



Illegal logging policy endorsed by industry

1 September 2009

Forest industry leaders today endorsed the Federal Government's illegal logging policy direction and action plan. President of the Australian Timber Importers Federation Norm Long said the Government was moving forward commendably in this complex, demanding and sensitive area of international trade and environmental policy.

“The Government is heading down a track that is supported by the timber importers and wholesalers. Requiring legal verification of timber and wood-based products presents a range of challenges that may well have implications for timber-based businesses. However, we believe Federal forestry minister Tony Burke is making significant progress and we unreservedly support the work he is directing.”

Mr Long went on to say that advancing the Government's policy to eliminate the importation of illegal wood-based products, necessitated careful diplomacy with Australia's trading partners, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

“We back the Minister's multi-pronged approach to the illegal logging policy challenge, including the substantial efforts and funding he is making available through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to increase the capacity of countries like Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to improve forest management and forest products trade governance and law enforcement.”

In relation to the generic industry code of conduct project being undertaken as part of the illegal policy implementation process, Mr Long said that as far as he was aware, the project team comprised the largest ever consortium of industry associations. “From paper right across the board, including the whole range of timber products to manufactured furniture.”

Also referring to the code of conduct project, Chairman of the National Association of Forest Industries Bob Pearce said the project was but one of four underway that would collectively allow Minister Burke to more thoroughly understand the extent of illegal logging, the credible mechanisms available to verify and certify a wide-range of wood-based products and the regulatory options available to the Government.

“The code will provide a basis for industry compliance to ensure that all timber and wood products sold in Australia are from legal sources.”

Mr Pearce said he also endorsed the actions of the Federal Government in making a careful, considered evaluation of the best way forward to curtail the sale of wood products where legality could not be adequately demonstrated.

“Tony Burke is to be applauded for his competent and comprehensive approach to this issue - an issue that has implications for our ongoing relationships with neighbouring countries and important trading partners further afield.”

Mr Pearce said the National Association of Forest Industries recognised that implementing a robust policy that would ensure timber and wood products sold in Australia were from legal sources was critical in reinforcing the message that timber and wood-based products remains the building materials of choice.

“Illegally sourced products not only undermine the wonderful environmental and climate change credentials of wood-based products, but undercut the prices of products from lawful forest operations and trade,” he said.

“I can confirm that the National Association of Forest Industries will be continuing to work closely with the Government on this matter and provide whatever assistance is requested.”

Mr Long noted that Minister Burke had been working to put in place bilateral agreements to support the Government's illegal logging policy. "He has been able to negotiate agreements with Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and China. This has been no mean feat and he is to be congratulated for his ability to secure such critical agreements."

"His diplomacy efforts will assist to improve forest management activity, environmental outcomes and lawful trade with countries in the region that have special relationships with Australia," he concluded.

- ends -

Media enquiries to:

*John Halkett, Technical Manager, Australian Timber Importers Federation:
02 9356 3826 or 0417 421 187*

*Jane Heffernan National Association of Forest Industries: 02 6285 3833 or
0419 465 328*

Images available on request

Image: Norm Long 03

Caption: Norm Long, President, Australian Timber Importers Federation:
Government moving commendably in complex, demanding and sensitive area
of international policy.

Image: Bob Pearce 05

Caption: Bob Pearce, Chairman, National Association of Forest Industries:
Illegal logging undermines the environmental credentials and value of
products from lawful forest operations.