

Friday, August 1, 2014

VicForests celebrates 10 year anniversary

VicForests celebrates its ten year anniversary today, August 1st, with a reception at Parliament House in Melbourne.

VicForests' CEO, Robert Green said the organisation had worked hard to deliver social, environmental and economic sustainability since being established in 2004.

"The timber industry continues to play a vital role in communities across regional Victoria and the Victorian Auditor General noted in his report last year that 'VicForests has demonstrated that it balances the need to operate profitably with the need to support industry and socio-economic sustainability'.

"VicForests is now Australia's largest supplier of native forest hardwood sawlog and in our ten years we have generated over \$1 billion in revenue – with virtually all of this revenue poured straight back into the Victorian economy, mostly in regional Victoria.

There have been a number important achievements for VicForests and the forest industry such as certification to the Australian Forestry Standard, substantially reducing the number of forestry workplace injuries and our contribution to firefighting efforts during a period of unprecedented wildfires in Victoria.

Mr Green said, "Despite all the challenges we face, we continue to have a timber industry for one very good reason - we need to source our local hardwood timber.

"With a rapidly growing population, the demand for timber and wood products will only increase and VicForests can supply the demand for hardwoods sustainably and responsibly.

"Sustainability is key to our operations and we have worked hard at making sure our harvest levels match what is growing in the forest over the years, taking account of our external environment.

"That has meant harvesting less to allow the forests to recover from the large scale bushfires that Victoria has suffered over the past century and in particular the last decade.

"VicForests is dedicated to making sure that what we do doesn't harm the environment. Our planning and operations teams make biodiversity protection and maintenance an absolute priority.

"Being an active member of the Leadbeater's Possum Advisory group and playing a lead role in implementation of the recommended actions is testament to this. We want a sustainable industry that works in hand with the environment while producing social and economic outcomes for us all.

Mr Green also said that safety had come a long way since 2004: "Forestry can be a dangerous occupation and improving safety has been an important focus for VicForests over the last ten years.

"Over 90% of harvesting is now done from within the protected cab of a machine, every contractor has a safety management system and our staff have not had a single lost time injury since April 2013."

Mr Green said that VicForests has recently announced its bid for Forest Stewardship Council certification and with the implementation of a suite of tangible action to improve outcomes for the Leadbeater's Possum we are making the biggest changes to harvesting practices since we commenced operations in 2004.

“We will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the environment and our communities. Timber is rightfully making a renaissance as the environmental product of choice and we look forward to continuing to deliver this from local, sustainable sources over the next ten years,” said Mr Green.