

TIMBER QUEENSLAND MEDIA RELEASE



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Immediate Release

Industry recognises Government step toward resource security priority for the SEQ hardwood industry

The peak body for the Queensland timber industry has acknowledged the Palaszczuk Government's announcement today as an important first step toward recognising the need for resource security and the long-term future of the many workers and timber companies directly involved in the South-East Queensland native hardwood industry.

Timber Queensland's CEO Mick Stephens said the announcement of a number of measures by the State Government was formal recognition of the unsuccessful hardwood plantation program, with more detail and work needed on key aspects of the proposed new plan.

"We have warned of a looming hardwood industry crisis given the lack of certainty over future resource supply. Under the 1999 South-East Queensland Forest Agreement, the state-owned native supply was to cease from 2024, assuming an adequate resource from plantations and private native forests," said Mr Stephens.

"However, with insufficient development of the private native forest resource and the inadequacy of the hardwood plantation resource, there was significant uncertainty," he said.

"South East Queensland is home to 40 hardwood sawmills which generate regional income in excess of \$200 million and provide direct employment for more than 1000 workers, and a further 1000 indirect jobs with related economic activity in many local communities."

"The State Government announcement to extend state supply to 2026 in the Wide Bay Burnett will address some of the immediate concerns for resource security for investment. The two-year extension will allow for additional credit confidence as options are explored for new avenues of hardwood timber supply across the region.

"While falling short of industry's recommendation for a more longer-term extension of state supply, we welcome the announcement to establish a timber advisory panel for making plans with industry for the future. The associated study to identify new options for sustainable long-term supply will be an essential priority."

Key actions previously advocated by Timber Queensland include:

- ensuring the private native forestry regulatory code remains a practical and cost-effective tool for landowners to implement good forest management; and
- the acceleration of private native forestry management incentives and extension activities, to develop a more financially secure and long-term private timber resource.

"These actions, if implemented effectively, could generate additional resource supply certainty, along with any options for further supply on state-owned land," said Mr Stephens.

Timber recycles carbon

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“The private forestry code already provides for ongoing forest cover and prescriptions to protect biodiversity values and soil and water resources, thereby helping to protect the reef while supporting timber industry production and local dependent communities.

“There is also a critical need for extension activities and incentives for landowners to adopt good forest practices across remnant and non-remnant vegetation, which can act to boost timber production and reduce land clearing pressures for broadacre agricultural activities.

“There is a growing body of evidence that the integration of forestry and grazing, which retains a proportion of permanent forest cover with livestock, can generate higher overall returns to the landowner than broadscale clearing for grazing alone.

“We want to work with Government and stakeholders to promote these opportunities through wider forestry extension and education in the agricultural community, including links with related programs such as the Land Restoration Fund.

“Forestry practices can generate multiple environmental and economic co-benefits. These benefits include carbon sequestration, income diversification, agricultural productivity, climate resilience, soil and water conservation and habitat enhancement. In addition, timber products that are sustainably harvested contribute to a greater pool of renewable and carbon friendly products over time,” he said.

“Not only do we want to educate landowners about the opportunities for enhancing forest cover for timber production and related environmental outcomes, we want to ensure appropriate carbon market signals and incentives are put in place to help drive these activities.

“There is strong demand for Queensland timber products and with the right policy settings and measures, the hardwood industry has strong potential to grow and generate additional jobs across South-East Queensland.”

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