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TIMBER QUEENSLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Timber families gather to demonstrate importance of resource security for industry's future

Hundreds of families are gathering in Maryborough this Sunday at a 'Wood is Good' convocation to show their support and concern for 2000 jobs reliant on South East Queensland's native hardwood timber industry.

Peak industry body Timber Queensland's CEO Mick Stephens said busloads of timber growers, processors, harvest and haulage contractors, wholesalers and retailers who are keen to ensure a long-term supply of sustainably managed hardwood, will join the family day to promote their role in supporting the prosperity and well-being of many local communities.

"South East Queensland has 40 hardwood sawmills which generate regional income in excess of \$200 million and provide much needed employment and economic activity in many local communities," said Mick Stephens.

"Resource security is essential for investment and financing requirements in the timber industry, given the long planning timeframes and capital requirements" he said.

"Without a guarantee of long-term timber supply there is a significant risk of industry collapse, mill closures and job losses across the region."

The Queensland Government is presently developing its policy on the 'future of timber production on state-owned land' including its position on the South-East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA).

"Under the SEQFA, the supply of state-owned native sawlogs was to cease from 2024, assuming an adequate resource from plantations and private native forests," he said.

"However, with insufficient development of the private native forest resource and the inadequacy of the plantation resource as a substitute, there is no long-term resource security for the industry beyond 2024."

"Understandably, many timber companies, workers and families are concerned about their future. In the absence of more detailed information regarding the Government's position, we are seeing legitimate fears and anxiety in the community," he said.

Timber Queensland has consulted regularly with the State Government and key Ministers and Departments on the SEQFA, and looks forward to continuing to work constructively on a solution.

Timber Queensland has proposed three key actions to avert an industry crisis:

1. Extend the current state-owned supply arrangements for a minimum of 10 years, on a rolling basis, to allow for a transition to greater use of sustainably managed private forests. This State supply is necessary to guarantee investment confidence and financing security in new mill plant and associated value adding and job creation.
2. Accelerate private native forestry management incentives and extension activities, to develop a more financially secure and long-term private timber resource.
3. Ensure the 'Managing a Native Forest Practice' regulatory code remains a practical and cost-effective tool for landowners to implement good forest management. This code should be broadened to ensure the full suite of relevant commercial forest types is included.



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“By extending the agreement the Queensland Government would give a green light for the industry to further invest and grow. It would allow the banks to have sufficient credit confidence from state supply, as industry develops more secure long-term supply from private native forest and improved knowledge about best-practice forestry with landowners.”

“It is therefore essential that the current private forestry code is maintained with retention down to 150 stems per hectare. This code already provides for ongoing forest cover and prescriptions to protect biodiversity values and soil and water resources, thereby helping to protect the reef”.

With the implementation of these key actions, Timber Queensland estimates that the industry could double in mill door value to over \$410 million by 2034, and generate an additional 1000 direct jobs.

“These economic and social benefits are important in local areas and towns such as the Wide Bay Burnett, Gympie and Maryborough” said Mr Stephens.

The ‘Wood is Good’ event, organised by Private Forestry Service Queensland and Slacks Hardwood, will be held at the Granville Soccer Club, Banana Street, Maryborough, 11.30am - 3.00pm, 18 August 2019.

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ATTACHED: *Securing the Future of South East Queensland’s Native Hardwood Timber Industry Fact Sheet*