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## **Victorian Native Timber – Beautiful, Natural, Sustainable**

Victoria's forests are disappearing. We can just get our timber from plantations. Elvis served me in 7/11.

We've heard it all before. And it's all equally inaccurate.

The reality is our sustainable and well-managed native timber industry continues to improve its practices and play a vital role within regional communities.

VicForests recently announced a net profit of \$3.6 million for the 2009/10 Financial Year, a turnaround of more than \$8.6 million.



This positive outcome was achieved in part due to a change in accounting practices, in line with Australian Accounting Standards.

However, a \$6 million increase in sales revenue also highlights the significant community demand for our native wood products.

It's natural at first glance to look at the recent forestry talks in Tasmania and ask 'what does this mean for Victoria?'

But the industries and practices in the two different States are exactly that – different.

Victoria has a native timber industry the community can rightly be proud of. Its practices are world class in relation to protecting environmental, social and cultural values.

VicForests harvests around 5500 hectares of native forest each year, less than 0.1% of the 7.8 million hectares of native forest across the State.

Every area harvested by VicForests is regenerated to ensure the forest fully re-establishes following its operations – a process that is crucial to sustaining our forests for the future.

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The seeds used to regrow these areas are sourced from each local region. This ensures the forest which grows back has the same mix of species as the one which existed on the site prior to harvesting.

Contrary to claims from anti-timber activists, these don't become 'plantations'. They return to being healthy native forests which meet a range of environmental, social and economic needs.

The biodiversity present in our forests today highlights the fact that species do return after harvesting as well as after events such as bushfires – which affect the landscape on a far greater scale.

The native timber industry also supports increased investment in Victoria's plantation estate. Rather than replacing the timber we get from our State forests, the timber from our plantations complements this native wood resource.



The majority of our eucalypt plantations are grown to be harvested every 10 – 15 years for woodchips. They cultivate species which are used for different products to our native forest hardwoods.

Our native forests are harvested every 60 – 120 years. This difference is vital as it allows timber to develop strength for use in flooring, furnishings and for structural purposes.

Plantation timber, harvested on a shorter rotation, does not have the time to develop the same strength and appearance properties of our native forest timber.

The suggestion we can shut down native timber harvesting makes for great rhetoric in the lead up to an election.

However, without a viable and realistic alternative source of timber we simply won't meet community demand for a beautiful, natural and completely sustainable product – native timber.

**Nathan Trushell is VicForests' Director, Strategy and Corporate Affairs**