



FICA – Press Release Tuesday 22 January 2019

Fact or Fiction?

Summing up the recent media claims that a silviculture planter will earn \$400 a day to plant trees would concur with the famous saying one never lets the truth get in the way of a good story. Unfortunately, the inaccuracy of the reporting has the forestry industry sector up in arms as well as a flow of people wanting to get into the industry on false pretences that they can earn themselves a significant wage package of \$2000 per week for five days work. The quote of 60c a tree was, the average figure a forest owner pays a Silviculture contractor and out of that the contractor will be taking out overheads, management costs, logistics, transport, quality control and staff to deliver trees to the planters on site. This leaves approximately 50% to go to paying wages to their crews and if they are lucky to cover the costs of ongoing training and compliance that the industry and government agencies demand of the contractor to remain a good employer. As an experienced silviculture planter there is certainly the ability to earn above the average weekly package but there are factors that can change this very easily like the terrain and weather conditions that they are planting in at the time.

The Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA) have been working with this sector for the last twelve months as Silviculture Contractors were put under the spotlight following the release of a report in 2017 from MBIE which focused on employee exploitation and recognised serious concerns that employees within the sector were particularly vulnerable. The Silviculture Action Group have come along way in their discussions on solutions to improve the sector as it faces challenges with labour, with work conditions and with the seasonality of the task. This year they will be aiming to put in place some initiatives that will assist and support a better environment and a more sustainable sector.

With the government initiative of the Billion Tree plant the industry is looking at this as a positive opportunity to increase awareness of forestry in New Zealand and all that it offers with respect to employment, economic outcomes and carbon credit contributions. FICA encourages anyone wanting to enter the industry to do so through a reputable contracting company that can demonstrate a history of good employment practices or has achieved Safetree Contractor Certification. Our contractors are good employers who are offering genuine opportunities within forestry and now is the time to take advantage of that in a very positive industry.

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Please contact Prue for more information as required.

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