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VIC OPPOSITION EXPOSES DAN'S SHAM FORESTRY PLAN

The Victorian Opposition has highlighted Premier Dan Andrews' sham forestry plan and exposed the so-called "transition to plantations" as just Government spin.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Ross Hampton commended Member for Eastern Victoria Melina Bath for uncovering that, almost a year after promising to "transition the industry to plantations", the Andrews Government has only planted a very small area and is not using the species which the hardwood timber sawmills rely on.

"In the [Latrobe Valley Express](#) today, Ms Bath revealed that the 250 hectares of plantation seedlings are all fast growing bluegums. Bluegums provide important pulpwood for paper and packaging – but not the timber the sawmills need," Mr Hampton said.

"Plantations are a vital part of forest industries in Australia. The pine species provide our house frames and there are several sorts of fast growing eucalypts which supply the type of timber which can be woodchipped to go into the important work of replacing plastics with recyclable packaging and paper products. These trees however cannot provide the sawlogs for the hard and beautiful, appearance-grade timbers Melbournians love. This timber we obtain from slow growing Australian native forests."

"If the Victorian Government was fair dinkum about 'transitioning sawmills to plantations' they would need about 60 years to grow the right trees and many tens of thousands of hectares to accommodate them. The cost to achieve this is many times more than the \$110 million the Andrews Government has committed for new plantations."

"The State Government's plan, if it remains unchanged, will actually amount to Victoria 'transitioning' to 100% imported appearance grade hardwood. Some of this will almost certainly come from areas being deforested for palm oil and other land uses in south east Asia. It is scarcely believable that the Victorian Government believes this is a better approach than creating these products at home where we use just four trees out of 10,000 and every tree used is regenerated and the areas regrown."

"In a post-COVID 19 climate when every job will be precious, there is still time for the Andrews Government to change course and discuss with the industry a plan which will ensure a supply of home grown, sustainable, architectural timber products, keep regional communities employed and address any environmental concerns," Mr Hampton concluded.

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