

Tuesday 22 December 2020

## **ABC SCIENCE CORRECTS ITS MISREPRESENTATION OF AUSTRALIAN REGROWTH NATIVE FORESTRY**

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has welcomed the finding by the ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs Department that a recently published story made a series of errors which showed Australian forestry in a negative light. The complaint to the ABC was made by Justin Law, Managing Director of community group, *Forest and Wood Communities Australia*.

Chief Executive Officer of AFPA Ross Hampton said, "It is very encouraging that the national public broadcaster's fact checking processes are clearly working, and this retraction and correction to key parts of the lengthy science article are a great credit to ABC management. The tens of thousands of men and women who work in our native forest industries around the country, and many who were upset by the original story, will join AFPA in welcoming this outcome."

"What remains deeply perplexing however is how the serious reporters and producers in the ABC Science unit could have held such views about our sustainable forest management in the first place? Even those with a modest understanding of forest industries in Australia would have known that the state forest agencies emphatically do not practice 'deforestation', as was implied in the report. In fact, this would be completely illegal. Australian native or regrowth forestry is completely sustainable and can continue forever, as the regeneration and replanting process which takes place after harvest is just as important to our forestry operators as the timber getting."

"Similarly, it was extremely puzzling that the ABC Science reporter did not seem to understand how Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) between the State and Federal Governments work. The ABC now admits it was wrong to imply that RFAs do 'not include environmental protections.' RFAs are managed to extremely strict state environmental laws which are monitored and enforced. For more than twenty years this has provided the framework for sustainable forest management and the production of the appearance grade timber products we all love; like stair treads, doors, floors, furniture and even musical instruments and boats."

"If we were to cease gathering timber from the tiny percentage of Australian regrowth native forests. demand for these products would not evaporate. All these things would have to be imported and, in some cases, this would lead to actual deforestation in places which do not practice regrowth forestry as we do here."

"Whilst the apology to Mr Law and published correction is a very welcome development, the fact that the correction will be disseminated within the wider ABC and reported to the ABC Board, gives us hope that such simple errors regarding our forest industries will be avoided in the future," Mr Hampton concluded.

**SEE OVER FOR SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINT**

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**The summary published on the ABC website follows:**

*ABC Science: On 8 October 2020 a story published on the ABC News website incorrectly used the term deforestation when referring to the process of land clearing. The item also failed to clearly identify that agriculture is the leading cause of land clearing, and particularly in sections on Victoria and Tasmania the focus was unduly on the role of forestry in land clearing.*

*A short video of land clearing, which was captioned as footage of illegal logging, has been removed; it was not verified that the footage did in fact show logging.*

*Reference to Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) lacked sufficient context and could have left readers with the impression that RFAs do not include environmental protections.*

*The definition of woody vegetation under the National Greenhouse Accounts guidelines was corrected. The inaccuracies and lack of context in this article as originally published unduly focused on the role of native forestry in land clearing and did not meet the ABC's editorial standards for accuracy and impartiality.*

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/corrections/2020-12-21/land-clearing-in-australia/13004560>