

Union wants immediate action on forest protests

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The timber workers union, CFMEU Manufacturing last night participated in a meeting in Healesville where forestry contractors and their crews described the financial pain, physical danger and mental strain of ongoing forest protests and dangerous workplace invasions.

The meeting held by the union, the peak forestry contractor body the Australian Forest Contractors Association and timber community activists heard from contractors and their crews who have faced unacceptable tactics from forest protesters.

At the meeting contractors and their crews made it clear on a number of occasions that they support peoples' democratic right to protest even when they don't agree with their objectives but that the victimising of contractors and crews, the targeting of their livelihoods and the heightened occupational health and safety risks due to current protest tactics was completely unacceptable.

"We are sick and tired of our people being targeted and victimised by forest protesters and workplace invaders and the government doing nothing about it," National Secretary CFMEU, Manufacturing, Michael O'Connor said.

"Some of the tactics which contractors and crews are being subjected to are a disgrace.

"Everyone has a right to a safe workplace and currently contractors and crews are being let down."

The meeting heard of contractors being on edge whilst going about their work tasks, not knowing if a tree falling would result in death or severe injury to a protester hiding in the forestry coupe.

Other instances of verbal abuse and harassment and the targeting of machinery were raised.

The union is backing calls for swifter action by the police, authorised officers, and WorkSafe when protesters are detected encroaching on forestry coupes and real penalties to deter this sort of behaviour.

"Protests shouldn't be conducted in a way which piles even more pressure on contractors and crews already conducting an activity with plenty of occupational health and safety hazards," Mr O'Connor said.

"Forest contractors and their crews do not want special treatment just the same support from their State Government that all other Victorian citizens would expect to receive.

"They don't want special treatment, they just want equal treatment.

"It's past time the Government and its regulators do their job," Mr O'Connor said.

Source: <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/union-wants-immediate-action-on-forest-protests/>