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Expert report warns timber industry's vital bushfire response role at risk under Andrews Government's plan

Victorian Inspector General for Emergency Management Tony Pearce has recognised the Victorian timber industry's vital role in bushfire management in his *Inquiry Into the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfire Season* [report](#), and warned that Daniel Andrews' plan to shut down the industry will compromise the state's bushfire response capacity.

"The timber industry provides an important support capacity to fire management in Victorian forests with a skill set, knowledge base and operational experience in forest landscapes," Mr Pearce said in his report.

He also warned, "The cessation of native forest harvesting by 2030 poses challenges for the fuel management program and bushfire response capacity across the state".

Victorian Hardwood Sawmillers Association spokesman Leonard Fenning said the Andrews Government cannot keep ignoring the facts.

"It is not the first time the important role the timber industry plays in fire prevention and protection has been pointed out, and the Government should heed the advice," Mr Fenning said.

"Daniel Andrews has no plan to replace the vital bushfire suppression and mitigation role that forestry contractors currently provide, and this should be of concern to all Victorians, especially those who live in bushfire-prone areas," Mr Fenning concluded.

Quick Facts

- The Victorian native timber industry is highly regulated and sustainably managed, with only 3,000 hectares per year harvested and replanted, in an overall forest estate of nearly 8 million hectares. That's the equivalent of only 4 trees out of every 10,000 are harvested annually every year, and every tree is replaced as the areas are regenerated and regrown by law.
- Victoria's native timber sector generates approximately 2,500 direct jobs and thousands more indirect jobs. It generates around \$770 million in revenue annually, with \$297 million value added in regional communities.
- The sawmillers operate vibrant modern innovative businesses utilising high tech equipment to manufacture products used by Victorians.

The VHSA represents all Victorian hardwood sawmillers including Fenning Timbers, Walkers Sawmill, Powelltown Sawmill, Reid Bros. Sawmill, Australian Sustainable Hardwoods, Ryan and McNulty Sawmillers, AG Brown, Radial Timber, Parkside Timber, Dormit, Kelly's Timber, Warburton Timber, Longwarry Sawmill, Mectec, and Victorian Sustainable Products.