

## Media Release

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### **ACT Government recognises forestry and timber workers are ‘essential’ so vital food packaging and timber operations can continue**

Following concerted efforts from the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) and industry, the ACT Government has today allowed forestry and timber operations to resume as essential industries under the Territory’s COVID lockdown rules.

Chief Executive Officer of AFPA Ross Hampton said, “We welcome the ACT Government’s decision on behalf of the region’s essential forest industries that can now resume their vital work with COVID safe plans in place – as is the case in other jurisdictions.

“It was understandable in last week’s rush to protect the community from the spread of the COVID delta strain that forest industries weren’t classed as essential and it’s pleasing that has been corrected following concerted representation to the ACT Government.

“Forest industries are essential. Most of the cardboard packaging which contains the food in our supermarkets is produced by our paper mills which need the residues from sawmilling operations, like those in the ACT. And, for the sawmills to operate they need sustainably harvested trees, like those in the ACT Government’s pine plantations,” Mr Hampton said.

Mr Hampton said the ACT’s initial omission underscores the need for National Cabinet to have a consistent approach on the essential status of forest industries, so that vital operations are not unnecessarily interrupted.

“Forestry and sawmilling in the ACT critically support the supply chain of many essential products, especially in NSW.

“Even the pallets which go under the boxes to allow supermarkets to move the food from the trucks into the supermarkets are made from timber. And then there’s all the vital everyday items such as toilet paper and tissues. All these things require forestry to continue and it’s all the more important during the current pandemic,” Mr Hampton concluded.

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