

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education
Minister for Agriculture



Wednesday, 23 August 2023

MORE SUPPORT ON THE WAY FOR TIMBER WORKERS

The Andrews Labor Government is scaling up support for timber workers, sawmill operators and their communities, as Victoria transitions away from native timber logging.

Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney announced the expansion of the *Victorian Forestry Worker Support Program* – increasing worker top-up payments from up to \$120,000 to \$150,000 and allocating extra payments to workers over 45 years old.

The wider community forestry sector - including firewood sellers, guitar makers, seed collectors and other Forest Produce Licensees will be eligible for the expanded Worker Support Payments, and redundant equipment compensation, plus payments for undersupplied timber, and a one-off hardship payment.

The first round of the *Forestry Transition Fund* is now open to create more local jobs in impacted timber communities. The fund will provide grants of up to \$1 million to expand, diversify or start new businesses – while also allocating wage subsidies to incentivise people to employ transitioning timber workers.

The *Sawmill Voluntary Transition Package* is also now open to support mill owners to stay in the industry or switch to new sectors. These packages will ensure workers entitlements are met and will include plant and equipment compensation.

An initial *Harvest and Haulage Support Package* will be available for forest contractors in September, which will include contract and equipment compensation and worker redundancy payments.

Harvest and haulage sub-contractors, chip truck drivers and other businesses heavily dependent on the native timber industry, will also be eligible for the next round of the *Timber Innovation Grants* – expected to reopen in late September.

The Labor Government will continue to consult with forest contractors to ensure their critical skills are retained for ongoing management of the state's public land with genuine opt-out packages available for those who choose to exit.

For more information on how to get local support, please visit vic.gov.au/forestry or contact the Forestry Transition Hotline on 1800 318 182.

To register for the Victorian Forestry Worker Support Program, visit forestworks.com.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney

"After listening to the timber industry, we have expanded our support program - ensuring worker needs are met."

"I thank our industry stakeholders for engaging constructively to deliver meaningful support for timber communities."

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Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Harriet Shing

“After many months of uncertainty due to ongoing litigation, this funding and support is already helping Victorian timber towns, workers, and businesses to make the decisions that are right for them. We are also investing in job creation, training, and local development.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

“The additional payments for workers in the later stages of their careers will make a big difference to timber families.”