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## **\$5 million call for forest research**

COVER STORY P 5

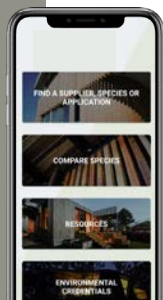


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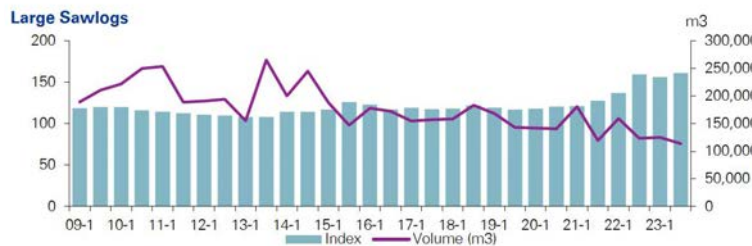
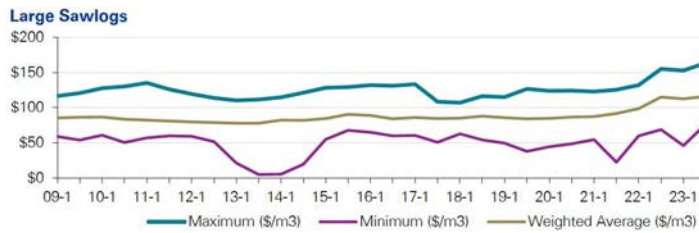


# Pine Log Price Index updated

## Last year's data shows prices up, volumes down.

KPMG has released the latest updated Australian Pine Log Price Index report for July to December 2023. This privately commissioned report includes a public version that can provide insights into the recent past of pine sawlog, preservation logs and pulpllog prices and volumes for both the Australian domestic and export markets.

Overall, indices were up and volumes were down (particularly for large sawlog). Higher mill door rates from the commencement of new supply agreements were the driving factor given for many increases, while haulage costs



Large sawlog prices improved, but volumes declined. Image: KPMG's Australian Pine Log Price Index

had risen in some areas and fallen in others.

Preservation logs, used for poles, rails and posts, had a

particularly sharp increase in average weighted price, leading to an index jump of 22 points. However, reported

sales volumes fell from 51,956m3 to 36,003m3 across the reported period.

Salvage logs returned to their usual lower levels after the spike caused by the Black Summer fires and export sawlogs decreased by 30.5%.

The data is based on prices reported by Forestry Corporation of NSW, OneFortyOne, HVP Plantations and WA's Forest Products Commission and the Index has a base period of January to June 1998.

To download the report, [click here](#).

Source: Friday Offcuts

## Special announcement

THE Directors and the entire team at *Timber and Forestry Enews* are proud to announce we are now the holders of a license to verify we are Australian made and owned.

The logo will be displayed under license in this and future issues of *Enews*.

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happy to have met the conditions required to display the logo. All our publications are produced in Australia using local labour and writers and our sister print magazine, *Timber Trader News*, is also printed here.

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# Budgeting excitement

## There was limited joy in both the Budget and the Opposition's Reply.

IT'S a bit of a socks for Christmas sort of Budget from Treasurer Jim Chalmers this year: a list of announcements that are very serviceable, but not the number of new plans people were really hoping for. The Dutton Opposition's reply was equally uninspiring: a few good ideas, but a lot more in the way of criticism than practical initiatives. Which is a great shame as the Australian voting public is really looking for some brave leadership at the moment rather than politics as usual.

To start with the positive, there was genuine support for Australia's forest industries contained within the budget. Diana Hallam, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), said, "The Budget builds on the Australian Government's investment since 2022 to boost timber and wood fibre supply, enhance manufacturing productivity, develop strategic industry policy planning and fund training and skills.

"The \$3.4 million provided over four years in this Budget for development of a National Timber Fibre Strategy and a review of the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement (\$1.8 million) with the states and territories will help industry plan for the long-term. Additional measures announced in biosecurity and firefighting, including aerial capabilities, are also acknowledged and appreciated."

Hallam acknowledged the inclusion of policies to increase timber in construction and reform carbon credit schemes and other emissions reduction



1/ Treasurer Dr Jim Chalmers delivers his Budget to the Australian parliament.  
2/ Opposition Leader Peter Dutton delivering his Budget Reply speech.

plans in Australia, but said both could have gone further and urged a closer link between government and industry to meet those goals.

The Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the peak body representing independent skills training, higher education, and international education providers, praised initiatives such as \$265.1 million over four years to provide targeted support under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System; \$90.6 million over three years to help skill the building and construction workforce, including a further

20,000 fee-free places to be delivered in partnership with the state and territory governments; and \$55.6 million over four years for the Building Women's Careers program, which will support the development of projects that support women to engage in non-traditional industries, such as construction, clean energy, and technology and digital.

Overall, however, ITECA wished the focus on training and skills in the budget had been stronger.

"This budget could have done more to put students at the heart of the skills training system, where the Australian

Government backs their decision to study with an independent training provider or public TAFE college," said Troy Williams, ITECA chief executive.

"While the 2024 Budget presents opportunities for workforce development, it falls short in fully supporting students with independent skills training providers.

"The government missed an opportunity to amplify its impact on skills training by not fully backing independent providers. Supporting both independent quality RTOs and public TAFE colleges is key to a comprehensive national skilling strategy."

Master Builders Australia was similarly lukewarm. Some measures received praise, such as demands for universities to house students, the extension of housing programs and agreements including the additional \$2.5 billion to increase the cap on bond aggregator financing, tax incentives for build to rent and funding to help builders meet stringent federal safety accreditation standards in order to build through the Housing Australia Future Fund as well as training investments, but Master Builders said there was insufficient attention paid to the need for integrating construction and housing concerns between federal departments and relieving supply pinch points.

CEO Denita Wawn said, "The Federal Budget has finally recognised the importance of a holistic, cross-portfolio approach to solving the housing crisis and

Cont P 14



# Adelaide tree legislation changes

NEW planning regulations have been introduced by the South Australian Government to protect a greater number of trees.

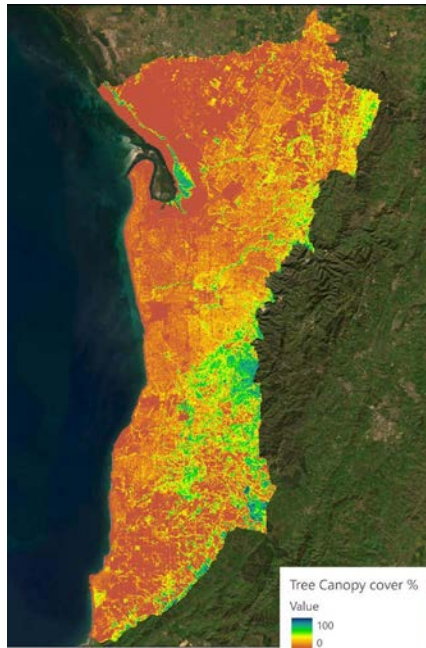
Taking immediate effect, the new regulations will protect trees with a smaller trunk circumference. The trunk size for regulated trees will be reduced from 2m to 1m, while significant trees will go from 3m to 2m.

Exemptions for trees based on distance from homes and pools have also been reduced. Now only trees within 3m from a home or pool will be able to be removed without approval, down from 10m under the old regulations.

The new regulations also place pruning limits on regulated and significant trees allowing only 30% of the tree's canopy to be removed every five years.

The changes also provide flexibility to adapt the exempt species list to local needs and community views through a notice on the PlanSA website.

Fees for destroying or removing protected trees will increase, better reflecting the cost of tree replacement. Offset fees for a regulated tree increase from \$326 to \$1000 and from \$489 to \$1500 for a significant tree. The money collected from the removal of trees will go into either local councils' urban tree funds or into the State Government's



**About 17% of metropolitan Adelaide is covered in tree canopy, according to data released by urban environmental organisation Green Adelaide.**

trees or purchase land to preserve or accommodate the planting of new trees.

The changes come in the wake of several studies highlighting the importance of tree cover for South Australian towns and cities, from combatting the urban heat effect to supporting biodiversity and increasing community wellbeing.

The SA Minister for Planning has also asked the State Planning Commission to prepare a design standard for minimum urban tree planting and maintenance requirements for public areas in greenfield developments, as well as update planning rules to both recognise the importance of tree canopies and fast-track approvals for legitimate removals.

To view all the changes, visit the PlanSA website.

Planning and Development Fund and be used to either plant, establish and maintain

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# AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

# \$5 million call for forest research

AFWI has opened its first call for forestry and wood product research projects.

APPLICATIONS are now open for research projects that will advance research and innovation in Australian forest and wood products.

The first of four \$5 million national open calls for forestry research projects has opened. Interested parties are invited to apply for grants ranging from \$250,000 to \$2.5 million aimed at establishing new high-value wood products, developed in Australia.

The funding is part of the Albanese Government's grant agreement with the University of Tasmania (UTAS) to establish and manage the \$100 million Australian Forest and Wood Innovations (AFWI).

The annual national open calls are open to applications from all Australian-based researchers supporting the forest and wood product industries and are not limited to the AFWI research centres.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt said the open call will allow industry and researchers to undertake projects that will make a positive impact on Australia's forest and wood product industries.

"We've cast the net wide to ensure a broad range of Australians get the chance to share their ideas on how to propel the industry forward," Minister Watt said.

"Establishing AFWI was an election commitment which we are proud to deliver and forms part of our record \$300 million investment in the industry.

"This program will help to deliver a sustainable future for the industry, by helping to unlock the full potential of wood as the ultimate renewable material, while also supporting a future made in Australia."

University of Tasmania Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Anthony Koutoulis said this funding presents an opportunity for researchers to develop



1/ The grants range from \$250,000 to \$2.5 million and are aimed at establishing new high-value wood products.

2/ Research areas covered include making the most of available wood fibre, which is aided by projects such as this one measuring stiffness and density.

novel and impactful ideas that support the sustainable production of wood products.

"AFWI is committed to fostering innovation and empowering researchers to enhance the research capacity and capability in the forest and wood products sector now and into the future," Professor Koutoulis said.

"Encouraging collaboration between researchers and industry is vital for impactful projects.

"With robust industry support and anchoring

research on what really matters, research outcomes become readily applicable, ensuring lasting benefits for Australian communities."

Project applications close on 12 July, 2024. For further details on this funding scheme, including eligibility requirements, click here for the relevant Grant Guidelines and Application form template on the AFWI website.

**On the cover: AFWI's grants are for both forestry and wood product research.**

## Nominations open for the Richard Stanton Memorial Award...

Read our selection criteria.



[responsiblewood.org.au](https://responsiblewood.org.au)





# Fire Summit final program announced

The Forestry Australia 2024 Fire Summit has now been finalised, with a highly experienced panel of expert speakers directing the discussions around the summit's theme of 'Prescribed fire: Exploring science, culture and practice'.

Bushfire consultant Dr Neil Burrows of FireNinti Consulting will deliver the Dr Kevin Tolhurst AM Memorial Lecture on the opening morning.

This will be followed by a session on Cultural fire practices and Aboriginal forest management led by Rachael Cavanagh, Balun Budjabin Consulting, who has spoken widely about her cultural fire practices and encouraged government and fire management sector take-up of the practice, as well

as Darren Burns, an Uncle and elder working with Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation as a joint management coordinator. Burns is from Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) where, after the massive wildfire on the island in 2014, he sought to improve fire management, driving change management by including traditional cultural knowledge and belief.

David Kington of Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation and Vegetation Management Science works alongside Burns. A 50-year veteran of the

sector, Kington worked with QPWS and local councils before his consultancy work. He was invited to Minjerribah by Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, to work closely with the team to help develop and deliver their Fire Management strategies.

The effectiveness of prescribed fire as a bushfire suppressant and to achieve land management goals

will also be investigated, as will the gaps in current understanding of the practices.

On day two, wider implications of fire management will be central including communicating the complex issues around

fire science and what happens when that goes wrong, as well as the ways fire interacts with sensitive environments and the health and safety implications of fire management, particularly smoke risk.

For the full program and to book for the summit, which will be held on 26 and 27 June at the University of Melbourne, [click here](#).



**Community members at a cultural burn.** Image: Rachael Cavanagh, from Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation case study.

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**MAY**

**30: Wood You Like To Know 2 – ONLINE EVENT.** A This online summit hosted by Weathertext takes a deep dive into the latest trends and innovations in timber construction. Industry experts, professionals, and enthusiasts will discuss topics from modular construction and prefabrication to affordable housing solutions and innovative approaches to aged care and retirement living, by way of Milan Design Week, sustainable construction and regulatory updates. Tickets \$79 and \$99. For more and to register, visit <https://www.woodyouliketoknow2.com.au/>

**JUNE**

**11: WoodSolutions Webinar Launch of the Resilient Timber Homes Design Guide - ONLINE EVENT.** This free online event will give an overview of the new guide from some of the experts behind it as well as a Q&A session to answer questions on the new Code+ approach.

For more details and an RSVP link, visit <https://www.woodsolutions.com.au/events/woodsolutions-webinar-special-event-launch-resilient-timber-homes-design-guide>

**14: NTHA Vic/Tas State Awards.** More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [alicia@ntha.com.au](mailto:alicia@ntha.com.au)

**26-27: Fire Summit – Melbourne Connect, The University of Melbourne,**

**Parkville, VIC.** Theme: Prescribed fire: Exploring science, culture and practice. This Summit will review and discuss cultural fire practices, evidence from recent wildfires, fire science, lived experience and current prescribed fire practices. The Summit will also look to the future and consider more effective use of prescribed fire, health impacts of fire and smoke and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and forest scientists can encourage two-way capacity building to support healthy and resilient forests. For more information, visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2024-fire-summit-prescribed-fire-exploring-the-science-practice-and-culture/>

**JULY**

**27: NTHA Qld State Awards.** More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [alicia@ntha.com.au](mailto:alicia@ntha.com.au)

**28-2 AUG: Gottstein Understanding Forest Science Course – Sunshine Coast, QLD.** The course is open to everyone associated with the timber and forestry products sector in some way. For full details, visit <https://gottsteintrust.org/grants-courses/understanding-forest-science-course>

**AUGUST**

**9: NTHA SA State Awards.** More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [alicia@ntha.com.au](mailto:alicia@ntha.com.au)

**12-13: Timber Construct Conference – Rydges, Melbourne.** The Timber Offsite Construction Conference and Exhibition has been rebranded as the Timber Construct Conference to encompass the full spectrum of timber building. The conference provides an invaluable forum to address pressing challenges and opportunities influencing timber's role across the built landscape. Technical sessions will cover research updates, emerging products, building code enhancements, and best practice case studies. For more information, visit <https://timberoffsiteconstruction.com>

**SEPTEMBER**

**13: NTHA NSW State Awards.** More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [alicia@ntha.com.au](mailto:alicia@ntha.com.au)

**23: Latin America Forest Investment Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.**

**24-25: International Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.**

**25-27: Field Trip – Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil.**

**OCTOBER**

**11: NTHA WA State Awards.** More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact [alicia@ntha.com.au](mailto:alicia@ntha.com.au)

**22-23: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.**

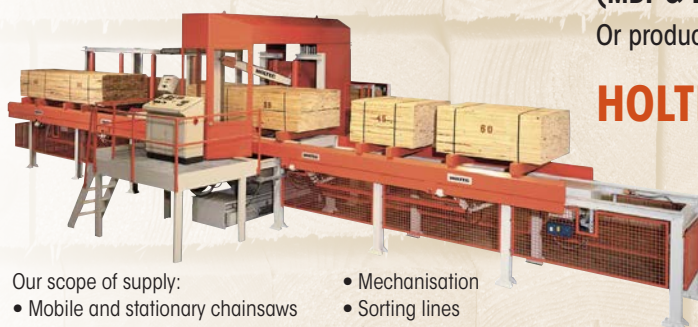
**29-31: Forestry Australia's 2024 Symposium – Mercure Ballarat Convention Centre, Golden Point, VIC.** Theme: Healthy and resilient forests for our future, will facilitate conversation and collaboration that regardless of land tenure and ownership, healthy and resilient forests should be the objective for all forest and land managers. The Symposium is a focused three-day gathering, consisting of two days of plenary and concurrent sessions, and a day of Field Trips. The two-day program will feature a range of Keynote and Invited Speakers, who are experts and thought leaders in their field. The Symposium will also feature several social functions, facilitating networking and collaboration in an informal and relaxed environment. For more information, visit [www.forestryconference.com.au/](http://www.forestryconference.com.au/)

**SAVE THE DATES 2025**

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**OCTOBER 20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.**

**OCTOBER 23-24: Field Trip – Vietnam.**

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# Responsible Wood in Paris

## The team presented 'Australian Perspectives on Sustainability Discourse' at PEFC Forest Forum 2024.

By **MATT DE JONGH**

IN the heart of Paris, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) Forest Forum 2024 convened the 56 PEFC national governing bodies to confront the pressing challenges of climate change in forest management. Against the backdrop of a warming world, forests have emerged as crucial allies, offering both resilience and solutions to combat the climate crisis. The forum spotlighted the role that forests play in adaptation, mitigation, and decarbonisation strategies and discussed the role of forest certification in international efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. Responsible Wood, the Australian and New Zealand national governing body for PEFC, took centre stage, advocating for enhanced recognition of sustainable forestry practices through forest certification and ensuring that Australian and New Zealand circumstances are taken into account during the evolving nature of forest certification.

Simon Dorries, CEO of Responsible Wood, emphasised the pivotal role of responsible forest stewardship in mitigating the impacts of climate change. "Forests are indispensable carbon sinks and ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and livelihoods," Dorries told the audience. "Responsible Wood is dedicated to ensuring that we can demonstrate that our forests are managed sustainably, safeguarding their resilience and ecological integrity, especially in the face



(L-R) Jonathan Tibbits (Marketing and Communications Manager, Responsible Wood), Dr Tony Bartlett (Chair, Responsible Wood), Suzette Weeding (Vice Chair PEFC), Simon Dorries (CEO, Responsible Wood) and Matt de Jongh (Sustainability Manager, Responsible Wood).

of evolving regulations like the EU Deforestation Regulation."

Dr Tony Bartlett, chair of Responsible Wood, stressed the necessity of collaborative efforts to address global forest challenges. "As stewards of the land, it's our responsibility to implement practices that balance environmental conservation with economic viability and social responsibility," Bartlett noted. "Through initiatives like the PEFC Forest Forum, we exchange knowledge and best practices to ensure a sustainable future for our forests amidst regulatory shifts."

Matt de Jongh, sustainability manager at Responsible Wood, highlighted the significance of forest certification schemes in promoting responsible forestry. "Certification offers consumers assurance that wood products originate from well-managed forests," he said. "Supporting certified products empowers consumers to contribute to

forest preservation and climate change mitigation, aligning with evolving regulations and industry standards."

Jonathan Tibbits, marketing and communications manager at Responsible Wood, emphasised the importance of raising awareness about sustainable forestry practices. "Effective communication is vital to foster a culture of responsible consumption," Tibbits said. "Through targeted campaigns and educational initiatives, Responsible Wood aims to empower individuals to make informed choices that support forest conservation, in line with regulatory requirements such as the EU Deforestation Regulation."

Suzette Weeding, Vice Chair of PEFC, commended Responsible Wood's commitment to sustainability and collaboration. "Responsible Wood exemplifies the principles of responsible forest



1/ PEFC Chair Eduardo Rojas Briales.

2/ The conference included two forest visits, to La Forêt de Chantilly and Auvergne Rhône-Alpes.

management endorsed by PEFC," said Weeding. "Their dedication to promoting sustainable practices not only serves as a model for the industry but also aligns with regulatory frameworks, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation, ensuring forests remain resilient ecosystems for future generations."

At the PEFC Forest Forum 2024, stakeholders shared insights and innovations, addressing the pivotal role of responsible forestry in tackling climate change and navigating evolving regulatory landscapes. As the discourse continues, Responsible Wood remains steadfast in its mission to champion sustainability, ensuring forests thrive amidst global challenges.



# Asbestos dumping in Queensland forest

## Queensland parks service asks for public help in finding dumpers.

THE Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is seeking the public's help in tracking down the person or people responsible for the alleged illegal dumping of asbestos roofing material in the Cherbourg Forest Reserve.

QPWS rangers discovered a number of asbestos corrugated roof panels (commonly called "fibro" or "super six") in the forest, some with the wooden fascia trim still attached.

Some of the wood and roof panels are painted green but most of the material is unpainted.



1/ Some of the dumped asbestos panels had been painted green.



2/ The panels represent a danger to park users and are costly to remove.

It is believed the dumping occurred within the past six months.

The material was removed by a specialist contractor on Saturday 18 May.

South Burnett Senior Ranger Mark Casey said anyone who may have information about the alleged illegal dumping can report this confidentially to the Department of Environment,

Science and Innovation's Pollution Hotline on 1300 130 372, or by phoning the local QPWS office on 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

"Dumping rubbish in any national park, state forest, or forest reserve is illegal," Casey said.

"In this instance the situation is more critical, as the material dumped contains

hazardous asbestos. It is also more costly to remove, with asbestos material requiring specialised handling, removal and disposal.

"If anyone recognises the roof panels or knows of people who have recently undertaken renovations or demolitions and that may be able to provide further details, that information would assist us."

Under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* significant penalties can apply for illegal dumping offences, while illegally dumping material in Queensland's protected areas can attract a fine of up to \$3096 for individuals or \$11,610 for corporations.

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# Two new tiny forests

Bupa and Earthwatch are helping councils grow small forests fast.

TINY forests are an inventive way of increasing biodiversity in cities. The concept was invented by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki and has been popularised by environmental charity Earthwatch. There are now hundreds in Europe and the movement is spreading globally.

By packing a lot of native trees and understorey plants into a little area (usually around the size of a tennis court) and enriching the soils with micro bacteria to mitigate the crowded conditions, they create a quick-growing habitat

area in which plants can grow from 30cm to 3m in the first year.

Tiny forests have been planted in the ACT, Wollongong, Newcastle and at South Padbury Primary School in Perth. They help to improve

local air quality and provide canopy cooling, as well as their habitat benefits for birds, insects and small marsupials.

Part of the tiny forest movement is encouraging corporate and local engagement with the process, which is why insurance giant Bupa has joined forces with Earthwatch to fund two new forests in the City of Monash, Victoria, and Ku-ring-gai Council, NSW.

The two new tiny forests have recently had their initial public planting days and will contain a combined total of 60 different species of indigenous plants (2160 plants in total) that will grow up to 10 times faster than traditional forests while promoting better air quality. Funding for this initiative comes as a result of Bupa's Healthy Cities challenge where its people took over 500 million steps to unlock \$1 million in funding for environmental projects across Asia Pacific.

Earthwatch CEO, Fiona Sutton Wilson said both the City of Monash and Ku-ring-gai Council Tiny Forest sites were selected in consultation with their councils because of their low biodiversity with large

unused grassed areas that supported little wildlife.

"The quality of green space matters in our cities. We know that taking a dose of nature is good for our mental and physical health and we are drawn to green spaces and places for a sense of belonging, a connection to others and a connection to nature. Being among the trees, watching the pollinators and butterflies, is something rare in our cities for many of us," said Sutton Wilson.

"A global campaign to increase urban greening, the Tiny Forest initiative brings nature to our doorsteps, and more of this is urgently needed. Earthwatch brings people together to plant the Tiny Forest and to participate in Science Days so the community can learn about and measure the benefits these forests contribute to nature and to people in their own suburb. Cross-sector partnerships like the ones between Bupa, Earthwatch, [councils] and local residents demonstrate that we all want to take effective action on climate change, biodiversity loss, and that we can do this in our own neighbourhood."



1/ Bupa and Earthwatch ran the recent planting day for the City of Monash tiny forest.

2/ Local children are encouraged to engage with tiny forests and to continue working with them as they reap the benefits of habitat and better air quality.

**Do you have SOMETHING to say?**

Share observations, comments, opinions, by email and, subject to normal editorial rules, your feedback will be published. Send media releases, news stories, events, any timber and forestry news related information anytime to Nicky, Donyale and Jess at the following dedicated email address - [editors@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:editors@timberandforestrynews.com)

**timber & FORESTRY eNEWS**



# WA's Quintis fails to sell

Global price pressures have put an end to the sandalwood company.

IN a sad end for Quintis, once the world's largest Indian sandalwood company, the *West Australian* paper reports the company has failed to sell and will now almost certainly be broken up by its receivers after no acceptable buyers have been found.

The move will see almost 70 jobs lost, half of those in Albany, 19 in Perth and 16 at the Kunanurra primary processing plant, representing 60% of the workforce.

Quintis launched in 1999 with plantings of Indian sandalwood trees in the Western Australian and Queensland tropical north. With trees able to be harvested from 15 to 20 years and booming sandalwood prices in the early part of



**Extensive plantings meant that Quintis's plantations contributed to global oversupply.**

the century, the scheme was initially considered very promising and new plantings were run as managed investment schemes (MIS) or backed by institutional investors.

However, increased global supply and a significant drop in sandalwood prices along with attacks from short

sellers saw Quintis enter administration in 2018. It was revived with backing from BlackRock and had a record harvest in 2021, followed by plantings of 165,000 new trees near Kunanurra in 2022.

Unfortunately, Quintis lost a number of major supply contracts and the offers made for its 2023

harvest were so low as to be considered uneconomical. That year, globally, the price for sandalwood had dropped by some 50% since 2000.

In 2023, the company decided to wind up the entirety of its MIS projects to avoid further losses from ongoing costs. At the time it was estimated this would cost Quintis \$40 million, as well as potentially hundreds of millions for the investors, but it was hoped that the value of the assets would be enough to keep the company going and eventually reap the benefits of its plantings. Unfortunately, that has not been the case and the plantations and real estate will now be sold separately.

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# Welcome wildlife, and some feral foes

## Greater gliders are making a return to northern regions, while deer are trespassing.

AFTER a 25-year absence, the greater glider has been spotted in Queensland's Deongwar state forest. Ecologist Jessica Lovegrove-Walsh told ABC News's Joe O'Brien, "It was an incredibly quiet night and ... after about 400 metres I saw some really bright eyes shine in the distance with my torch."

She yelled to her colleague to check the tree and he was delighted to report it was a greater glider.

The area has recently ceased logging. "In the future, when these trees regrow after logging, this is really good area for a greater glider habitat," said Lovegrove-Walsh.

She noted that a lack of large trees with hollows due to historic logging techniques had limited current habitat but that there are suitable nestbox designs that can help the species return in higher numbers.

You can see the ABC report on the Wildlife Queensland spotting by clicking [here](#).

Less welcome in forests are feral deer and the National Feral Deer Action Plan has been reaching out to communities and stakeholders with warnings that the national feral deer population is increasing and that impacts are often poorly understood.

Deer are attractive animals and can be legally hunted



1



2



3



4

in some areas, which has lessened the public perception of their damaging impacts. A recent report by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions estimated the economic cost of feral deer at over \$91 million per year, with impacts to agriculture, road users, train networks. This also includes government-funded control and research costs.

"This is a big number, and the estimate does not include environmental impacts, which are significant," said Dr Annelise Wiebkin, the coordinator of the National Feral Deer Action Plan.

"Deer eat native vegetation, ringbark trees, trample undergrowth with their hooves and spread weed seeds, all impacting the ability for native flora and fauna to survive.

"Our native plants, animals and habitats have evolved for many thousands of years, and

they cannot adapt fast enough to withstand the pressures of expanding deer populations."

Wiebkin says Australia has six species of feral deer; Chital, Fallow, Hog, Red, Rusa and Sambar, and that the numbers are often significantly underestimated as they are mostly shy and good at hiding, only really being seen on cameras at night or through their significant impacts.

The group is calling for culling to be stepped up before the increase in deer numbers reaches a point where control will be too difficult. Read more by clicking [here](#).

Meanwhile, Grant Linley, a PhD candidate in Ecology at Charles Sturt University, has published research that finally appears to answer the question of whether or not wombats save other animals during bushfires.

1/ A greater glider pictured by ecologists in south-east Queensland. Photo: Paul Revie/Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

2/ Cameras captured a variety of animals interacting with the wombat burrows. Top row, L to R: red-necked wallaby, short-beaked echidna, lace monitor. Bottom row, L to R: grey shrike-thrush, superb lyrebird, swamp wallaby. Images: Grant Linley

2/ Trees ringbarked by feral deer in South Gippsland.

3/ Nearby deer populations require additional expenses for tree plantings in plantations and parks, such as these robust tree fences.

Black Summer saw stories of hero wombats ushering other animals into their deep and capacious burrows to escape the intense flames. At the time, wildlife rescuers were sceptical as altruism has never been a defining behavioural characteristic for the species.

Linley's work, reported in *The Conversation*, shows that while wombats aren't heroically herding smaller beasts into their shelters, the quality of their burrow engineering does provide refuge for other species, though notably not larger or more dangerous animals that wombats regard as threats and which they have been known to kill by crushing them against the solid roof of their burrows with their effectively armour-plated behinds.

Click [here](#) to find the story with links to Linley's research.



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From P 3

made some inroads but has fallen short of supporting the businesses required to deliver on those projects...

"We must reduce the time it takes to build and minimise increasing construction cost blow outs in infrastructure, commercial and housing projects.

"There is still a long way to go, and Master Builders will work closely with the Government to ensure the industry has the capacity and support to build for Australia's future and continue to deliver strong economic growth for the country," Wawn said.

The government announced that the existing \$20,000 instant asset write-off would be extended for another 12 months until June 30, 2025. The write-off is available to small businesses with a turnover of less than \$10 million.

In his reply, Opposition Leader Peter Dutton announced that a Coalition government would increase the threshold for eligible assets to \$30,000 and make the instant asset write-off an ongoing measure for small businesses. This has been a popular policy that has made a practical difference for businesses as well as easing their accounting, so an expansion would be welcome, though many industry figures including Wawn have said that neither figure is sufficient for funding the expansion in plant required for small businesses to keep up with modern machinery developments.

A key difference in the Opposition Leader's Budget Reply speech was a promise to reduce the permanent migration program by 25% while ensuring "there are enough skilled and temporary skilled visas for those with building and construction



**Treasurer Jim Chalmers with Finance Minister Katy Gallagher spruiking the Budget.** Image: Jim Chalmers Twitter

skills to support our local tradies to build the homes we need."

Wawn approved the carve out for tradies, saying: "The industry needs half a million new workers over the next three to five years which we cannot fill domestically alone – skilled migration represents a vital piece of the puzzle.

"Both major parties have this week committed to ensuring Australia is an attractive destination for skilled migrant tradies."

She also called on more recognition of immigrants' training or support for them to retrain and welcomed pension incentives to encourage older workers to remain in or return to the workforce, as the median worker age across timber and construction sectors is well above the national average.

The Government's Future Made in Australia plan received general support, provided such schemes worked within established sectors and standards and were cost-effective. Supply issues post-pandemic may have forever changed the way we look at globalised chains.

The Budget Reply's main response to the housing crisis was a re-announcement of allowing first home buyers to access up to \$50,000 of their Super, with separated

women now allowed the same. Most Australians in the bracket targeted do not have that amount in their Super accounts to access.

In a statement released by the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, chief executive Mary Delahunty criticised the proposal as one which would worsen inequity without addressing the issue of supply. "Building more homes is the solution to Australia's housing shortage, and it's unfair to ask young people to mortgage their retirements in an attempt to get on the property ladder, amid a housing-affordability crisis," she said.

Dutton also announced that a future Liberal government would temporarily restrict foreign investors and temporary residents from being able to purchase existing homes in Australia for two years, limiting them to new investments. However, the number of foreign buyers of existing homes is already very low, with almost all such investment in new builds,

**“INDUSTRY NEEDS HALF A MILLION NEW WORKERS OVER NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS**

providing a popular stream of financing for investors.

When it came to Industrial Relations, however, the Opposition Leader's plan was much better received, particularly by the construction sector.

Wawn said, "The Budget missed an opportunity to provide adequate resources for the Fair Work Ombudsman to clean up the industry and stamp out unlawful union behaviour on construction sites."

In contrast, she said, "Builders applaud the Opposition for calling out the damaging impacts of recent industrial relations reforms and commitment to remove this complex legislation and provide more certainty for business.

"The Government's recent industrial relations legislation ultimately makes home building more expensive and blows out supporting infrastructure projects. Recent modelling found, under a best-case scenario, new industrial relations laws will see at least 15,000 fewer homes and almost 8000 fewer jobs and cost the economy over \$113 billion over the next five years...

"The viability of the building and construction industry remains key to bringing down inflation and boosting economic growth. We must reduce the time it takes to build and minimise increasing construction cost blowouts in infrastructure, commercial and housing projects. These costs are ultimately passed on to consumers or taxpayers.

"As we gear up for the Federal Election, both major parties are now on notice to produce a plan to ensure that all policy levers are being pulled in the same direction to strengthen the industry and boost housing supply."



# HIA Awards star timber

The national awards celebrate the best of the year's builds and builders.

LAST weekend the annual HIA Awards celebrated the best of building in Australia and it's no surprise that timber played a starring role in many of the winning categories.

Ballarat Construction Management (BCM) Homes won Home of the Year, People's Choice Home of the Year and Custom Built Home for its Separation Creek build on Victoria's Great Ocean Road.

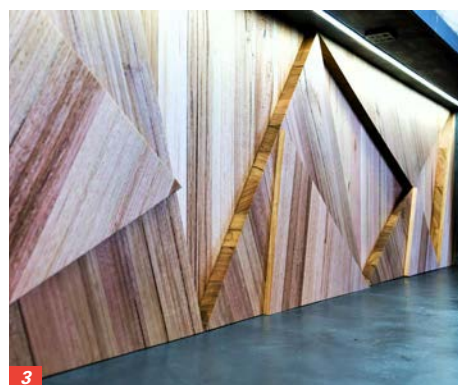
Reflecting the tough seaside and fire-prone location, concrete is a major material – roughly a hundred truckloads were used and the resulting build is rated to BAL 40 – but it is the solid timber incorporated into the façade and used internally that elevates the building, nestling it into the wild surrounds and softening the hard interior surfaces.

In the kitchen, one side of the workbench is practical traditional joinery while the other features a geometric puzzle of timber triangles that draws and holds the eye.

"We are so proud and humbled to bring this national award back to Victoria and to Ballarat," said BCM director David Moyle, who also owns the house.

"It goes to show what we can do from a regional centre."

The 2024 HIA Australian Apartment of the Year was won by Bronx with its Oasis Cronulla build's penthouse. The featured eye-catching parquetry floor throughout the major living spaces ties into views over the water and nearby national parks, as



**1/ BCM Homes won home of the Year for this Separation Creek design where solid timbers alleviate the austere wind and fire-proof concrete exterior.**

**2/ Meticulous timber joinery shows the high level of finish from BCM Homes.**

**3/ The kitchen workbench features eye-catching, interlocking geometric timber shapes.**

**4/ The chevron parquets in the Bronx apartment link the penthouse to its natural surrounds.**

**5/ Oliver Burnell won Apprentice of the Year.**

well as the timber joinery and contrasts with the natural

stone used for the kitchen islands and hard flooring. Passive design principles were combined with sustainable materials choices for this very luxe but also successfully low-environmental impact result.

Meanwhile, the HIA Apprentice of the Year is Oliver Burnell of Ronald Young & Co Builders, a young chippie who is already making a

difference in his career. As HIA's notes said: "Oliver has consistently exhibited an unwavering work ethic, positioning himself as a role model for his peers. He consistently goes above and beyond to assist other trades and ensure

the utmost satisfaction for clients.

"Oliver's communication skills, both written and verbal, are exemplary. He keeps everyone well-informed, provides accurate updates, and excels in collaboration with team members, stakeholders, and clients. His professionalism, meticulous attention to detail, and pride in his work, tools, and appearance reflect his deep commitment to representing Ronald Young + Co Builders in the best possible way.

"Oliver's performance as an apprentice has been outstanding, propelling him ahead in his apprenticeship progress. This award not only celebrates Oliver's remarkable journey but also highlights the hard work and commitment of all apprentices in the construction industry."



# Beef driving deforestation

Greenpeace has condemned leading beef producers for failing to address the destruction of forests in their supply chains.

IT'S nice to see a major environmental group getting the data right. Last week, a new Greenpeace report slammed Australia's biggest beef buyers, including McDonald's, Coles and Woolworths, for failing to adequately address deforestation in their supply chains.

The new report, Greenpeace Australia Pacific's 2024 Deforestation Scorecard (click here for a link) assesses how 10 of Australia's top retailers and beef processors stack up in terms of becoming deforestation-free by 2025.

The environmental group has said that "Australia has one of the worst rates of deforestation in the world, driven largely by the bulldozing of forests for beef cattle grazing. This damning report found that all 10 of the companies assessed for the scorecard failed, with none scoring above 50% on Greenpeace's metrics."

Industry body Cattle Australia has been lobbying government to accept an industry-led definition of deforestation. At the recent Beef Week in Rockhampton, multiple politicians including the PM and Opposition Leader



were wooed with steaks and more to back the sector, which has expressed concerns about new EU regulations to crack down on products linked to forest destruction. Greenpeace has likened such a definition to "the fox guarding the henhouse" and points to how little work has actually been done to improve beef's environmental impacts in Australia at the big end of town. (On the other side of the scale, there are small-scale producers who have been leading the way with integrating farm forestry and other reforestation into their land management.)

Gemma Plesman, senior campaigner at Greenpeace Australia Pacific, said, "Our Deforestation Scorecard shows that all 10 companies we assessed scored a big fat 'F'. Given deforestation has been a persistent issue

in Australian beef supply chains for decades, these results seriously call into question the environmental performance of these companies.

"This is simply unacceptable. Right now the beef industry is killing native wildlife and the big beef purchasers are corporations like McDonald's, whose customers would be shocked to learn their Big Mac is fuelling the deforestation crisis and pushing threatened species like the koala to the

brink of extinction. "We're sick of the glossy marketing from companies that have no idea where their beef comes from. The beef industry must address the destruction of forests and bushland happening on their watch – there must be no hiding behind lacklustre targets and watered-down definitions.

"We're calling on these companies to publicly aim for, and achieve, conversion and deforestation-free supply chains by 2025, using global best practice definitions. This includes protecting important regenerated forest and threatened species habitat. If big corporations take action to change their practices, we can stop the destruction of our native wildlife and the places they call home."



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“THE BEEF INDUSTRY MUST ADDRESS THE DESTRUCTION OF FORESTS ON THEIR WATCH”



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