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Senator McKenzie stands up for timber workers to deliver certainty

Victorian Nationals Senator Bridget McKenzie has shown she is a true champion of timber workers from her state and all over Australia by announcing she will today introduce legislation into Parliament that will provide certainty for Australia's native hardwood timber industries.

Australian Forest Products Association CEO Mr Ross Hampton said Senator McKenzie's Bill will clarify a legal anomaly created by a [Federal Court ruling](#) in May, which has created significant uncertainty for Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) – the national framework that delegates the environmental regulation of Australia's sustainable native timber forestry operations to the states.

"That certainty is in doubt because of a Federal Court decision in May which took a new interpretation of how RFAs operate, and how they interact with the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act," Mr Hampton said.

Mr Hampton said Australia's native hardwood timber industry has been warning for months that its future is in doubt because of the legal uncertainty the judgment has created, and the threat of lawfare from anti-forestry groups who threaten to use the precedent to shut down the industry.

"Senator McKenzie's Bill will affirm and clarify the Commonwealth's intent regarding RFAs to make it explicitly clear that forestry operations covered by an RFA are exempt from Part 3 of the EPBC Act.

"This in no way weakens environmental laws because the RFA framework ensures the environmental protections provided by the EPBC Act are reflected in the accredited state environmental laws.

"This Bill merely provides clarity about how those bilateral agreements operate, as they have for over 20 years under a bipartisan model that balances our shared community needs for social, environmental and economic outcomes from the sustainable management of our forests."

Addressing the legal uncertainty created by the court case was also a recommendation in Professor Graeme Samuel's Interim Report of the Independent review of the EPBC Act.

Mr Hampton thanked Senator McKenzie for standing up for timber workers and urged the Government and Opposition to support Senator McKenzie's Bill.

"As the daughter of a log truck driver and growing up in timber towns in Victoria, Senator McKenzie knows first-hand how vital the industry is for regional communities.

"This minor but vital legislative amendment should be supported by everyone in Parliament who claims to support RFAs and the Australian timber industry," Mr Hampton concluded.

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