



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 13 November 2020

Committee for Portland calls on government to intervene on China's timber ban

The Committee for Portland is concerned a ban on Victorian timber log imports into China will have a devastating impact on jobs and the local economy.

Committee members are urging the Federal Government to negotiate with China to ensure all Victorian timber log exports can resume as soon as possible.

The call comes after China suspended the import of Victorian timber logs on Wednesday after Chinese authorities claimed a bark beetle had been found in logs exported in containers. A similar ban on timber from Queensland previously been put in place.

Committee for Portland Chair Steve Garner says the industry in Portland employed up to 1,000 people and a protracted investigation would be costly.

"We are asking our state and federal politicians to step in to protect the livelihoods of regional Victorians who are involved in the export of timber logs to China," Mr Garner said.

"The hit to the local economy alone is enormous if this ban continues any longer than it has to. It will run into hundreds of millions of dollars per annum in our region alone."

Port of Portland Chief Executive Officer and Committee for Portland member Greg Tremewen says the industry depends on a fast resolution to the problem.

"All of the logs from the Green Triangle region from southeast South Australia to southwest Victoria are shipped from the Port of Portland. A lot of people are employed in the industry, from forestry and transport workers to stevedores, shipping agents, and the many people who work for the Port of Portland. The issue centres on biosecurity issues with containerised logs and not bulk loading of logs. The government needs to act swiftly to ensure the loading of bulk logs to China can be immediately restored," Mr Tremewen said.

The Port of Portland is Victoria's only naturally deep-water port, strategically located on the southwest coast between Melbourne and Adelaide. It is one of Australia's busiest regional ports.

Mr Tremewen said he hoped the shipping of timber from Portland, which used bulk shipping rather than containerised logs, was not collateral damage in a dispute that did not apply to its timber.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The Committee for Portland is an initiative of leading business, local government and Community leaders within Portland. It was established in 2007 with the view to advocate and facilitate the future development of Portland and surrounding areas to be a vibrant and economically sustainable community.



Members of the Committee for Portland impacted by the ban include Port of Portland, South West Fibre, Australian Bluegum Plantation, A2C International, QUBE and Porthaul.

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