

Call for new ‘workplace invasion’ penalties

Country Alliance's candidate for Western Victoria Region, Miles Hodge, is calling for increased trespass penalties after recent protests against the exporting of woodchips out of Geelong.

Mr Hodge today called on the government to increase trespass penalties and assist timber companies targeted by protestors.

"The democratic right to protest is being abused by anti timber industry protestors," he said.

"They have killed the native forest timber industry in the Otways through these tactics and now they are trying to shut Midway Plantations down. It is not a protest - it is a workplace invasion."

Mr Hodge said he doubted the protestors would stop until they have closed down the native forest timber industry.

"They will then turn their full attention to interfering with plantations," he said.

"Although protestors have advocated plantations, they are already starting anti plantation letter writing campaigns. I can see the time when we'll see protestors on private land protesting against plantations."

Mr Hodge said that if elected, he would start a push to assist businesses such as Midway by increasing penalties for trespass and prosecuting protestors who enter premises for the purpose of stopping lawful business operations.

"We are all vulnerable to this type of action if a group in society doesn't approve of the particular business we conduct," he said.

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