

Media Release

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Australians can have confidence in environmental safeguards provided under RFAs

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) says Australians can have confidence that our sustainably managed native forestry operations provide all the environmental safeguards required by the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, Deputy CEO Victor Violante said today.

Responding to criticism of the national RFA framework in the Samuel review of the EPBC Act, Mr Violante said all forestry operations under RFAs are managed to extremely strict state environmental laws which are independently enforced.

“RFAs are required by law to be independently reviewed, and all the reviews have found that RFAs are meeting or exceeding environmental objectives while providing a level of certainty to industry,” Mr Violante said.

“Also, all RFAs were reviewed and renewed in recent years to ensure that they remained up to date and reflected the latest available science and were amended accordingly.”

Mr Violante said the RFAs delivered significant protections for the environment and threatened species when they were developed, and continue to do so.

“Nationally, as a result of the RFAs and public land use decisions, over 13.6 million hectares have been added to Australia's forest conservation reserve system. Meanwhile, timber harvesting operations occur on only a tiny fraction of Australia's native forest estate, using the equivalent of just 6 trees out of every 10,000 annually, and every tree is replaced as the areas are regenerated and regrown by law.”

Mr Violante welcomed the Samuel review's recommendation that there should be greater clarity around the interaction between RFAs and the EPBC Act, to provide greater certainty for the tens of thousands of workers in our sustainable native timber industries.

“AFPA reiterates its plea to the Federal Government to provide certainty for timber workers and put an end to the lawfare that anti-forestry groups are waging.”

“Closing down Australia's sustainably managed native timber industry won't stop the demand for quality appearance-grade hardwood timber for floorboards, staircases and furniture. It will just increase imports from countries with weaker regulations, including those where rainforests are logged unsustainably and illegally,” Mr Violante concluded.

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