

Media Release

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You can't have a Cabinet without timber

Australia's peak forest industries association has urged the Coalition and Labor to elevate the forestry portfolio to Cabinet in recognition of the sector's significant economic contribution and the essential products and services it provides.

Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Chief Executive Officer Ross Hampton said Australia's \$24 billion-a-year forest industries employ more than 80,000 people across the supply chain to produce timber for our building industry and vital everyday items like toilet paper, renewable packaging, and other single-use plastic replacements.

"Our message is simple: 2020-21 has shown us that you can't have a Cabinet without timber," Mr Hampton said.

"Forest industries are the backbone of the construction industry that is currently keeping the Australian economy strong, we make the toilet paper that is flying off the shelves, and we will play a vital role in any national net-zero target.

"It is time the whole-of-government impact of our industry is recognised with the appointment of a dedicated Forestry Minister to Cabinet. There is no better candidate for the role than our Assistant Minister for Forestry, Senator Jonno Duniam, who has proven he is up to the task.

"Our sector should also be acknowledged in the Department's name, which should revert to the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries."

Mr Hampton said all Australian governments should work together on a national timber strategy to ensure we have the forest resource we need to meet our future timber needs.

"The current housing timber shortage should be a wake-up call to decision-makers that we cannot rely on imports to meet our timber needs. Housing timber is a sovereign capability issue alongside fuel and food, and at the moment we are failing.

"Unless we take immediate national action to grow our plantation resource to meet future timber needs and stop the closure of yet more sustainable native forestry operations, we will fail future generations. The Aussie dream of owning a home will be out of reach for our children and our children's children.

"The best time to plant more timber trees was 30 years ago. The next best time is today," Mr Hampton concluded.

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