

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Victorian Government forestry announcement a “kick in the guts for timber workers and timber communities”**

The Victorian Government’s plan to end native forestry has been slammed as a kick in the guts to Victorian timber workers and the communities which rely on the industry.

The Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union said that while no one denied the industry faced challenges, the Government’s response was deeply flawed, completely inadequate, and far from being a viable or fair transition plan.

“This is not the way to respond to an industry facing challenges,” Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union National Secretary Michael O’Connor said.

“This announcement isn’t a viable plan for the future, it’s an embarrassing, motley, half-baked, rag-tagged, mishmash of talking points.

“It is a stupid, heartless decision that is out of character for a Government that had built a reputation of supporting blue-collar jobs and regional communities.

“The Government’s ham-fisted handling of this issue has sent a chill down the spine of not only timber workers, but every blue-collar worker in the state.”

Mr O’Connor said it was extraordinary that the forestry policy was announced on the same day a review into Labor’s Federal Election campaign was released, which warned that the party had alienated blue collar workers.

“Rather than take for granted the votes of workers and ignoring the swings against Labor in blue collar electorates not just at the Federal election but at the 2018 Victorian election the Andrews’ Government should concede they’ve got this one completely wrong,” he said.

“It’s not just timber and forestry workers, but manufacturing, resources, power generation and mining workers and communities across Australia who will now, justifiably, be even more sceptical of Labor when they promise to deliver a ‘Just Transition’ as this fiasco speaks louder than their promises.”

Mr O’Connor said an examination of the announcement revealed that the Victorian Government’s rhetoric about providing security, protecting jobs and industry, getting the balance right, and making hard but necessary decisions simply didn’t stack up.

“No one in the timber industry supports this hopeless and embarrassing plan,” Mr O’Connor said.

“The union will fight to ensure that workers, their families and their communities are not left on the scrap heap because of this deeply flawed announcement.

“This debacle also flies in the face of the understanding that our union has had with the Andrews Government since prior to its election in 2014.”

Mr O’Connor said that meetings with workers will determine exactly what the fightback looks like, but the Manufacturing Division of the union will be reviewing its relationship with the Labor Party in Victoria as a result of this announcement.

The union believes the Victorian Government’s plan is deeply deficient in a number of ways, including that it:

- does not give the hardwood saw logging sector a fighting chance to adapt and adjust, with mill closures and job losses certain to occur either straight away, in 2024, or in 2030;
- risks the viability of Australian Paper and the thousands of jobs that rely on it, with little room to manoeuvre if there is another big bush fire or there are problems in establishing or growing the 50,000 hectares of plantation needed to transition the company to plantation wood;
- contains a completely inadequate and insufficient worker and community support package;
- gives environment groups everything they want, upfront, with no strings attached, yet contains no strategy to prevent environment groups from continuing to withhold certification, engage in logging coup protests, or run market campaigns against Victorian timber and paper; and
- has no mechanisms to ensure new plantation jobs will be good, secure, union jobs.

**Media contact:** Tim Vollmer — 0404 273 313