

Media Release

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BOLSTERING THE VICTORIAN FORESTRY PLAN

The Andrews Labor Government is strengthening the Victorian Forestry Plan, with new support for the timber industry and enhanced environmental protections as the state transitions away from native timber harvesting.

The plan ensures critical supply chains that rely on native timber will have enough time to adjust ahead of the phase out in 2030, while supporting workers and communities through the 2024 step-down and beyond.

The Labor Government today announced more than \$100 million for workers, communities and businesses impacted by the 2024 step-down from native timber harvesting, which will include opt out packages and increased redundancy payments.

The new commitment to timber communities and families boosts the Government's total investment for transition support to more than \$200 million.

Recent legal challenges to timber harvesting have highlighted the need for new mechanisms to ensure the timber industry can meet the requirements of the *Code of Practice for Timber Production*.

Legislation to be introduced early next year will include standards that set out how the industry can meet its obligations to a section of the Code called the precautionary principle.

The changes will provide the industry with greater certainty about how the precautionary principle should be implemented.

The enhanced Victorian Forestry Plan supports include the expansion of the *Victorian Timber Innovation Fund* and the *Forestry Business Transition Vouchers* program by \$20 million.

In addition, \$14 million will be provided to implement new environmental measures. This includes a new coupe regeneration plan, which will increase confidence that regeneration requirements are met before coupes are taken off the Timber Release Plan.

The Labor Government is strengthening the Conservation Regulator with new infringement powers for anyone breaching the Code of Practice – bringing its disciplinary powers in line with other regulators in Victoria.

This builds on the additional powers provided to the regulator in the new *Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2021*.

VicForests will continue to deliver on the Government's timber commitments under the Plan, concentrating on contracting, harvesting and regeneration.

For more information on the Victorian Forestry Plan visit vic.gov.au/forestry.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

“The Victorian Forestry Plan was created to transition the native forest industry to a range of new opportunities by 2030, and we are doing just that.”

“The timber industry is changing – this is why we have a substantial financial package ready to support workers and communities, as we move to a new timber future based around plantations.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D’Ambrosio

“These changes will deliver new ways to protect our precious wildlife while supporting the transition of our native forests from timber harvesting by 2030.”

“We’re continuing to strengthen the Conservation Regulator, with new penalties and provisions enabling them to take timely and appropriate action.”