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AUSTRALIAN FOREST INDUSTRIES WELCOME GOVERNMENT CRACK DOWN ON ILLEGAL TIMBER IMPORTS

The Australian Forests Products Association (AFPA) has welcomed Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries Jonno Duniam's announcement of an Australian first national DNA testing program to verify the species and origin of imported timber sold at retail outlets across Australia.

The testing program supports the Government's work conducted under the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012*, where importers are required to have robust due diligence processes to guarantee the accuracy of labelling and manage any risks that the timber may be illegally harvested.

Testing has revealed that up to 40 per cent of the species' labels on the imported timber was inaccurate.

The Chief Executive Officer of AFPA Ross Hampton said, "Australia exports some \$3.5 billion in timber products and imports some \$5.5 billion. That represents a huge trade deficit. Until we can grow domestic manufacturing in Australia to a much greater extent, imports will be an important part of the product supply mix to build our sustainable homes and offices."

"Troublingly, it is estimated however that up to 10 per cent of this imported material is illegal or obtained from dubious sources, has doubtful labelling, or has been 'dumped' on our markets. The Assistant Minister is right in saying that '*when it comes to imported timber it's essential consumers can have confidence in the products they're purchasing*'. Those consumers should not accept imported products from countries with arguably less sustainable standards of operation."

"We look forward to working with the Assistant Minister on both strengthening protections against illegally logged timber imports, and at the same time, supporting regional jobs, businesses and economic growth, while building resilience in local manufacturing supply chains which will underpin our long-term economic recovery from COVID-19 and global trading issues," Mr Hampton concluded.

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