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Forest Product Industries will continue to provide Australians with essential services during CoVid-19 crisis

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) is urging state and federal governments to recognise the essential services provided by Australia's forest product industries, as they consider further restrictions to contain CoVid-19.

While acknowledging the need for unprecedented shutdowns for large parts of the economy, AFPA Chief Executive Ross Hampton said Australian forest products industries supply essential products and services like timber for housing construction, kerbside recycling services, manufacturing toilet paper and tissues, and cardboard packaging for supermarket and retail home deliveries – all of which are part of an interconnected supply chain that is delicately balanced, and employs tens of thousands of blue collar workers.

“Our industry has been proactive in implementing risk mitigation measures to minimise the risk of CoVid-19 across our supply chains, and we will continue to act in accordance with the latest health advice,” Mr Hampton said.

“However, it is important that all levels of Government understand that many of the essential products and services that our communities will continue to need throughout this ordeal are contingent on the continued operation of much of the forest products industries – it is not possible to close down one sector without impacting on another.”

Mr Hampton said defining forest product industries as essential services was consistent with other countries' approaches to managing the CoVid-19 shutdowns.

“Last week the US Department of Homeland Security and the State of California listed workers involved in the manufacture and distribution of forest products as providing an essential service, and that service is just as essential in Australia. In providing it the industry will of course abide by all social distancing measures set out in the current restrictions and will continue to protect all their employees using the best practises possible.

“This is a time for all Australians to work together and the Forest Products Industry will proudly work with all governments to get through this crisis. But governments must recognise that what the industry provides is a necessity, not a luxury,” Mr Hampton concluded.

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