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Industry calls for Forestry Minister to take action

THE WA forestry industry is urging the State Government to provide support to businesses impacted by the Forest Products Commission's (FPC) failure to deliver on log contracts.

Sawmills and forestry contracting businesses are struggling due to poor supply, with a number of sawmills in the South West forced to cease operations while desperately trying to keep their employees.

FIFWA Executive Director Melissa Haslam said support was required to retain the affected workforce until the FPC could resume a consistent supply.

Ms Haslam said delays with the approval, planning and preparation of harvesting areas had snowballed over the last 12 months resulting in the shortfall.

"Normally sawmills have a stockpile of logs heading into winter, as access to sites is limited during the wetter months," Mrs Haslam said.

"This year however, mills have been unable to accumulate a stockpile because the FPC has fallen so far behind on its contractual obligations.

"Our members have literally run out of logs and as such, have been forced to stop work and send their employees home. Contractors have also been impacted, having their machinery sitting idle waiting for harvest areas to be prepared.

"We are seeking a response from the Minister for Forestry Dave Kelly, including support for the businesses impacted, because quite simply this situation is not their fault."

WA's forestry industry contributes \$1.4 billion to the WA economy annually and supports about 6000 jobs, with more than 90% of those jobs located in regional communities.

Sustainable native forestry directly employs more than 500 people and contributes over \$220 million to the WA economy each year.

The industry underpins many small businesses, suppliers and service providers, particularly in regional areas.

Mrs Haslam said support was a necessity, to help businesses directly impacted as well as the regional communities in which they operate.

“When businesses are forced to close it not only impacts those directly involved, but the wider community and other businesses along the supply chain also feel the pain,” she said.

“It could have been avoided, so we expect the State Government to do the right thing and provide the necessary support.”

Media enquiries

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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.