

MEDIA RELEASE

A win for TAS forestry workers' right to a safe workplace

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The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) and Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT) have welcomed the Work Health and Safety Regulator's common-sense decision to order the Bob Brown Foundation to cease all illegal forestry protests, which have endangered lives and impinged on forest workers' right to a safe workplace.

The workplace regulator's Prohibition Notice directs the Foundation to cease forest protest activity until the Regulator is satisfied the Foundation is managing health and safety duties, and risks to forest workers.

The decision follows a series of dangerous protests by the Foundation in which demonstrators have illegally entered areas designated for select harvesting of specialty timber species of regrowth trees, in which they have endangered their own lives and those of the forest workers.

"This decision sends a strong message to extreme activist groups that their conduct is illegal, dangerous and well beyond the right to peaceful protest," FIAT Acting CEO Terry Edwards said.

"For these workers the forest is their office – they should be allowed to go about their lawful business without fear of having protestors endanger themselves or others in the workplace. This has done the right thing by these forest workers and by the protestors by upholding their rights."

"FIAT have been concerned at the potential of serious injury or even death of these reckless protestors and the consequences this may have on the mental well-being of forestry workers that are just going about their lawful daily work", Mr Edwards said.

AFPA CEO Mr Hampton said regulators around the country should take notice of the decision, particularly in Victoria where demonstrators are conducting similar illegal forest worksite invasions.

"AFPA respects the right of an individual to engage in protest in a respectful and lawful way, but this must be balanced against the rights of lawful businesses and their workers who work in Australia's vital primary industries to have a safe work environment," Mr Hampton said.

"The decision by the Tasmanian Regulator sends a strong message to the other states that workplace safety laws do apply in the forest and to protestors in the same way they apply to others, and I urge them to follow Tasmania's example to protect our sustainable forest industry workers."

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