



Timber Industry and Environment Groups Call for Government to Deliver on Election Promise to Prevent Illegal Logging Imports

Monday 24 August 2009: Major timber industry organisations A3P, Timber Queensland, Furnishing Industry Association of Australia and timber importer Agora have joined a growing coalition of timber industry bodies and environment organisations calling upon the Federal Government to fulfil its 2007 election promise to prevent the importation of illegal forest products into Australia.

The Joint Statement identifies the destructive impacts of illegal logging and recognises that while industry has a responsibility in ensuring illegal logging is eliminated, the Government needs to take the leadership role.

The CEO of A3P, Richard Stanton said: "As the peak national body representing Australian plantation growers, solid wood processors and paper manufacturers, A3P urges the Government to deliver on its stated election commitments to prevent the importation of illegal forest products into Australia, and to encourage the production and use of forest products sourced using sustainable forest management principles."

"A3P developed and promoted its Member Guidelines 'Stopping the supply of illegally logged forest products in Australia' in 2007. Our guidelines provide member companies with a practical framework for demonstrating legality and control within their supply chains."

Before the last election Prime Minister Rudd stated very clearly that he would identify illegally logged timber and restrict its import into Australia. At a policy announcement in Tasmania in July 2007, the Prime Minister launched a policy that headlines with the statement: "Labor will encourage sourcing of forest products from sustainable forest practices and seek to ban the sale of illegally logged timber imports."

Two years on and Minister Tony Burke is yet to reveal a policy options paper.

Timber Queensland, the state industry body representing the full timber value chain, says industry has been implementing forest certification and chain of custody schemes which show Australian timber comes from legal and sustainably managed forests.

"However, it's time the government lives up to its promise to stop illegal timber entering Australia; it's bad for our own timber industry and for the public at large," said Chief Executive, Rod McInnes.

Deforestation is responsible for about a fifth of global greenhouse gas pollution and illegal logging is a major driver of deforestation.

Leading environment groups, Greenpeace and WWF, acknowledge that when valued and used in the right way, wood can be one of the more environmentally sound materials available for meeting a range of human needs because it is reusable, recyclable and stores carbon and can be continually produced through ecologically sustainable management.

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Notes

1. The Joint Statement has been signed by timber merchants and large timber retailers including IKEA, Bunnings and Simmonds Lumber and by leading environment groups WWF, Oxfam, The Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Greenpeace. Full Statement available at: <http://www.goodwoodguide.org.au/assets/docs/JointStatement.pdf>
2. According to a report commissioned for the Government, Australia imports approximately \$400 million worth of illegal timber products each year and the rate of illegal logging in our region is amongst the highest in the world. Illegal logging is linked to loss of livelihoods, irreversible biodiversity loss and devastating deforestation. Deforestation is responsible for about a fifth of global greenhouse gas pollution and illegal logging is a major driver of deforestation. The United States and the European Union have recently moved to impose restrictions on the importation of illegal timber.