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Guy Barnett, Minister for Resources

Government Committed to Supporting Strong Growth in Forestry

The resurgent Tasmanian forest industry is experiencing strong growth, with new figures showing a massive 48.5 per cent rise in the private forest harvest last year.

This dramatic turnaround has occurred under a majority Hodgman Liberal Government that backs the sector, as opposed to the previous Labor-Green government that brought it to its knees.

The Liberal Government remains absolutely committed to securing a sustainable future for the industry because we know how important it is in regional communities, such as Triabunna, where we are visiting today.

That's why we are acting on the advice of Forestry Tasmania (FT) that we need greater resource security to sustain ongoing growth and put the Government Business Enterprise on a proper commercial footing.

We will deliver on our contractual wood supply obligations; what we are considering is how we achieve that and how we end the public subsidies to FT.

Businesses like Elphinstone Engineering here in Triabunna, which makes trailers, rely on a strong forest industry, and felt the impact of the disastrous Labor-Green forest deal.

To allow businesses in this sector to continue to grow and to create more jobs – our number one priority – we need to ensure commercial resource security.

All the figures show it is not only confidence that is growing in forestry, but also exports, production and job-creating investment.

Private Forestry Tasmania says the total private forest harvest – including hardwood plantations and native forests – increased by 950,000 tonnes in 2015-16 to just less than three millions tonnes; numbers not seen in eight years.

Export statistics from TasPorts, meanwhile, showed wood products rose to more than three million tonnes in the year to June – the highest level in five years.

In another positive sign for the industry, there has also been great interest in the Government's \$1.25 million Wood and Fibre Processing Innovation Program from companies confident and keen to invest.

I expect to announce the successful grant recipients in the near future.

Our largest native forest saw miller, Neville Smith Forest Products, is spending \$1.3 million to expand and create new jobs in regional communities.

The Liberal Government is committed to continuing to work with our forest industry to encourage and maintain this ongoing growth.

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