



Media Release

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SA water policy risks \$1.2 billion plantation industry

The South Australian Government must delay new Natural Resources Management legislation to licence forest water use until its economic, social and environmental impact can be assessed and appropriate amendments made, or risk the long term viability of the plantation forest industry, cautioned the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI).

Chief executive Allan Hansard said, “It’s crucial that the South Australian Government gets this legislation right for the future of the plantation industry in South Australia, and probably in other States as well. Other State Governments are watching to see how South Australia handles water policy and its move to license water used by forestry plantations, which are a non-irrigated dryland crop, has significant implications for other dryland crops, such as lucerne and improved pastures.

”If we have to be in a licence scheme it should be equitable and sustainable and include other dryland crops that, like trees, are not irrigated but use rainfall or groundwater. This means including the 1.4 million hectares of modified pasture, 140,000 hectares of livestock grazing and 131,000 hectares of cropping in the South East of the State. All these crops use water but are not accounted for in the Government’s scheme.

“I would rather see the South Australian Government work on improving the efficiency of water use by irrigators, who are by far the largest users of water, rather than putting a licence on dryland crops like forestry that are essentially very efficient water users.

“The Government should also realise how much uncertainty is being created by its urgency to get the legislation passed without appropriate consultation with industry and communities on the potential impact. With the global recession and the collapse of Timbercorp and Great Southern, the industry and communities in the Green Triangle have been thrown into economic uncertainty. I’m surprised the Government has not realised that its approach to this important piece of legislation is creating more uncertainty and may contribute to significantly delaying the economic recovery for the region if they don’t get it right.

“Plantation forests are a \$1.2 billion industry in South East South Australia, contributing nearly 30 percent of the region’s total economic activity and household income. The industry also helps offset a significant amount of the State’s greenhouse gas emissions.

“The forest industry will continue to work constructively to find a way through this issue but urges the South Australian Government not to rush this legislation at the expense of the long term future of plantation industry and the families that rely on it.”

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