



Following the recent announcement by the Andrews' Government of stopping the annual harvesting and replanting of the 0.04% of the Victorian native hardwood estate, the equivalent of 4 trees in 10,000, this will have significant repercussions for the Victorian timber industry and its supply chain. Many window manufacturers, who heavily relied on hardwood, now face unforeseen challenges. In response to this, we understand that some timber window manufacturers have been exploring alternative ways to sustain their production capacity.

The concerns that have been raised are in relation to timber windows for use in bushfire-prone areas. The provisions contained in "AS 3959:2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas" require the timber used in the manufacture of timber windows, for window and door frame assemblies less than 400 mm from the ground or deck, to have a density of 650 kg/m³ or greater at a 12% moisture content when used in Bushfire Attack Levels (BALs) BAL-12.5 and BAL-19. In Victoria, these timber species have traditionally been supplied as Victorian ash, Silvertop ash, and Messmate as the preferred choices.

With imported and locally fast-grown plantation hardwood alternatives now being offered, it is important to ensure that you have the appropriate documentation to demonstrate compliance with AS 3959. The physical characteristics of fast-grown plantation hardwood, particularly density, are altered due to different plantation growing conditions. Therefore, it is vitally important that you obtain documentation from your supplier for that plantation species that can be provided to building design professionals and Building Surveyors/Certifiers, on request, to ensure the use of compliant timber products. Care should be taken relying on published characteristics of the native-grown species.

Known examples of such timbers include:

- Plantation grown mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) from Victoria, Chile, Uruguay, and New Zealand.
- Plantation grown flooded gum (*E. grandis*) from South America.
- Plantation grown shining gum (*E. nitens*) and southern blue gum (*E. globulus*) from Victoria, Tasmania, and New Zealand.
- Meranti (e.g., *Shorea Spp*)

Information in relation to hardwood timber species and their properties can be found on the WoodSolutions website –

<https://www.woodsolutions.com.au/wood-species/hardwood>

It is important to reinforce that timber species with densities lower than 650 kg/m³ do not meet the AS 3959 requirement for use in BAL-12.5 and BAL-19 window joinery applications within 400 mm of the ground/deck surface and should not be used as substitutes. Compliance with AS 3959 prioritises safety and protects both customers and manufacturers. Safety and compliance are the cornerstones of our industry, and by working together, we can navigate these challenges and emerge stronger. We appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you for your continued dedication to excellence in the timber window manufacturing sector.