

Newspaper gets it wrong: VicForests strongly rejects 'illegal logging' claim

A STORY in Melbourne's The Age newspaper this week that "Victoria's state-owned logging company doesn't comply with Australian requirements designed to stop illegal logging ..." has been roundly denounced by VicForests.

The report said breaches recorded by the Auditor-General showed paper companies buying logs from VicForests might not be meeting the conditions of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act.

VicForests says the The Age article wrongly reports that breaches of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act have been recorded and reported by the Victorian Auditor-General.

"There is no such report by the Auditor General," a VicForests spokesman said.

The Age data – which is from a Victorian Forest Audit Program (FAP) report – is stated incorrectly: the 43% of roading design non-compliances related to harvesting in 2015-16, not 2017-18 as stated."

The Age story went on to



Victorian forests... certified under the Responsible Wood standard.

say the act puts the onus on timber importers in wealthier countries rather than the regulators in poorer countries to carry out due diligence on their supply chains to prove timber has been sourced responsibly and in compliance with regulations. Where risks of illegality cannot be reduced to a negligible level, logs cannot legally be processed.

VicForests provided Timber&Forestry enews with some solid and factual background notes on the matter:

- In the 2017-18 FAP audit, VicForests achieved

81% compliance on roading design.

- The non-compliances included minor issues with no environmental impacts, to some major issues, which have since been addressed.

- It targets high risk features (e.g. waterway crossings) and audit findings cannot, therefore, be taken as being statistically

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representative of VicForests' overall operations.

- It is wrong to suggest non-compliances mean paper companies may be buying illegal timber from VicForests.

- To comply with the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act, timber processors, including paper companies must have a due diligence system in place to address the potential for processing illegal logged raw timber.

- Due diligence could include timber processors having regard to the timber legality frameworks and guidelines in the Illegal Logging Prohibition Regulations, which VicForests operations comply with.

- Since 2007, VicForests has also been certified under the Responsible Wood standard, endorsed by the international Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) – the largest and most recognised such system in the world. Responsible Wood audits VicForests every nine months and we have never failed an audit.

– JIM BOWDEN



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