

Media Release

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Forest Industries applaud Assistant Minister Duniam condemning use of children in dangerous protests

Australia's forest industries congratulate Assistant Minister for Forestry, Jonathon Duniam who has condemned a case of activism in the Gippsland where a toddler was dangerously brought onto an active forestry site with operational machinery, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Ross Hampton said today.

Speaking on Sky News [last night](#), Senator Duniam said, *"...in 2021, where you've got mums and dads using their kids as political pawns, an infant, a toddler, walking around a dangerous worksite where you've got big moving machinery, spinning blades, trees falling on the ground, what kind of a parent does that? Someone who doesn't actually care, someone who's more interested in scoring a political point than the welfare of their own child, it's a disgusting thing..."*

Mr Hampton said, "Senator Duniam was correct. This incident was quite frankly a disgrace. It should go without saying that heavy machinery sites, such as forestry harvesting operations, are potentially very dangerous. Although our operators place health and safety as the number one priority, unlawful access is outside their control. Those who do this put their lives at risk and in this case the life of a toddler.

"We of course support the right of all Australians to protest about the things they are concerned about, however not in ways which are illegal and put themselves and our operators at risk. All the environmental advocacy groups involved in forestry debates should also be seeking to stop this behaviour. It will be a great tragedy if someone is badly injured or killed.

"The irony is that Australian native forestry operations are actually the envy of the world in terms of their very high level of environmental standards. All areas which are harvested are replanted or regenerated by law and certified sustainable.

"Australian environmental activist groups which continue to try to close this industry in Australia never can answer the question - is it ethical to stop using Australian hardwood timber for our floors, decking and stairs when we know the replacement timber will likely be imported from countries that practice deforestation?" Mr Hampton concluded.

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