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Softwood timber industry welcomes multi-million dollar boost

COVER STORY P 5



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FSC Australia hold 17th AGM

FSC ANZ (trading as Responsible Forest Management Australia Limited) hosted its 17th Annual General Meeting on 30 May at the National Arboretum in Canberra, marking a significant milestone celebrating 30 years of FSC globally under the theme 'FSC for Life'.

The event, held in Canberra and attended by members in person and online, highlighted the organisation's achievements and set its future direction.

The meeting provided an opportunity to delve into FSC's International and national priorities, explore the alignment with the European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), and highlight the achievements of the FSC (ANZ)

“ A VERY POSITIVE OUTLOOK ”



The group gathered at the National Arboretum in Canberra to mark the 17th AGM.

team across the organisation's policy, promotional licencing, and brand awareness work. Discussions also focused on the challenges facing the organisation and its future direction, while the Board could present a remarkable financial turnaround for the organisation and a very positive outlook for the coming years.

FSC ANZ celebrated the contributions of outgoing Directors Mike Thompson and Alfred 'Parry' Aguis, for their support and guidance throughout such a successful year and welcomed new and returning Directors, namely,

Jon Dee and Stuart Blanch in the Environment Chamber, Suzanne Feary, Scott McLean and Rachael Cavanagh in the Social chamber and Michelle McAndrew and James Felton-Taylor in the Economic chamber.

The current Board of Directors comprises of three chambers; the Social Chamber: Suzanne Feary, Scott McLean, Rachael Cavanagh Economic Chamber: James Felton-Taylor, Carlie Porteous, Michelle McAndrew and the Environment Chamber: Nicky Moffat, Stuart Blanch and Jon Dee.

The event featured special guest presenters Vanja Kitanovic from HVP Plantations, who explored the organisation's 20 years of FSC certification and the collaborative work they have done with FSC, along with Michael Brand, Forestry Extension Officer at the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade Northern Territory

Government of Australia who showed an incredible video showcasing the Birany Birany community forestry project led by the NT Government and University of Sunshine Coast with the support of FSC ANZ and other organisations.

A spokesperson for FSC ANZ said they 'appreciate the invaluable contributions of all presenters and attendees, reinforcing our shared commitment to sustainable forest management. We look forward to another successful year together'.

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New acquisition for Big River Group

BIG River Industries Ltd (Big River, ASX: BRI), has announced the acquisition of Specialised Laminators (SLQ), a renowned panel products company based in Brisbane, Queensland. This strategic move enhances Big River's panel product offerings and strengthens its presence in the industry.

SLQ, established in 1977, has earned an outstanding reputation for producing high-quality decorative and functional panel products.

Known for their innovative solutions and commitment to excellence, SLQ's products are highly regarded in the construction and architectural sectors. The acquisition will allow customers to access an expanded range of premium panel solutions through Big River's Timberwood Panels division nationally, combining the strengths of both companies to deliver superior products and services.

"Bringing SLQ into the Big River family is a significant milestone in our mission to offer top-quality panel products to our customers," said John Lorente, CEO of Big River Group.

"This acquisition allows us to expand our specialised Panels Division, providing customers with a broader selection of innovative and



high-performance panel solutions. The synergies between SLQ and Big River create exciting opportunities for growth and product development."

John Closter, one of SLQ's founders, and Wayne Austin, General Manager, will continue to lead the business

1/ *There's a fresh look to Big River Group following the acquisition of SLQ.*

2/ *Big River Group CEO John Lorente has welcomed the acquisition as a 'milestone'.*

under the Big River umbrella, ensuring continuity and leveraging their expertise to drive future success.

"Joining Big River Group is an exciting new chapter for SLQ. We are confident that our combined expertise and resources promise enhanced product availability, improved

“THE SYNERGIES CREATE EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES”

supply chain efficiencies, and innovative panel solutions tailored to meet diverse construction needs," said Closter.

"We are thrilled to become part of Big River, a company that shares our commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. Our customers can

look forward to an expanded product range and enhanced service capabilities," Austin adds.

Big River Group manufactures a range of construction products including timber and steel formwork, timber flooring, plywood and decorative panels, as well as distributing a broad range of other building products from well-known local and international suppliers, focussing primarily on commercial and residential, civil and infrastructure construction trade market segments. Big River owns and manages 26 sites across Australia and New Zealand expanding Panels, Building Trade Centres and Commercial divisions. Big River provides customers with the security of a full support network, and technical expertise at every stage of the product lifecycle. This is the guarantee of quality and service that Big River has based its 120 years of success on.

For more information, visit www.bigrivergroup.com.au



SLQ say they are thrilled to join the Big River Group.

VicForests responds to recent ABC broadcast

VICFORESTS says it has once again been forced to defend itself as an organisation and its expert staff, releasing a statement in response to what it says was a false and misleading claim aired on ABC Mornings.

According to VicForests, on Thursday 23 May, the ABC aired a segment on Mornings with Debbie Rybicki that contained 'false and misleading claims of damage to the ecosystem, not conducting surveys, and failing to adequately regenerate coupes'.

"VicForests was not approached to provide a statement. However, we have provided the ABC with multiple statements contradicting such claims over the preceding years," they shared in a statement.

"We also have multiple pages and statements on

our website detailing how VicForests met its obligations in protecting threatened species and their habitat and regenerating what was harvested. These are a matter of public record and have been provided to various ABC outlets.

"VicForests is a government agency, overseen by an independent Board and otherwise subject to the ordinary governance obligations and control of any government body. We have repeatedly demonstrated our commitment to meeting, and often exceeding, the explicit rules and regulations for environmental management set by the Government. This includes demonstrating that VicForests continued to meet its obligations and the required



Despite a number of statements confirming their position, VicForests has been forced to defend itself against the National Broadcaster.

Image: Shutterstock

standards for successful regeneration".

The statement comes just weeks after its previous statement from the organisation in which they hoped to quash public commentary about the closure of VicForests and the numerous false and misleading claims.

"VicForests knows there are individuals and organisations who are opposed to native timber harvesting who will be

celebrating VicForests' closure," the April statement read.

"But this doesn't mean it's open season – and it will never be acceptable to treat the men and women of VicForests with blatant disrespect," they said.

More details on this statement and others can be read online from VicForests here: <https://www.vicforests.com.au/publications-media/latest-news>

"False claims do harm," they recently shared.

"This includes the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of people who have dedicated themselves to the management of forests for future generations. Broadcasting false information to the public supports empty rhetoric; the national broadcaster should encourage constructive dialogue and avoid the peddling of false claims".

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Australian Forest Products Association

AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

\$13 million boost to protect timber supplies

THE NSW Government has announced a \$13 million forestry funding package to provide much-needed protection of critical timber supplies in the Murray region in the lead-up to the next bushfire season.

This package will build a better resilience into this important regional industry. The measures will deliver fire prevention, detection and response works that have been developed following consultation with forestry industry groups and government agencies.

The NSW Government has a plan for developing regional NSW and a plan for delivering more housing. Protecting softwood forests and production is critical to delivering on both of those plans.

Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty made the funding announcement in the Murrumbidgee State Forest, 60km from Wagga Wagga, with Independent Member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr and representatives of the NSW timber industry.

Feedback from the industry highlighted three key focus areas to ensure the forestry

sector is better prepared for the next bushfire season and the package delivers on these as follows:

Prevent bushfires from occurring or spreading by constructing new and maintaining established strategic fire trails and asset protection zones.

Build rapid response capability and suppress fires and prevent their spread such as towers, remote sensing and camera technology to detect fires early.

Improve tactical and operational response with additional fire tankers, equipment and infrastructure.

The recent funding announcement puts the region in a much better position to focus on these preparedness measures.

During the 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires, it is estimated up to 65,000 hectares of softwood plantation were affected across NSW representing



Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty made the recent announcement. Image: Facebook

around a quarter of the softwood resource state-wide.

Softwood plantation forestry in southern NSW injects some \$3 billion in economic value annually and provides more than 11,000 jobs.

"The clearest message we have received from forestry industry representatives in the region is that all effort needs to be put into protecting the forests from bushfires. This package demonstrates how

“THE WELL-TARGETED FUNDING IS WELCOMED

the Government is responding – get the job done and protect our forests and communities," Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty said.

"The NSW Government has made it clear we are focused on expanding plantation assets, and we are boosting the protection of the existing and future plantation resources.

"I want to thank the Forest Industries Advisory Council, the Softwoods Working Group, the Australian Forest Products Association, Forestry Corporation and other NSW agencies and industry representatives for their input and efforts in this important area."

"Sadly, the horrific memories of the Black Summer fires are still fresh in local memories and now is the time to do all we can to reduce the risk of a repeat," Member for Wagga Wagga Dr Joe McGirr said.

"Our softwoods industries are crucial to the future of the entire region, and especially to the Snowy Valleys, so I applaud government and industry measures to prevent

Cont P 6

Nominations open for the Richard Stanton Memorial Award...

Read our selection criteria.



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From P 5

bushfires in the first place, and to improve response capabilities when fires do start.

"Thousands of jobs and many millions of dollars in economic activity depend on secure, stable softwoods supplies and I congratulate industry groups and the government for this important investment in protecting the industry's future."

Softwoods Working Group (SWG) Chairperson, Peter Crowe commended the Minister on the well-considered funding.

"The Softwoods Working Group commends the minister for well-targeted funding for essential projects which will significantly enhance fire protection for the valuable plantation in the NSW Murray.

The SWG and its members

look forward to aiding the Minister and the department on the most valuable infrastructure investments for communities, industry and the region broadly."

Ms Porteous, Executive Officer of the SWG commented on the need for future-proofing the region.

"The 2019/2020 fires are still too fresh for many community members. This funding will allow the industry, communities and critical RFS volunteers to be better prepared and react to future fire events".

On the cover: members of the SWG have welcomed the announcement. Pictured: Campbell Sanderson (FCNSW), Darren McPherson (Hyne), Mick Ivill (AWU), James Jooste (AFPA), Dr Joe McGirr MP, Dean Hawkins (Visy), The Hon. Tara Moriarty, Brett Webb (AKD), Kristina Kaminski (Hyne), Luke Hayden (CFMEU), Carlie Porteous (SWG), Rab Green (AKD), Jacob Lazarus (Southern Cross Forests). Image: LinkedIn

Save the date for AFCA gala event

THE Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) will hold its annual gala dinner and business summit in November this year. Encouraging members to save the date, the association says they will celebrate members and industry partners in Launceston from 13-15 November. The event will kick off with a welcome reception before being followed by a business summit and exhibition.

"The highlight of the event, our Gala & Awards Dinner, will take place the evening of the 14th November where we will honour the dedication of our members, showcasing family legacies, innovators, and emerging leaders," organisers shared in a statement.

"Inductees into the Hall of

Fame will be recognised for their long-term contributions to the forestry industry, especially those with at least 25 years of service in the harvest and haulage sector. The special "Industry Icon" category will acknowledge those with extraordinary contributions.

"Additionally, we will celebrate the achievements of women in the industry, their advocacy, and efforts to attract more women to forestry.

"We will also recognise those committed to safety and operational excellence, as well as emerging leaders in business and innovation," they said.

The event will be held at the Tramsheds Function Centre with tickets on sale soon via the AFCA website.

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Image: Shutterstock

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

19: WFTN Quarterly breakfast – Hunter & Scout Cafe, Graceville, Brisbane. Contact Tahlia.tahlia@ntha.com.au to RSVP by 17 June.

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

3: FSC Aligned for EUDR program – ONLINE EVENT, 6-7.30pm. To register, visit <https://www.linkedin.com/events/launchevent-fscalignedforeudr7193967598538022912/>

27: NTHA Qld State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact 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

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

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

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/

SAVE THE DATES 2025

JUNE 22-26: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Brisbane. WCTE is the world's leading scientific forum for the presentation of the latest technical and architectural solutions and innovations in timber construction.

OCTOBER 20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event

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Victorian timber manufacturer goes interstate for growth

MELBOURNE-BASED timber door manufacturer Specialty Doors has launched an ambitious expansion into the Queensland construction industry.

Having recently opened a dispatch centre in the Gold Coast, Specialty Doors has plans to further cement its presence in the market with a manufacturing plant by 2025.

Director Marcus Bastiaan believes Queensland is a growing market, with an almost inexhaustible pipeline

of construction - driven by cashed-up interstate buyers looking for better lifestyles.

"Southerners are heading north with plenty of money and architectural tastes.

For any manufacturer it's a market that cannot be ignored," he said.

Specialty Doors manufactures up to 1,000 doors weekly across their

flush panel and joinery teams. The doors are sold through building material retailers for residential and commercial projects.

Marcus Bastiaan sees diversification of market geography as essential for Victorian timber-based manufacturers, in part due to the impact of decisions made by the Government.

"The local timber industry was shut down by the state Labor government, and within a few months we went from using local timber to being forced to use imported timber," Marcus expanded.

"We aren't the only manufacturers who have



Marcus Bastiaan and the Specialty Doors apprentices.

Cont P 9



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From P 8

backed interstate expansion before local.”

Additionally, Marcus credits part of Specialty Doors' ability to expand on their apprenticeship program. The company employs first, second and third-year apprentices across their production teams.

“We offer apprenticeships to people who are already working with us and have demonstrated commitment. We reward that commitment with a rate well above the award and a good job after,” he said.

Specialty Doors has built a reputation for producing doors requiring



Marcus Bastiaan, Director of Specialty Doors.

specific certifications and custom manufacturing processes. The company has certifications to manufacture fire-rated, acoustic and radiation doors.

The business has sustained success and is often specified by architects to supply doors for commercial projects like hospitals and high-rise residential developments.

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'One-stop shop' to promote women in building

MASTER Builders Association (MBA) of New South Wales, in partnership with the NSW Government, has officially launched a digital one-stop shop to attract, support and promote women in the building and construction industry.

The new website, Women Building NSW, marks a significant milestone in the industry's efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity within the industry, with a range of resources and support for women and young girls, parents, employers and consumers.

Executive Director Brian Seidler said they hope providing vital resources and support will help more women pursue rewarding careers in this dynamic sector.

"As one of the largest sectors, with around 150,000 businesses employing around 400,000 people, the building and construction industry plays a crucial role in the growth and prosperity across every city, town and region in NSW.

"But sadly, only 15 per cent of that workforce is made up of women, and as little as 3 per cent of tradies are women," he continued.



The newly created hub offers a number of features designed to support and encourage women into the building industry. Image: Shutterstock

"This presents a massive opportunity for the future success of the industry with an untapped pool of the population who have an array of skills and talents to bring to the table."

The launch of the Women Building NSW website comes in the midst of chronic workforce shortages facing our sector, and at the same time, NSW struggles with a housing crisis.

"Women are the key to ensuring we can unlock the door to many more homes and deliver the vital infrastructure and commercial hubs communities are crying out for," Mr Seidler said.

“AS LITTLE AS 3% OF TRADIES ARE WOMEN

NSW President Bob Black said the new Women Building hub offers a wealth of resources and support to help bridge this gap.

"It can be difficult to navigate all the various pathways available for women in the industry, which the hub aims to bring together."

"We know the premise of working in a male-dominated industry can be daunting for parents of young girls who might be interested in the trades, so we want to make sure there are appropriate support networks available and clear information on the opportunities," Mr Seidler added.

"Unfortunately, vocational education still faces biases to its university cousin, especially in school, so this

hub hopes to dispel some of the myths and showcase the rewarding opportunities for women."

Some of the features of the hub include:

- Detailed Job Guidebook covering over 100+ careers and job opportunities for women in trades.
- Business start-up booklet for women interested in establishing a construction business.
- Information for parents, teachers, and career advisors.
- Information on upcoming pre-apprenticeship courses and apprenticeship employment opportunities for girls and women.
- Resources for employers to recruit, retain, and support women in construction.
- Register of female-led businesses in the building and construction industry.
- Women ambassadors and mentors offering support and guidance.
- Industry stories, networking events, and resources on gender awareness and discrimination.

The project was made possible with funding from the Trade Pathways Program - Training Services NSW.

More information can be found by visiting the site: <http://www.womenbuildingnsw.com.au>



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Building approvals remain flat

BUILDING approvals for new homes remained relatively flat in April, falling by 0.3 per cent from already-depressed levels," HIA Senior Economist Tom Devitt stated.

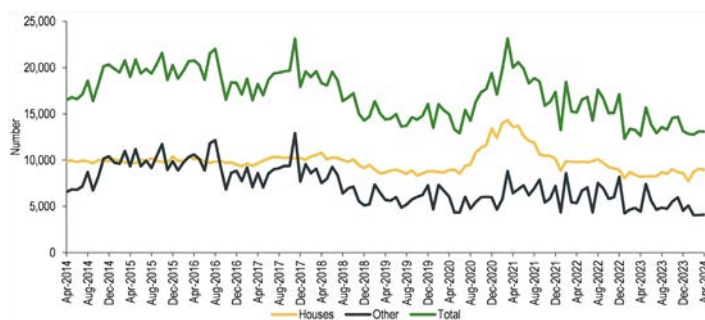
The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released its monthly building approvals data for April 2024 for detached houses and multi-units covering all states and territories.

"A 1.1 per cent increase in multi-unit approvals was offset by a 1.0 per cent decline in detached housing approvals," added Mr Devitt.

"These depressed approvals volumes don't foreshadow a rapid recovery from the weakest volume of new home commencements in the 2023/24 financial year, in over a decade.

"At the same time, Australia is seeing record population

MONTHLY BUILDING APPROVALS - AUSTRALIA



Source: ABS Building Approvals

growth and acute shortages of housing that are expected to persist for at least the next few years.

"With recent inflation data casting further doubt on the prospect of any reduction in interest rates this year, government policymakers need to pull the levers within their reach.

"The recent re-acceleration of residential lot prices in some

markets suggests the industry could re-encounter land constraints, even as materials and labour constraints ease.

"State and federal policymakers need to incentivise local authorities to accelerate the release of shovel-ready land and permit higher density development in existing suburbs near jobs and transport.

"Addressing tax, planning,

land and regulatory constraints on the housing industry is the only hope of reaching state and national housing targets in coming years and addressing the country's housing crisis," concluded Mr Devitt.

In seasonally adjusted terms, dwelling approvals in the three months to April increased in Western Australia, up by 39.4 per cent compared to the previous year, and in Victoria (+2.8 per cent). New South Wales was flat (+0.0 per cent) over the period, while other jurisdictions saw declines in approvals, led by Queensland (-16.6 per cent), followed by Tasmania (-12.2 per cent) and South Australia (-11.3 per cent). In original terms, dwelling approvals declined in the Northern Territory (-38.2 per cent) and increased in the Australian Capital Territory (+4.1 per cent).

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Forestry Corporation to safeguard iconic forests

FORESTRY Corporation has embarked on a seed collection program to safeguard some of the most iconic forests in New South Wales.

The giant eucalypt forests of the NSW high country dominated by Alpine Ash were severely impacted by the Black Summer bushfires.

The species, despite its enormous dimensions, is highly susceptible to fire and large tracts of mature trees died in more than half of the species' distributions across the forest estate.

A similar outcome was also recorded for the species White Ash, which occurs in tableland and coastal forests of southern NSW.

Alpine Ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*), growing up to 70-metres in height, and White Ash (*Eucalyptus fraxinoides*), growing up to 40-metres, are 'obligate seeders' meaning the trees die after exposure to fire, even where the fires are not hot or intense.

The species regenerate solely on seeds stored in the soil or the tree canopy.

This means after a single fire, ash trees can regenerate in large numbers, however, the regenerating forest is vulnerable to future fires until it has matured to develop seed itself, which occurs after 20 years.

Forestry Corporation's Southern Resources Supervisor



Alpine and White ash forests are harvested for seed pods enabling Forestry Corporation to establish a seed bank to preserve the iconic species in bushfire-prone forests.

Joel Dawson said there is now a risk that future wildfires could impact both species' survival.

"Having a seed bank for these species will be crucial in the event of another fire. This is why it is so important that Forestry Corporation builds an insurance seed store," Mr Dawson said.

"The collection of Alpine Ash seed has centred around Bago and Maragle state forests near Tumbarumba as these populations are most of risk of repeat fires," he said.

To ensure these species will continue to inhabit our forests a seed program was initiated, which identifies where mature trees in the forest are carrying seed and flowering.

"We have had staff conducting surveys of flowering for a couple of years now and we are expecting good seed crops in the coming years

based on those surveys," Mr Dawson said.

Forestry Corporation has contracted trained arborists who specialise in seed collection and extraction to scale the ash trees and prune seed pods from the canopy.

"We collect from healthy trees through a light pruning of about 30-50% of the canopy. It's a one-time collection operation from each tree and then we record their location and exclude them from future seed collection programs," Mr Dawson said.

"We need to preserve these important species from not just fires, but also pests and weeds that threaten the health of the forest.

"We will also look to use these seed stores to actively regenerate areas where we identify poor regeneration following the

2019/2020 bushfires."

So far this year, White Ash seed collection has occurred on the Far South Coast and Alpine Ash seed collection has been completed in Maragle State Forest.

"We have monitored the forests over the past few years to pinpoint the flowering events and found and harvested these seeds collecting 25-kilograms of white ash seed to restore the stock," Mr Dawson said.

The seeds are extracted from pods through a drying process in a rotary kiln and then stored in a cool room at Eden.

"It's an extensive process where nearly a tonne of seed pods produces about 25 kilograms of seed, which is just enough to fill three buckets," Mr Dawson said.

"Eucalypt seeds are very small, and despite the massive size of the mature trees an Alpine Ash seed is only 2-3mm in size once extracted," he said.

After the 2019/2020 bushfires, some harvesting occurred in the burnt Ash forests, which allowed some of the dead timber to be utilised before it degraded, but that harvesting has now finished.

Regeneration surveys following the fires are being conducted by drones to determine if any additional rehabilitation and seed sowing might be required to regenerate the forest.

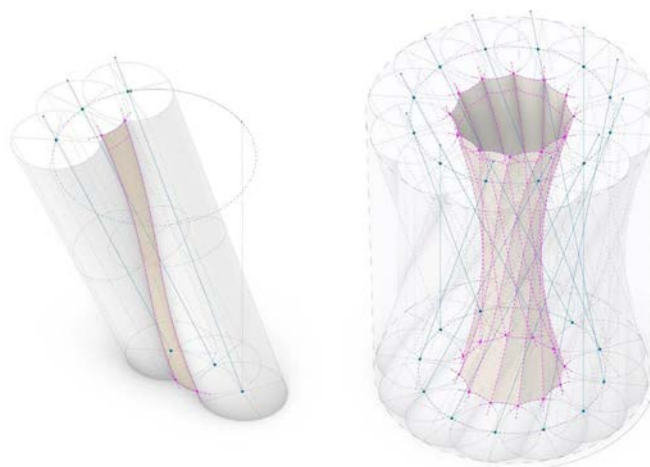


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Mass timber Wangen Tower opens in southern Germany

SET amidst the scenic landscape of the western Allgäu, the Wangen Tower is an architectural landmark and pioneering timber structure for the Landesgartenschau 2024. Based on research conducted at the Cluster of Excellence 'Integrative Computational Design and Construction for Architecture (IntCDC)' at the University of Stuttgart, the tower is the very first multi-level, walkable building to use self-shaped, structural timber components. The distinctive expression of the tower's unique timber structure stands as a testament to the latent design possibilities in naturally renewable, locally sourced, regionally manufactured and resource-effective timber architecture, which can be uncovered through an integrative approach to scientific research, materially-informed computational design, digital fabrication and expert craftsmanship.

The tower constitutes a landmark that connects the Landesgartenschau site in the Argen Valley with the rolling hills of the surrounding landscape through its expressive timber architecture. On the ground, the tower's entrances unfold elegantly between the timber surfaces in three directions, creating an inviting, open space that orients towards the Argen River and the softly contoured top of the neighbouring drumlin, a glacially formed hill that marks the region's pre-alpine glacial history. On the inside, the tower offers a unique spatial experience when ascending through the spiralling timber form towards the transparent viewing platform. Climbing the 113 steps to the top provides visitors with a visual and tactile



connection to the materiality of the tower's innovative timber structure. The articulated interplay of light and shadow on the curved wooden surfaces creates a sense of ascension towards the impressive reveal of the surrounding landscape at the top. With its curved upper edge, the tower curates the visual connection of various cultural sites and landscape features, framing views of the medieval town of Wangen and the Argen valley,

while also offering stunning vistas of the Alps.

The tower's 23m tall, pioneering structure is composed of 12 curved cross-laminated timber (CLT) segments, each with a slender cross-section of just 130 millimetres. The global

“ A PIONEERING
TIMBER
STRUCTURE

shape of the tower, together with the local curvature of the CLT surfaces, results in a novel surface-active timber structure, which bears all the decisive horizontal wind loads and creates the tower's distinctive, spiralled silhouette. The curvature provides additional stiffness to the timber surface, similar to a corrugated sheet. The central spine of the staircase supports the vertical live loads on the steps and elegantly highlights the precise load distribution among the various structural components by tapering at the base. Computational design strategies that integrate material behaviour and fabrication constraints from the onset are at the core for the advanced design and high-precision construction of this permanent research building. Millimetre-accurate prefabrication and precision-milled connection details enabled the onsite assembly to be completed in three days and allowed for seamless integration of the tower's steel staircase, glass skylight and observation platform. The high-performance, resource-efficient timber structure results in a distinctive architectural expression with a visually striking silhouette.

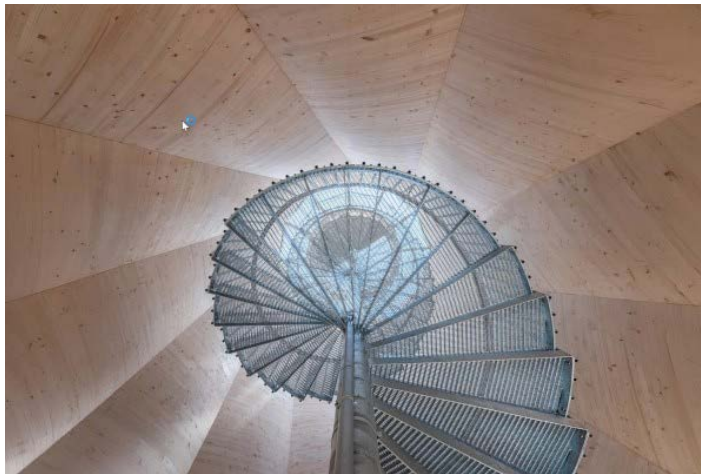
The Wangen Tower, with its viewing platform at the top, is the first structure with multiple inhabitable levels to use curved components based on large-scale self-shaping manufacturing derived from the moisture-induced shrinking of wood. Typically, moisture-induced shrinkage and deformation is considered undesirable in timber construction. However, inspired

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by biological examples like the spruce cone, which reacts to changing ambient humidity levels with a shape change of its scales, similar principles can be applied to control the self-forming of curved timber components. Here, precise shape change to a computationally predetermined target curvature is driven solely by the wood's characteristic shrinkage as its moisture content decreases during a standard industrial drying process.

Locally sourced spruce was used to craft the self-shaped cross-laminated timber (CLT) components. The self-shaping bilayer plates are designed and produced as flat panels, each consisting of a 30-millimetre thick 'active' layer and a cross-laminated 10-millimetre thin 'restrictive' layer. Contrary to typical industrial timber production, the wood boards get processed after slight air drying. The 'active' layer with higher moisture content is laminated to the restrictive layer in a flat vacuum press. After lamination, the flat plates undergo a controlled kiln drying process where the active layer shrinks perpendicularly to the fibre direction of its boards, effectively shaping the panels into their predicted curved form. Three self-



All images: © ICD/ITKE/ IntCDC University of Stuttgart (Photo: Nina Baisch) via LinkedIn



shaped bilayer plates together with 10-millimetre thin elastically bent locking layer are stacked and laminated to create a final, dimensionally stable and accurately curved 130-millimetre thin CLT panels.

To utilize the curvature of CLT panels for a highly resource-effective, form-active timber structure, material-informed computational design and precise digital prefabrication was employed in an integrative manner. The innovative timber connections were derived directly from the digital model and precisely materialized using CNC milling. Each of the twelve 23-metre long structural segments of the tower is made from three individual CLT elements, which are 5-axis CNC cut and

precisely joined using a newly developed mono-material lapped joint to transmit forces in all directions and creating continuous CLT elements while maintaining constant cross-sectional dimensions. The exact position and geometry of the joints were optimized to fulfil both structural criteria and fabrication constraints while minimising the total amount of off-cut material.

In the factory, the 12 tower components were pre-assembled into pairs of two, a key step to minimise on-site construction time. Additionally, the steel connectors, which interface between the CLT structure and the staircase, as well as most of the 168 individually crafted larch panels of the façade were

pre-mounted in the factory. Onsite, the tower components were installed on a foundation made from recycled concrete with CO₂-reduced cement in three days only. The resulting structural timber shell supports the staircase and observation platform. Segments of the spiral staircase, as well as the 7m-spanning observation platform, were inserted into the tower from above.

The Wangen Tower's distinctive form and innovative structure is a truly contemporary architectural expression of

the traditional construction material wood. It shows how an integrative approach to scientific research, materially-informed computational design, digital prefabrication and expert craftsmanship significantly expands the design space of naturally renewable, locally sourced, regionally manufactured and resource-effective timber architecture.

The project is a collaboration between the university's Institute for Computational Design and Construction (ICD) and the Institute of Building Structures and Structural Design (ITKE) at the university. Source the University of Stuttgart.

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Hardware and timber delegates head to Canada

MEMBERS of the Australian timber industry are among more than 100 delegates who have headed to Canada this week to join the Independent Hardware Group (IHG) on their annual business study tour.

The tour, which departed on Sunday from Australia, will see several of IHG's business partners and independent store owners join members of the Executive in an eight-day adventure. The group touched down in Vancouver on Sunday afternoon local time before heading to hotels and welcome drinks where all could come together for their first networking event. Following the line of previous tours, the first full day included a number of local site visits, allowing the delegates to see how Canadian hardware operators work and differ from Australian. Included on the first full day was a site visit to a local sawmill, an opportunity that was met with resounding positivity from representatives of the Australian timber industry. A river cruise dinner wrapped up the first day of the tour with delegates set to attend a business session hosted by IHG early day two.



1/ Last year's study tour took delegates to Milan who were given a tour of local operators.

2/ Last year's delegates attended the International trade show as part of the tour.

The tour follows last year's successful study tour, taking delegates to Milan, Italy. It was the first of such tours for the group following COVID-19 and was welcomed in its return by both suppliers and store owners who attended. Delegates visited a number of stores in and around the Milano area, took in a football game with AC Milan and enjoyed day trips to both Florence and Lake Como.

This year's tour will depart from Vancouver on Wednesday with delegates heading north to Whistler for a further three days before wrapping up over the weekend.

Stay tuned next week for more details on the IHG tour.

WFTN quarterly breakfast to RizeUp!

Following the ongoing success of their events, WFTN is extending out the invitation to all who wish to join for their next quarterly breakfast.

This breakfast will be held on June 19 and will be in support of RizeUp.

RizeUp provides life-changing practical support for families affected by domestic and family violence. Guests are being asked to bring along a donation in support of setting up a new bedroom for a displaced family member.

Providing these items can make a significant difference in creating a sense of security and comfort for those starting anew. This could be a set of sheets, a doona/quilt or a quilt cover

(single or queen only). Even bedside lamps (Don't forget the bulbs) or a pretty throw. These items do not need to be expensive, but they do need to be new. Additionally, each mum who is set up in a new dwelling is given a handbag, these are often not new, just in good nick. A little gesture in a difficult time. So, clean out those cupboards!

As always the WFTN Breakfast is a wonderful networking event with women, men and colleagues all welcome to join. The event will be at Hunter & Scout Cafe in Graceville on June 19 from 8am with all encouraged to order and pay for what you want and stay until you need to head to work!

RSVP Tahlia by June 17 for attendance.

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WOODHOUSE

Trees planted globally to mark World Environment Day

AROUND the world Wednesday, June 5, large and small groups of people came together to plant trees, marking World Environment Day.

Held annually on June 5, World Environment Day aims to bring together millions across the globe to focus on the protection and restoration of the environment.

This year's theme was land restoration, desertification and drought resilience under the slogan "Our land. Our future. We are #GenerationRestoration."

Internationally thousands of trees have been planted to promote the 'land restoration' of this year's theme.

Originally established in 1973, World Environment Day, led by the UN Environment Programme, has helped to 'drive action on some of the planet's most pressing environmental problems'

The day focuses on raising awareness of critical issues and over the years has had several themes including the rising temperature and the ozone layer.

This year's host country is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is playing host to a number of events to mark the day however across Australia, businesses, not-for-profits and local government organisations all jumped on board.



Across Australia, groups have gathered to plant trees for World Environment Day.
Image: Shutterstock



The global day is more than 50 years old with Saudi Arabia acting as host for 2024. Image: Shutterstock

In a statement on their website, Greenfleet Australia said the 'day recognises the importance of protecting our planet and we're thrilled to reach this milestone with our supporters'.

It also marries a significant milestone for the organisation who say they have planted enough native forests to remove 5 million tonnes of carbon.

Maitland City Council and Tweed Shire Council are among those who came

together on Wednesday to mark the day.

The Mayor of Tweed Shire Chris Cherry said the day would be a fun celebration with positive outcomes.

"Restoring this native forest is one way we can help protect the Tweed's unique biodiversity and ensure the next generation continues to enjoy these wonderful surrounds," Cr Cherry said.

"From guided walking tours to picturesque views,

there was something for everyone at this free community event."

In New Zealand however, there was more than one thing marked on June 5 with it also being National Arbor Day. The New Zealand Institute of Forestry this year said it hopes to build further on the annual day contributing to a 'greener, healthier and more sustainable New Zealand'.

To mark Arbor Day, NZIF planted one tree for each of its members. This initiative symbolises our commitment to fostering a greener future and highlights the collective impact of individual actions. We believe if every New Zealander plants a tree, it will not only beautify our landscapes but also contribute to our nation's ecological and economic prosperity.

NZIF President, James Treadwell, emphasises the importance of this initiative: "Arbor Day presents a unique opportunity for all of us to come together and make a tangible difference. Planting a tree is a simple yet powerful act which benefits our environment, our communities, and our future generations. We encourage everyone to join us in this effort and make Arbor Day a significant and cherished tradition in New Zealand."

More than 150 Countries are believed to have participated in activities for World Environment Day.

Find out more at <https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>

'Water rule' removal to benefit plantations

AUSTRALIA'S forest industry can now celebrate the removal of the 'water rule' that for years has deterred new timber plantings from participating in the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF), Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Chief Executive Officer, Diana Hallam said.

As of 1 June 2024, the water rule that had added conditions that plantation forestry needed to meet to participate in the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme has been removed following a long campaign by AFPA.

"This week is a great week for Australia's forestry industry. The removal of the water rule means plantation and farm forestry projects will now be treated the same as other carbon methods and not excluded from many areas that are suitable for tree planting. The removal of the water rule will now enable farmers in many areas to invest in trees, diversify their



Farm forestry projects will now be treated the same as other carbon methods and not excluded from many areas that are suitable for tree planting.
Image: Shutterstock

income and create market options to help them achieve net zero," Diana Hallam said.

"It's a Berlin Wall-sized barrier coming down that for years has hindered new investment in much-needed timber trees.

"The removal of these restrictions nationally is great news because Australia

“PEOPLE CAN INVEST IN TREES”

desperately needs new production tree plantings to grow future timber and wood fibre supply and decarbonise the economy.

"Just last month, AFPA released How Timber Can Help Solve Australia's Housing Crisis, a plan for how our sector can help supply the timber to build 50,000 much-needed new homes, to help solve Australia's housing crisis. The removal of the water rule is one very important cog in the wheel of success towards this goal.

"We thank the Albanese Government, in particular Ministers Murray Watt, Chris Bowen and Tanya Plibersek, for honouring its 2022 election commitment to remove the water rule, as well as the Coalition for taking the same policy to the election. This recognition and bipartisan support for industry investment is very important for our sector.

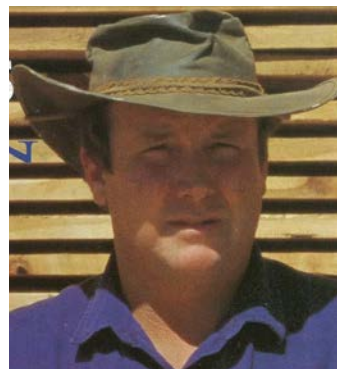
"AFPA will continue to work with Minister Watt and the rest of the Government on how to leverage the removal of the water rule, including through the plantation establishment grants and other policies relevant the boosting the forestry sector," Diana Hallam concluded.

Funeral announcement

LAST week the sad passing of a Queensland Timber Industry champion, Vic Gersekowski was announced. The owner/director of Vic's Timber, a cypress pine sawmill at Cecil Plains in the Western Downs regions of Queensland was

a much-loved, respected member of the timber community.

His family have announced Vic Gersekowski's funeral will be at Cecil Plains on 11th June at 12 noon for all those wishing to attend and farewell Vic.



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HEAD OFFICE

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd
PO Box 3001
Maraylya NSW 2765

PUBLISHER

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd

EDITORS

Nicky Ainley
Donyale Harrison
Jess Hockridge
editors@timberandforestryenews.com

ADVERTISING

Campbell McInnes // +61 (0) 406 223 007
campbellm@timberandforestryenews.com

ACCOUNTS

Chris Parker // +61 (0) 413 710 203
cparker@ttnews.com.au

SUBSCRIBE

www.timberandforestryenews.com



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CONTACTS

Media releases and editorial:

Nicky Ainley // Donyale Harrison // Jessica Hockridge
e: editors@timberandforestrynews.com

Display ad bookings:

Campbell McInnes // e: campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com

Accounts:

Chris Parker // e: cparker@ttnews.com.au



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