



## Forest Industry Contractors Association

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### Media Release

9 November 2011

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#### For Immediate Release

### Forest Industry calls for Government get Tough on Drugs Policy

Over 10 years ago the forest industry began a war on drug-use and has made a lot of progress towards eradicating the use of drugs. However it is difficult for any industry group to battle drugs, without the government taking a hard line on the issue.

Chief Executive of the Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA), John Stulen says, “When the Labour Party was in government there was a distinct lack of willingness by the party to reduce marijuana use in our society. In the current term of government the National Party has also shown a lack of motivation to act quickly to remove synthetic drugs from the market.”

FICA President Jacob Kajavala says, “Decades ago, Government did a great job of demonising drink driving. The same cultural shift is required to make drug affected personnel unacceptable in the work place. This is the role of Government and we will support them.”

Mr Kajavala continues, “The forest industry has no place for people who choose to live under the influence of drugs. We are a professional industry and, as such, drug affected personnel are entirely inconsistent with the future of forestry.”

Even without government backing the forest industry has made huge strides towards a drug-free industry.

Mr Kajavala says, “A decade ago, the influence of drugs in the forestry workplace was often placed into the “too hard” basket. But the industry has now adopted a very hard line to drug affected personnel. “Zero drugs” is the standard.”

Increasingly, forestry workers are choosing to get-and-stay-clean rather than risk losing their enjoyable forestry job.

Forestry workers attitudes towards drugs have changed. Rather than being staunch, not wanting to dob in their ‘mates,’ crews in forestry now screen each other to make sure a new worker will measure up to their standard.

Mr Kajavala continues, “The “Zero drugs” standard is monitored using range of testing including pre-employment, post incident, reasonable cause & random testing. Once detected, drug affected personnel are placed into an employee assistance programme. Should the employee address their drug

issues, everybody wins. Should the employee fail to make the necessary changes, they leave the industry.”

**About Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA)**

FICA’s role is to improve profitability of forest contractors and their clients. This is achieved through professional development programmes including regional seminars, workshops and networking meetings around key forest product regions of the country.

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**Column Opportunity**

FICA CEO, Mr John Stulen writes a monthly column on topics of interest to the forest industry. Please contact FICA if you believe a forestry column could be of interest to your readership.