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Forest Industries welcome establishment of Department of Regional NSW and calls for bushfire recovery to be a priority

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has commended the NSW Government for creating a new Department of Regional NSW.

In announcing the new department Deputy Premier John Barilaro said it will be a voice for regional people who are were already trying to recover from drought and bushfires, but now have the added burden of the CoVid-19 crisis.

The CEO of AFPA Mr Ross Hampton said, “CoVid-19 is an issue we’re all dealing with, but I think many in our cities forget that as well, regional Australia is still dealing with a long running drought and recovering from the ‘black summer’ bushfires.”

“This decision by NSW to bring together a number of state government agencies under one roof to grapple with regional issues is to be commended, as is the appointment of Gary Barnes as Secretary, someone who understands regional NSW and has done a great job representing it in his current role as Coordinator General for regional NSW in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. But we do urge the new department to set bushfire recovery as a major priority.”

“The forest product industries are dealing with CoVid-19, and will continue to do their part to support federal and state government efforts to bring it under control. But its major priority is bushfire recovery, something it was dealing with before the virus and is still doing now. Both the sustainably harvested and then regenerated native timber forests in NSW, and the softwood timber plantation areas were badly affected by the fires. Urgent recovery harvesting and replanting needs to go ahead quickly.”

“Forest industries underpin the economic prosperity of many regional NSW communities and in many places are the main source of employment. After the devastating impacts of CoVid-19 on the tourism and services sectors it is vital that these blue-collar jobs are supported to continue providing a baseline for the broader regional economic rebuilding which must eventually follow when the virus is brought under control.”

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