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PLANTATION BOOM TO BUILD MORE HOUSES

New South Wales will record the biggest expansion of softwood plantations in a decade, growing the timber frames needed to build more houses.

Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) NSW CEO James Jooste said new softwood plantations are critical to resolving the states housing crisis.

“Timber frames are the backbone of our housing industry used in 80 per cent of new homes,” Mr Jooste said.

“The solution to meeting future housing targets is access to domestic building materials and the most important material is timber,” he said.

The Commonwealth has allocated \$73 million over the next four years to help establish new long-rotation softwood and hardwood plantations in Australia.

NSW will plant an additional 3500 hectares of softwood timber under round 1 of the Commonwealth Governments Plantation Establishment Program.

Mr Jooste said that figure is three times larger than the total national plantings in 2021-22.

“We are on the right track to reverse the stagnant growth of one of our most important resources,” he said.

“New South Wales received 70 percent of grants on offer under round 1 of the program showing the demand to address our housing crisis.

“We need to build more homes to deal with our housing crisis, but we can’t build houses with growing more softwood trees.”

Mr Jooste said the Plantation Establishment Program has been key to stimulating new investment in plantations.

“NSW must build 80,000 new homes every year for the next 25 years to meet our housing needs, so this program could not have come at a better time,” he said.

“The Commonwealth can keep improving the program by simplifying up-front to access the program while maintaining a robust assessment criterion.

“The strategic increase in timber plantations is not just about meeting immediate housing needs. It is also a vital step towards environmental sustainability.

“Timber is the ultimate renewable helping to decarbonise our economy while we achieve our housing targets,” Mr Jooste said.

Grant applications for Round 2 of the program runs from 9 February 2024 to 27 June 2024. Successful applicants will receive \$2,000 per hectare to help with the establishment costs of new plantations.

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