

2 June 2016

AFPA's Great Election Debate draws out Parties on key issues

Last night the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) hosted a sold-out Great Election Debate with more than 180 industry representatives attending. It provided a successful platform for the forest, wood and paper products industry across Australia to connect with the major Parties leading up to the election.

On stage were Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources; the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and Senator Janet Rice, Australian Greens Forestry spokesperson. AFPA's 'Build the Vote' scorecard was displayed containing many empty spots ready for the major Parties to announce their election policies that impact our industries.

Questions were asked of the speakers on AFPA's nine big policy asks: a National Forest and Fibre Plan; access to the Carbon Farming Initiative to support plantation investment; support for R&D through a National Institute for Forest Products Innovation; recognition of thermal heat in the Renewable Energy Target; strengthening of the antidumping system; promotion of renewable bioenergy opportunities from biomass; funding for farm forestry; bushfire mitigation through a national mechanical fuel reduction program; and renewal of the Regional Forest Agreements.

AFPA CEO, Mr Ross Hampton said, "On a positive note both the Government and the Opposition (ALP) revealed that they would renew the Regional Forestry Agreements for a further 20 years. On a more disappointing note the ALP says it will not be taking a policy of supporting the continuation of native forest waste Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) in the Renewable Energy Target (RET) to the Election and neither major Party is yet willing to accept the sensible recognition of thermal energy RECs in the RET."

There was applause for Senator Ruston who was able to tick off on \$4m of announced funding support for two 'National Institute for Forest Products Innovation' hubs to be located in Launceston and Mt Gambier. This initiative was backed by Senator Rice who announced the Australian Greens would try to secure \$20m in extra funds for plantation-based forestry R&D. However, Senator Rice said the Greens remain opposed to sustainably managed natural forestry.

The full video of the Great Election Debate is available on [AFPA's official YouTube page](#).

AFPA's Build the Vote policy scorecard is available [here](#) (to be updated shortly).

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

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