



MEDIA RELEASE

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ATIF Members Battle Illegally Logged Imports

In a world rife with counterfeit or illicit goods, ATIF members are facing one of the toughest battles to comply with some of the world's strictest legislation aimed at combating the trade in illegally logged timber, and they are doing so unapologetically.

"It is a key part of the ATIF Code of Ethics that members not only refrain from dealing with illegally logged timber, but also avoid trading in conflict timber—material that may still be legally imported but is subject to heavy tariffs, such as timber sourced from Russia," said General Manager Natalie Reynolds.

"Any member found in violation of the Code of Ethics risks their membership in the leading association for timber importers."

Australia has not adequately invested in planting enough plantation resources to meet the domestic demand for timber. On top of this, insufficient investment in local manufacturing limits our ability to produce many of the timber products we currently import. To reduce inflation and meet the housing needs of the nation, the reality is that we must rely on imports. Simply urging consumers to "buy Australian" isn't enough—many members of the Australian Timber Importers Federation (ATIF) are also the largest domestic timber suppliers, and for that resource to be used, it must first exist. "The same regulations apply to domestically processed logs as to imports, and illegal logging is not only an international issue, but also occurs in developed countries, including here," said Ms. Reynolds.

In making this statement, Ms. Reynolds highlights the repeated instances where forestry companies and agencies have been caught illegally logging forests—whether by exceeding harvest boundaries, violating regional forest agreements, or breaching other legal requirements. While such violations may often occur unintentionally, the reality remains.

Merely reopening forests closed by State Governments is not a sufficient solution. These forests do not contain the structural timber needed for house frames, and, moreover, we lack the manufacturing capacity to meet the demand.

To import timber for Australia's homebuilders, importers are required to perform due diligence and obtain documentation verifying the timber's source. Under recent legislation, they must also ensure the authenticity of the documentation provided.

However, this can be nearly impossible when the documents are in a foreign language and refer to legal systems abroad.

Despite these challenges, ATIF's importer members do not complain—they make every effort to comply. "No system designed to prevent organised crime can be effective if enforcement is limited to the point of import. It requires a coordinated, international effort at every stage of the supply chain to truly eradicate it. If addressing organised crime at the import level alone were enough, we would have already eradicated the global drug trade," said Ms. Reynolds.

Country of origin labelling is also not practically possible. Using the example of the type of board used in every kitchen, there are often fibres in those boards from many different sources. So there will not be a single country of origin. "Australian plantation forest fibre is sent to Asia to be converted into paper and then affixed to a composite board made up of many different fibres and imported again. This illustrates the country of origin labelling problem to a tee" Ms Reynolds said.

Ms. Reynolds has called for greater multinational collaboration, particularly with manufacturing countries that produce highly refined composite products, where illegally logged fibre can sometimes be hidden—often without the knowledge of well-intentioned importers. ATIF is urging government intervention in these countries and the establishment of a taskforce to eliminate the practice of "switching out" fibre during the production of composite or refined products.

This call is in addition to ATIF's longstanding requests for government action, particularly from Border Force, to monitor and intercept structural timber that fails to meet Australian standards. Such timber can lead to structural collapses, causing serious injuries, fatalities, and significant costs to repair.

"Non-compliant timber creates unfair competition for domestically produced and compliant imported products, and it poses a serious risk to public safety. Members of the building industry should only purchase from ATIF members—who are committed to ensuring the quality, source, and performance of their products," Ms. Reynolds stated.

"The last thing ATIF members need is timber of questionable origin and quality being dumped onto the Australian market, competing with their legitimate imports or domestically resold products."

It is for this reason at the ATIF AGM held on Monday 11th November, members re-affirmed their commitment to the Code of Ethics and spent the entire afternoon in an education session learning about timber testing techniques and how to identify fraudulent documents in accordance with internationally accepted mechanisms. They also have the [guide to the Australian Standards](#) as a ready reference and are providing it whenever possible to customers.

"ATIF has also submitted recommendations to the government to help improve the regulations, ensuring they are practical and enforceable. We've even offered to pilot

the regulations in real-world scenarios before they are finalised, to ensure their effectiveness," Ms. Reynolds said.

"With similar legislative changes happening in the EU and other countries worldwide, reducing the risk of illegally logged timber entering the Australian market will help eliminate the market for this global crime. By doing so, we can ensure that timber—one of the most renewable building resources, which also stores carbon—remains a sustainable option, delivering superior environmental outcomes compared to alternative materials," she added.

For further information contact:

Jacinta Colley
Mob: 0427 209 807
Email: Jacinta.Colley@vidawood.com

Natalie Reynolds
Mob: 0422 444 745
Email: contact@atif.asn.au