

MEDIA RELEASE

19 March 2020

Victorian Liberal Nationals to be commended for calling for forest industry ban inquiry

The forestry industry has congratulated the Victorian Liberal Nationals Opposition for showing its support for the industry in Victoria and trying to ensure it has a future.

On Tuesday the Opposition introduced a motion to State Parliament to establish an inquiry into the Government's plan to end native forest harvesting by 2030. Its recommendations to the "Economy and Infrastructure Committee" include inquiring into where Victoria's timber will be sourced following the implementation of the plan; how it will impact the availability of machinery and infrastructure for fire-fighting and the impact on forestry workers and regional economies.

The Chief Executive of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries Inc. (VAFI) Tim Johnston said the questions about the future supply of Victoria's timber must be answered.

"We've asked the Andrews government repeatedly to explain how it will meet future demand, but it's refusing to give us an answer, so hopefully an inquiry has better luck," he said.

"We'd also encourage all Victorian crossbench MPs to support the motion as they too will want answers to the questions being posed."

The General Manager of the Australian Forest Contractors Association Stacey Gardiner said forest contractors and their workers have a cloud over their future.

"Many already face an uncertain future with contracts terminated and lawsuits causing closures," she said.

"If, as the Premier says, plantations will replace native forests, then he should be able to show us how that can be achieved, because right now we can't see it happening in time."

The Chief Executive of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Ross Hampton has commended Victoria's Opposition for putting an inquiry on the table.

"This motion is asking common sense questions about Victoria's future forestry needs," Mr Hampton said.

"We know it's already operating sustainably, providing jobs and supporting regional communities across regional Victoria. But that's a message the Andrews' Government doesn't seem to want to listen to, and it also isn't prepared to explain how its plan will work. This Parliamentary Inquiry is asking those questions, and we commend the Opposition for calling for it," he concluded.

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