

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Training and Skills

Minister for Higher Education

Minister for Agriculture



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LEGISLATION TO PROTECT FORESTRY WORKERS PASSED

Strengthened laws to protect forestry workers from illegal protest activity have passed the Victorian Parliament, as the Andrews Labor Government continues to ensure every Victorian is safe at work.

The Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022, brings stronger penalties to deter dangerous protest activities that puts the safety of both forestry workers and people who illegally enter dangerous work sites at risk.

The new legislation introduces offences and updates existing penalties to deter dangerous protest activities in Timber Harvesting Safety Zones and prevent harm.

Timber Harvesting Safety Zones are small and restricted worksites where forestry activities are undertaken. It is illegal for anyone who is not authorised to be in those areas.

To prevent repeated safety risks across multiple Timber Harvesting Safety Zones, Authorised Officers will be able to issue Banning Notices when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed or will commit a specified offence. The notices will aim to stop individuals from repeatedly engaging in dangerous activities in Timber Harvesting Safety Zones and other forestry coupe areas.

Authorised Officers will be given additional powers to search containers, bags and vehicles for prohibited items.

These changes are focused on illegal and dangerous behaviour occurring within THSZs and do not limit normal recreation in forests, or peaceful demonstration in areas where it is safe and legal to do so.

This new legislation will bring the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 in line with other similar pieces of legislation in other jurisdictions and in Victoria such as the Wildlife Act 1975.

The legislation will come into effect from May 2023. For more information visit vic.gov.au/forestry.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney

“These reforms reflect the real risks created from dangerous protests and they will help to protect the safety of anyone who enters a Timber Harvesting Safety Zone.”

“Forestry workers deserve to be safe at work and that’s why we have strengthened these laws to make it clear that we don’t tolerate people putting workers at risk while they are on the job.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

“No matter what industry they’re in, Victorians deserve to be safe in their workplace – these laws are an important step in strengthening the protections around ensuring their safety.”