

Media Release

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AFPA welcomes Charities reforms to draw a line between lawful protest and criminal activity

The Australian Forest Product Association (AFPA) welcomes the Federal Government's reforms to charities regulations which could strip extremist groups of their charitable status if they commit or incite criminal activities.

AFPA Chief Executive Officer Ross Hampton said AFPA respected the right of any individual to engage in lawful, peaceful protests. However, this activity should not disrupt another Australian's right to work in a safe environment.

"Forestry operations are regular targets for these illegal activities, costing the industry millions of dollars a year in disruptions, and distress to forestry workers who are often intimidated, threatened and harassed by protestors," Mr Hampton said.

AFPA made a [submission](#) supporting the reforms to the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission*, following an alarming escalation in the dangerous and illegal conduct of extremists.

"Just [last year in Tasmania](#) a number of long metal spikes were driven into trees about to be harvested. Fortunately, the concealed spikes were discovered just before the logs went through a sawmill. Had they been run through a saw, spinning at enormous speed, it could have meant death or serious injury for plant operators nearby.

"And, just recently in Victoria, we had [a disturbing case of a young child](#) being brought into an active harvest site. These vandals have to be stopped before someone is seriously hurt or killed, and clearly the existing legal deterrents are not enough," Mr Hampton said.

"We commend the Federal Government for standing up for workers. We hope these reforms will empower the Charities regulator to take strong action against activist groups masquerading as charities that are engaged in criminal conduct and strip them of this privilege if they cross the line," Mr Hampton concluded.

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