

# Harvest and Haulage Contractor support

## Overview

All harvest and haulage contractors will continue to be engaged for the period of their contracts.

We are continuing to work with industry, including Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA), to better understand contractor businesses, what form of compensation works best and transition opportunities that will be available in fire and forest management.

Stand-down payments for harvest and haulage contractors who are not working will continue within their contracted period.

For workers, if an employee of a contractor business is made redundant as a result of inactivity, they will be eligible for worker support services and payments.

Support and advice are available now for businesses and workers and we continue to consult with them on their transition support needs.

Please visit [vic.gov.au/forestry](https://vic.gov.au/forestry) for more detail on the support available and for updates as more assistance becomes available.

## Getting the help you need

### Workers

ForestWorks support is being delivered through 1:1 case management that includes:

- access to payments
- training support
- recognition of prior learning and current competencies to formalise skills acquired
- employment support including matching workers to jobs in their local area
- health and wellbeing support
- referrals to other support agencies.

Training support includes getting recognition for your prior learning, developing a personal re-training plan and identifying free training opportunities.

Directly affected native timber workers and families should contact ForestWorks on 1800 177 001.

### Businesses

The Forestry Transition Program is supporting timber businesses to transition out of native timber, explore opportunities and diversify into different ways of working.

All contracting businesses will receive case management to make sure they can access joined-up support and referral services.

Timber Innovation Grants are available for contractors to explore, investigate and implement business transition opportunities.

Harvest and haulage contractors and workers will be offered alternative work in forest and land management to potentially continue to work in the forests and contribute to bushfire risk reduction.

Dedicated teams are available now to provide 1:1 case management and help businesses navigate the changes in their circumstances. Contractors are also encouraged to continue providing input and feedback on transition support needs.

You can call the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) Forestry Transition Hotline on 1800 318 182 or contact the Business Transition Coordinator in your area:

- Gippsland — Andrew van der Kaap, Business Transition Support Officer, 0417 992 636
- Rest of Victoria — Kara Zdrzalka (Hinton), Business Transition Support Officer, 0417 483 803

## Next steps

VicForests and DEECA are working closely to establish a work program across the 2023-24 period. The work program will prioritise timber harvesting and log haulage for the rest of 2023, supported by forest management activities. In 2024 the priority will switch to forest and fire management, regeneration and rehabilitation activities.

The DEECA Forestry Transition Team is working with the Australian Forest Contractors Association to establish an inventory of all harvest and haulage equipment and assess stranded assets. This will help in developing contracting and compensation packages.

## Frequently asked questions

### **What will the scope of forest and fire management works look like for forest contractors?**

Through additional Government investment, contractors will maintain the strategic fire road network, Strategic Fuel Breaks network, visitor and recreation facilities, undertake seed collection, silvicultural works (including regeneration of historic coupes and fire-affected areas), hazardous tree treatment, work on roads, bridges and crossings, and bushfire risk reduction works, including storm debris removal and planned burning preparation.

### **What skills does this work require?**

Forest and fire management works require a mix of skills, many of which are consistent with timber harvesting and haulage including:

- operating in steep terrain
- heavy debris handling
- landing construction where required
- hazardous tree removal
- haulage

### **What machinery is required?**

As we focus on minimal footprints, we use smaller crews, smaller machines and old snig tracks. We typically need machine equipment such as harvesters, excavators with log grabs, trucks and floats. Skid steers are also being used in the storm debris operation.

### **When will harvesting in state forests resume? How much work will there be?**

VicForests is currently a developing program of operations to be conducted prior to 31 December 2023. VicForests will advise contractors once works programs are finalised.

### **I have an extension option of 2 years+ in my current contract, will that be honoured?**

Any contract extensions are optional. It is not envisaged that VicForests contracts will be extended beyond their current expiry date. Suitable contracting options are being considered for future forest fire management activities.

### **Mills have the option to 'opt-out', is this available to harvest and haulage businesses?**

The intention is to provide as much work as possible to contractors through fire and forest management, but this may not be an option for all contractors.

The Forestry Transition Program will provide support for contractors who do not transition to fire and forest management activities. Suitable contracting and compensation packages are being considered and all harvest and haulage contractors continue to be engaged under government contracts until they expire.