

Media Release | **08/09/2021**

## Forestry industry blindsided by State Government

THE WA forestry industry has been blindsided by the State Government's sudden decision to end the native forestry sector by 2024.

The announcement came with no industry consultation, leaving businesses, employees and regional communities shocked.

The sustainable industry employs more than 500 people and contributes over \$220 million to the WA economy each year, as well as underpinning many small businesses, suppliers and service providers.

Forest Industries Federation WA (FIFWA) Executive Director Melissa Haslam said the \$50 million Just Transition Plan offered by the State Government as compensation was miniscule compared to the level of investment in the sector.

Mrs Haslam said one company alone had invested well over \$50 million in the past two years and there was a further \$100 million of investment pending, which would now be lost.

"This is heartbreaking for our industry, and the biggest initial impact is likely to be felt in our regional communities, but this will impact most West Australians – anyone who enjoys products from timber furniture right through to firewood," Mrs Haslam said.

"We are shocked at this rushed and bizarre decision, which came without any consultation.

"The irony is this does not even protect our forests; forest management protects our forests.

"For forests to cope with a drying climate, to control and minimise dangerous wildfires, they still need to be thinned and managed. This will now come at a huge cost to taxpayers where previously the costs were offset by timber production."

Mrs Haslam said while industry welcomed the \$350 million investment in the plantation sector, that investment would do nothing to help the native timber sector, as the two were not interchangeable.

"This decision will result in an increase in timber imports from countries which do not share our high environmental and management standards," she said.

"Right now, we need more detail about what comes next for these businesses, who have been shattered by a reckless decision."

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**About FIFWA**

Forest Industries Federation WA (FIFWA) has been representing the interests of the Western Australian timber industry since 1895. The industry is a key driver of economic activity and jobs in Western Australia, contributing \$1.4 billion to the WA economy and creating about 6000 jobs in WA, with more than 90% of those in regional areas. The industry employs careful and comprehensive management policies to ensure WA's forests are sustainably managed. Less than 1% of the total forest area is harvested annually, with the area harvested then replanted. In 2001 WA became the first state to abolish harvesting old-growth forests.