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Australian Forest products industries essential for food and medicine production and transport

Australian Forest Products Industries must continue to operate to ensure Australians continue to receive essential products and services including sanitary products, food packaging, and freight packaging used by all supermarkets and hospitals, the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) urged National Cabinet today.

In a brief sent to Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers today, AFPA outlines why the forest product industries must be recognised as essential service providers if further restrictions are put in place to contain CoVid-19.

“Forest products industries manufacture and deliver a range of essential services and products - everything from toilet paper, tissues medical and sanitary products are in record demand,” AFPA Chief Executive Officer Ross Hampton said.

“Cardboard manufactured in Australia is used for pharmaceuticals and food and beverage packaging, as well as wooden pallets for supermarkets and other distribution operations.”

“Our industries also supply wood residues from our sawmills are also a vital input into many agricultural processes including livestock and crop production, we operate kerbside and wastepaper recycling services, and make newsprint for most of Australia’s newspapers, to name a few,” Mr Hampton said.

“Also the timber used for construction, including for temporary field hospitals built from timber panels which are already being planned for should the pandemic worsen, and hospitals be unable to cope.”

“Critically, these vital products and services require the continued operation of the whole forest products supply chain, as the harvest of pulp logs for paper and cardboard manufacturers is only commercially and operationally feasible if higher-value timber for sawmills is also harvested.”

“For these reasons, countries including the United States, Canada, South Africa, Finland and Scotland have defined forest products as essential services which will continue throughout nationwide shutdowns.”

“With constraints on the importation of goods and the slowdown of manufacturing operations abroad, it is more crucial than ever that Australia continue to manufacture these essential products locally to guarantee supply,” Mr Hampton said.

Mr Hampton said the forest products sector has implemented several changes across the supply chain to minimise the risk of CoVid-19 and would continue to act in accordance with the latest health advice.

(See over)

“Our forest products industries stand ready to work constructively with all governments to ensure we can continue to supply these vital products and services to all Australia during these difficult times,” Mr Hampton concluded.

ENDS

Find attached to this media release a copy of the briefing note sent to the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers today.

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