

MEDIA RELEASE

Ongoing illegal protester action in Victoria

AFCA GM Stacey Gardiner has continued to work with government departments, VicForests and AFCA members to seek swift action against those that continue to conduct illegal actions as part of their protests in Victoria.

Significant resources, at a growing cost, have continued to be deployed to manage these illegal activities. This has included Government Authorised Officers visiting the site almost daily and Victoria Police regularly attending.

AFCA will continue to work with stakeholders from the state government to ensure that protesters' illegal activities and dangerous behaviour are dealt with quickly and their actions receive the appropriate fines and charges.

AFCA can also report that in response to the recent illegal protest activity in East Gippsland up to the end of 4 April, the following fines and charges have been issued:

- three protesters charged and bailed to appear at the Orbost Magistrates' Court on 29 July (briefs to be compiled), and
- 10 Infringement Notices to be issued to protesters.

It is understood further infringements and charges have also been issued since 4 April.

Below is a message directly from The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas, MP, regarding the ongoing protest actions being undertaken to respond to the illegal activities.

Message from The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas, Victorian Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Agriculture

While I respect the right to protest, our Government will not tolerate the behaviour witnessed over recent days at the Arena coupe in East Gippsland. Any unauthorised entry into a Timber Harvest Safety Zone is not only illegal but is also very dangerous.

No worker or their families should have their livelihood or wellbeing disrupted by illegal activities at their legitimate workplaces.

We will continue to protect forestry contractors in their workplace, as clearly demonstrated by the actions we have taken over recent days to support the entry of machinery into the coupe so that harvesting operations can commence.

We have dedicated more resources to support you to get on with your job and ensure those who are committing offences are appropriately dealt with. It is my expectation that non-authorised individuals entering these zones receive the full application of powers available to Authorised Officers and Victoria Police.



Serious workplace safety concerns

AFCA continues to hold serious workplace safety concerns that may arise from illegal protest activities, with the possibility of serious injury or death.

Recent illegal activities have included serious safety breaches. These are unacceptable, dangerous, often life-threatening and must not be tolerated. No AFCA member or workplace should be subject to these scenarios.

AFCA is advocating for action on these serious safety breaches and will be joining other industry stakeholders at a meeting with the Victorian Minister for Workplace Safety next week to discuss these serious concerns.

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