

MEMBERS' BULLETIN

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Welcome

This *Members' Bulletin* is intended to keep you up-to-date with current ATIF activities. This edition comments on the Labor Opposition orchestrated disallowance motion to the Illegal Logging Regulation; the continuing work on reviewing timber import conditions and the Forum of forest industry trade associations that was attended by ATIF.

Illegal logging regulation amendment disallowance

ATIF is disappointed that, despite assurances given by Joel Fitzgibbon, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of support, the Labor Opposition initiated a disallowance motion to the Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment (Due Diligence Improvements) Regulations 2017 in the Senate. It would appear that, despite assurances from Labor of bipartisan support for the forest industry, this disallowance motion was moved at the request of the CFMEU.

Discussions over this issue are ongoing with Department of Agriculture and Water Resources officials.

Timber import condition changes

Work of the revision of timber product import conditions is being progressed by the Plant Import Operations section from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Activity this year has centred on changes to import requirements for timber products that are over 200mm in all directions, which we generally refer to as 'oversize' timber products. In the normal way when the revised conditions are finalised, a circular will be prepared and distributed.

Forum of forest industry associations

At a forum of more than 40 representatives from timber and forest associations, other entities and companies in Canberra on 7 March 2018, Assistant Minister Senator Anne Ruston detailed progress on the preparation of a national forest plan.

Senator Ruston's task is based on the commitment given by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at Parliament House, Canberra, on 12 September 2017 when he announced that the government would



develop a new Government plan that would underpin growth in the renewable timber and wood-fibre industry. “We are committed to developing this industry as a growth engine for regional Australia,” he said.

Senator Ruston announced that it was her intention to provide a copy of the draft plan to state and territory forestry ministers in June, and for the Federal Government to be in a position to make announcements about the plan in September.

In opening the industry forum Chair of the Australian Forest Products Association, Greg McCormack restated that the forest industry sector contributed about \$24 billion to the country’s economy each year. “Forest Industries underpin many regional jobs and communities. About 80,000 people work directly in our industries, while another 40,000 work in diverse jobs which use the timber from our plantation forests and native forests. A further 180,000 people rely on forest industries for their indirect employment,” he said.

He confirmed the urgent needed for a national forest industries plan. “There is a growing shortage of softwood plantations, which is preventing our sawmills from expanding to global-scale operations. There is also a growing global demand for renewable timber, paper, cardboard, and bio-products to replace those existing products derived from fossil fuels.”

Senator Ruston confirmed that significant opportunities also exist for the industry to make a leading contribution to the biofuels revolution, enhance research capacity, and consider related infrastructure issues and needs.

“Getting the policy setting right was an essential part of the national plan process. Yes there are big challenges ahead for the industry in promoting its message.”

“Greater effort was needed to build relationships with entities and people who supported our goals and aspirations, including a closer collaborative relationship with the farming sector and working collectively to change the public perception of the industry, especially the public perception in urban areas,” she said.

“We need to be more proactive to dispel myths and put science back into the argument – we need to change the public narrative. We need to also put emphasis on the industries’ linkages to climate change abatement, carbon markets and biodiversity.”

In addition to the national forest plan the forum also discussed:

- Next steps related to the Illegal logging regulation disallowance.
- Issues related to the New Zealand draft standards for timber products.
- The forest industries’ response to steel marketing campaign for housing frames.
- This year’s Timber Design Awards.

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