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ISSUE 822 // September 26 2024

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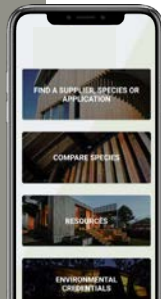
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# First round of HAFF allocations

Victoria has done particularly well in the funding announcement.

LAST week, Housing Australia and the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) announced commitments to the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) under its first funding round.

More than 13,700 social and affordable homes in 185 projects are set to be delivered across the country, representing some \$9.2bn in investment and one third of the HAFF's five-year target of 40,000 social and affordable homes.

Victoria has done particularly well, with 4135 of these homes destined for the state – the largest allocation for any state and territory, representing 30% of the Australian total, a development that the state's peak body for community housing has described as a win for the community.

"It's heartening to see that in the middle of a housing crisis Victoria is receiving thousands of additional desperately needed social and affordable homes



**Essex Street, Prahran, is a Homes Victoria project underway to provide more social, affordable, market and specialist disability rental homes.** Image: homes.vic.gov.au

thanks to this housing fund," Community Housing Industry Association Victoria acting chief executive Jason Perdriau said.

"This is a win for Victoria that comes at a critical time as the housing crisis tightens its grip on the state. Having thousands of additional social and affordable homes will be life changing for many Victorians and improve the liveability of our communities."

Victoria focused on housing earlier than most other states and has multiple state funding programs in place, many of which are designed to run in conjunction with community and not-

**“OUR NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR IS RARING TO DELIVER THE HOMES THAT VICTORIANS NEED**

for-profit groups, private investment and Federal Government funding opportunities such as the HAFF.

While debate continues around the need for more public housing as well as affordable rentals – and what is actually 'affordable' – the increased delivery of homes in this sector will also help ease rental vacancy rates, which still hover below 1.5%

"Securing the largest allocation of homes from the first round of this fund reflects the capacity and strength of Victoria's community housing sector which has grown as a result of the Victorian Government's Big Housing Build," said Perdriau.

"Our not-for-profit sector is raring to deliver the homes that Victorians need. Bids for HAFF projects from Victoria's community housing organisations for round one alone demonstrates strong capacity to build so it's great to see applications for round two will open within months.

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# Research Advisory Committee established at AFWI

THE Chair of Australian Forest and Wood Innovations (AFWI), Mr Bob Gordon, has welcomed the establishment of the new AFWI Research Advisory Committee.

The Committee will provide expert advice to the AFWI Board on forest and wood product research and innovation, ensuring that research activities are aligned with industry needs, and maximising benefits for the broader forestry and wood products sectors.

“Bringing together experts from across industry and research strengthens AFWI’s ability to ensure our work reflects real-world needs,” Gordon said.

“The Committee’s insights will be invaluable as we steer our research and innovation to better serve the forestry and wood product sectors. As we approach the announcement of the first round of funding under our National Open Call for Research, we are excited to mark the beginning of AFWI-funded projects.

“These initiatives will play a crucial role in advancing innovation and sustainability



**The Minister for Housing and Small Business, Julie Collins MP (centre, burgundy jacket), was with the AFWI team for the announcement of the Committee.** Image: supplied

within the forestry and wood products sectors.”

Mr Gordon also acknowledged the role of the Committee in assessing and recommending these projects: “The Research Advisory Committee has been integral to the selection process, ensuring that the projects we fund are supported by industry, deliver meaningful outcomes, and contribute to the broader goals of the sector.”

Chaired by Professor Rodney Keenan, the Committee includes leaders from academia, industry, and government.

The members of the AFWI Research Advisory Committee are:

- **Professor Rodney Keenan** (Chair), Honorary Professorial Fellow and former Chair of Forest and Ecosystem Sciences, The University of Melbourne
- **Mr Gavin Matthew**, Chief Executive Officer, Engineered Wood Products Association of Australasia (EWPAA)
- **Ms Belinda Lengenber**, General Manager Strategic Resources, Timberlink
- **Mr Simon Dorries**, CEO, Responsible Wood
- **Dr Shaun Suitor**, Strategy Manager, Sustainable Timber Tasmania,
- **Dr Danielle Wiseman**, Research Scientist, Plantation Industry Pest Management Group
- **Dr Craig Cowled**, Lecturer Civil Engineering, Queensland University of Technology
- **Dr Henri Baillères**, General Manager Forests to Timber Products, Scion
- **Dr Steve Read**, Former Chief Coordinating Scientist, ABARES (Retired)
- **Dr Jodi Mason**, Head of Forest Research, Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA)
- **Mr Peter Harding**, Assistant Director, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
- **Dr Melanie Zeppel**, Manager, Natural Capital and Carbon Analytics, New Forests
- **Dr Chris Lafferty**, Research and Development Manager, Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA)

For more information about the Committee, [click here](#).

## Chris Lafferty retiring

FWPA’s Head of Research and Development, Dr Chris Lafferty has announced he will retire at the end of June 2025, after 23 years with the organisation.

FWPA marked the announcement with a statement: “Since joining the then Forest and Wood Products Research & Development Corporation in 2002, Chris has been an invaluable team member, dedicating his significant skills and experience to advancing research and

development to benefit members and key stakeholders across the entire forest and wood products value chain.

“This is an appropriate time for both parties to make this transition. It will provide a succession plan for FWPA that will support the organisation’s future while allowing Chris to pursue new interests and challenges.”

Recruitment for a replacement is happening early with the aim of a significant



**Dr Chris Lafferty will leave FWPA in 2025 after a storied career at the organisation.**

overlap period and smooth transition.

FWPA CEO Andrew Leighton thanked Chris for his substantial contribution to the organisation and the industry, saying “For more

than two decades, Chris has served FWPA and our members and we are grateful for his willingness to mentor and guide his successor, to set us up for success moving forward.”

Chris has expressed his gratitude to FWPA for the longevity and opportunities provided over the past 23 years.

For more on the transition or to express interest, [click here](#) to contact FWPA.

# Timber sector celebrated

## Local leaders support Queensland Timber Fest and the important role played by the timber industry.

HUNDREDS of industry workers and their families, whose livelihoods and businesses are supported by Queensland's sustainable forest and timber industry, welcomed the support of local leaders at the Queensland Timber Fest in Gympie last weekend.

Timber Queensland's CEO Mick Stephens said the family fun day at the Gympie Woodworks Museum was a good reminder for Governments that the industry is relied upon by thousands of people and their families.

"Our industry supports over 25,000 jobs and injects \$4 billion into the state economy every year, providing essential materials for the building and



**Tony Perrett MP, Member for Gympie, at the Woodworks Museum during Timber Fest.**  
Photo: via Facebook/Tony Perrett

construction industry," said Stephens.

"Everyone at the event welcomed the support of local leaders Tony Perrett, Member for Gympie, and Glen Hartwig, Gympie Regional Council Mayor, who made it clear they recognise the value of the industry in growing regional jobs, providing materials to meet housing demand and delivering

environmentally sound land management," he said.

Timber Queensland has been a key driver behind the event, promoting it regionally and with the assistance of industry partners including T&F Enews. A free barbecue lunch was laid on for guests, along with industry displays, a VR forestry experience and free access to the Woodworks Museum.

The success of the day highlighted the importance of the industry to the region and to Queensland, and the risks.

"Going forward, a key issue facing the industry is a lack of policy certainty over access to public and private native forests for sustainable hardwood production, as well as minimal incentives and measures to promote plantation and farm forestry expansion to increase timber supply," said Stephens.

"With the right policy settings there is significant potential for the industry to grow and prosper and deliver positive economic, social and environmental benefits for the state."

Tony Perrett, Member for Gympie and Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry said, "The attendance of so many workers and their families is proof why the industry needs certainty to secure timber for production and guarantee a strong future for this valuable renewable and sustainable resource.

"I'm committed to providing that security for our valued timber industry."

Gympie Mayor Glen Hartwig said he thinks there is a good opportunity to manage our state forests to harvest the appropriate timber but also maintain the environmental significance of the areas for generations to come.

"That's the vision I have for Gympie which will give sustainability, it'll give long-term jobs and it'll give certainty to those people that have invested in the industry, but most importantly it pulls carbon out of the atmosphere and puts it into homes," said Mayor Hartwig.

The Queensland Timber Fest was an opportunity to celebrate the history and collective value of the forest industry across the softwood plantation, native hardwood and native cypress sectors. Over 250 people attended and Timber Queensland acknowledges the support of the many industry exhibitors and community partners on the day.

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# APRA concerns

## HIA calls for independent oversight board and mortgage arrears targets.

IT'S been quite the week for people wondering if our banking system really needs to be like this. With the Reserve Bank holding interest rates steady and the Treasurer's bid to create a specialist monetary policy board there being all-but scuppered by the Greens, the HIA has come out calling for a reassessment of APRA.

The Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority was established in 1998 to oversee banking, insurance and superannuation. In the wake of the GFC, this led to significant changes in the way it regulated mortgages. But in a submission to the Senate inquiry into the financial regulatory framework and home ownership, HIA has identified that years of additional costs have restricted competition among banks and made it increasingly expensive for them to lend to first home buyers.

"The Government should establish an RBA-style Board to oversee APRA with a target for mortgage arrears of between 2 and 3 per cent,"



**While APRA changes would make it easier for first home buyers to get loans rather than demand more housing, the freeing up of credit would also encourage more building**

Image: Shutterstock

said HIA Chief Economist, Tim Reardon.

"Just as zero inflation is not the RBA's goal, zero mortgage delinquencies is an unattainable and undesirable goal for APRA.

"Despite this, home buyers in Australia have been subjected to more than a decade of additional restrictions on lending that have reduced competition among banks issuing loans, especially for first home buyers."

Reardon pointed out these

restrictions are significant despite mortgage arrears remaining close to zero throughout the GFC and even the Covid pandemic. While the GFC is often blamed on bad housing debt, the cause of bank failure was financial institutions' investment in over-rated mortgage-backed

**“ ONGOING REGULATIONS HAVE FORCED BANKS TO ELIMINATE MUCH FLEXIBILITY**

security products, not the mortgages themselves.

"The problem is that ongoing regulations have forced banks to eliminate much of the flexibility and competition in the mortgage market that made home ownership accessible for households of variable credit quality, such as first home buyers," said Reardon.

"This 'belt and braces' approach to macro-prudential restrictions is needlessly restrictive and increasingly limits lending only to those that already own at least one home, pursuing financial system stability at the expense of first home buyers.

"Banks should be making the decision on who is able to service a mortgage, not the Australian Government. Banks are well placed to make this assessment and are protected from delinquency through mortgage insurance."

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# Business Grants

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Enews has partnered with a professional grant writing business. Watch this space as not all grants are made public. We will publish grants for various states/

territories for our industry here in Enews. Our connection might be available to assist you with eligibility criteria, grant writing, application process and

lodgement. They have a high success rate, so contact us if you would like to make an appointment. Contact: editors@timberandforestrynews.com

## NSW Living Carbon Grants

THIS NSW Government Climate and Energy Action initiative funds eligible landholders to set up a carbon planting project on their land.

Managing carbon is both a challenge and an enormous opportunity for landholders. If you are a landholder in NSW, you may be eligible for a

NSW Government grant to set up a carbon planting project. This could help you secure the health of your land, improve productivity, and unlock new income streams. Your land could be used to revegetate habitats for threatened or iconic species such as koalas.

The Department is investing \$5 million in Living Carbon grants (up to \$200,000 per project) to assist eligible

**“MANAGING CARBON IS BOTH A CHALLENGE AND AN ENORMOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR LANDHOLDERS**



Restoring koala habitat is one possible use of grant funds. Image: Hyserb /Shutterstock

applicants in delivering carbon abatement through planting projects in 3 regions in NSW:

- The Riverina Local Land Services region
- The North Coast Local Land Services region
- The MidCoast Local Government Area.

A suitable project would:

- Plant between 10 and 200 hectares of appropriate species on your land
- Plant with the aim of revegetating habitat for threatened or iconic species endemic to your area
- Deliver on and comply with all Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU) Scheme and Accounting for Nature (AfN) method requirements, beyond

the lifetime of your grant.

In return for funding, successful applicants must commit to sharing information and helping build capacity within the sector.

To be eligible you must be:

- A private landholder who is the proponent of the carbon project; or
- An Aboriginal or Traditional Owners group that owns or has legal right to the land and who are the proponent of the carbon project;

Public land managers may be considered for inclusion following discussion with Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and pre-approval to apply. NSW National Parks are

not eligible for these grants because they have access to funding for similar projects through a different initiative.

In return for funding, successful applicants must commit to sharing information and helping build capacity within the sector. This will help other landholders understand the potential benefits, risks and costs of carbon projects.

For more information on the grants, click here.

### GRANT DETAILS

**Provider:** NSW Climate and Energy Action

**Amount:** Up to \$200,000 per project

**Round 1 Closes:** 6 Dec 2024

**Location:**

- NSW

**Who Can Apply:**

- Non-Government
- Community Groups
- Businesses
- Individual
- Other

**Co-Contribution Required:** Yes

<https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry/programs-grants-and-schemes/primary-industries-productivity-and-abatement/living-carbon>

**OCTOBER**

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

**29-31: Forestry Australia 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 <https://www.forestry.org.au/2024-symposium/>

**NOVEMBER**

**13-15: AFCA annual Gala dinner & conference – Launceston, Tas.** For more information visit: <https://www.afca.asn.au/Events/afca-2023-conference-photo-gallery>

**SAVE THE DATES 2025**

**MARCH 22: NTHA QLD State Awards – Brisbane City Hall, Brisbane.** Join us in celebrating the QLD Timber and Hardware Industry. Contact Tahlia at [events@ntha.com.au](mailto:events@ntha.com.au)

**MAY 30: NTHA SA/NT/WA State Awards – National Wine Centre, Adelaide.** Join us in celebrating the SA, NT & WA Timber and Hardware Industry. Contact Tahlia at [events@ntha.com.au](mailto:events@ntha.com.au)

**MARCH 25-28: DANA Global Wood Products Supply and Demand Trends Seminar, Global Forest Investment**

**Conference, and WWII Battle of the Bulge Battle sites tour – Europe.** Contact [admin@dana.co.nz](mailto:admin@dana.co.nz)

**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 – Singapore.**

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

# OneFortyOne releases Annual Review

With more than 500 direct employees in regional Australia and New Zealand and 160,000 hectares of land under its management, OneFortyOne is a significant player in both plantation timber production and forestry conservation.

For the past five years, the 12-year-old company has marked its progress with an annual review. This week, the 2024 review was published.

Wendy Norris, CEO, said, "Since 2019, OneFortyOne's Annual Review has been an opportunity to reflect on the year that was and the path forward. Our journey towards



**OneFortyOne employs more than 500 people directly and over 3000 as contractors.** Photo: OneFortyOne

a better tomorrow is not just a strategic priority but a core part of our identity and

ambition."

The 2024 review includes significant capital investment

in safety at the Jubilee and Kaituna Sawmills, ongoing work with the Pine Community Grants Program and significant conservation efforts across the managed area.

"We are here for the long term," said Norris. "I extend my gratitude to our people, our Board, contractors, partners, and customers for their exceptional dedication and support. Together, we are making a significant impact and paving the way for a better tomorrow."

To download a copy of the review, click here.

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# Championing sustainability

## How engineers and specifiers are shaping the future of timber in construction.

By RESPONSIBLE WOOD

ENGINEERS and specifiers are increasingly crucial in driving the adoption of renewable building materials like timber, a key element in fostering a sustainable built environment.

As society grows more aware of where products come from and the pressing need for circularity, the next generation of professionals are leading the way in designing and advocating for materials that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their role extends beyond selecting green, eco-friendly and low carbon materials; it involves ensuring that the entire supply chain is transparent, ethical and responsible; paving the way for a future where development and sustainability go hand in hand.

In a recent presentation to students at the University of Queensland's School of Civil Engineering, Matt de Jongh, sustainability manager at Responsible Wood, highlighted the role that forest and chain of custody certification plays in combatting deforestation and climate change. By engaging with future industry leaders, de Jongh emphasised the importance of understanding the sourcing of forest products and the need for responsible timber use in construction.

His session outlined how informing and collaborating with the next generation helps instil well-informed values of sustainability



1/ Engineers need to understand the importance of certified sustainable materials in their projects.

2/ The shift to a circular economy requires both more transparency in supply chains and greater re-usability of materials, such as the panels and cassettes that could be used to build this midrise. Images: supplied

early on, ensuring that the engineers and specifiers of tomorrow are well-equipped to champion renewable materials and support environmental resilience.

de Jongh provided an in-depth overview of how Responsible Wood, Australia's largest forest certification scheme, works to promote sustainable forest management. He highlighted the importance of certified sustainable forest management in preserving forest ecosystems and promoting cultural and

community aspects of forest management at a landscape level.

"Forests play an important role in regulating our climate, and certification is key to validating their ability to act as carbon sinks," de Jongh said. "Certified sustainable forest management ensures that forests are not only managed responsibly but are also protected for future generations, helping us mitigate climate change and preserve biodiversity."

During the session, the

students were able to hear new perspectives on the growing importance of ethical and transparent supply chains, which are achieved through third-party accredited chain of custody certification. This certification ensures that materials sourced from certified forests can be traced through each stage of production, from the forest to the final product.

"Chain of custody certification provides a clear and verifiable link between the

Cont P 9



1/ The University of Queensland School of Civil Engineering students who attended Matt de Jongh's presentation.

2/ Matt de Jongh explaining the central importance of certification for sustainable materials. Images: supplied



From P 8

forest and the final product,” de Jongh said. “It’s essential for businesses to prove that their timber comes from an ethical source. Transparency is becoming increasingly important as consumers and policy makers demand more responsible supply chains.”

The presentation also touched on the challenges the world faces in tackling deforestation and climate change and how certification can be part of the solution. Matt stressed that it’s not just about managing forests for timber production, but also about creating systems that ensure accountability throughout the entire supply chain.

Dr. Lisa Ottenhaus, Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland’s School of Civil Engineering, praised the session, emphasising its relevance to the students’



1



2

1/ Instilling a sense of confidence around specifying timber is a key goal for the program.

2/ Responsible Wood highlights the regrowth of harvested sustainable forests, which compares starkly with what remains after mining. Images: supplied

current studies and future careers. “Matt’s presentation gave our students valuable insights into the intersection of civil engineering and sustainable resource management,” said Dr. Ottenhaus. “Understanding the role of certification, like that provided by Responsible Wood, is crucial for future engineers who will be working on infrastructure projects that directly impact and depend on

the environment.”

As the demand for well-credentialled, sustainable materials continues to increase, globally endorsed and nationally relevant standards, like those developed by Responsible Wood, are becoming increasingly integral in shaping future sourcing practices and procurement policies. With this eventual industry evolution, the

responsibility falls on today’s engineers and specifiers to not only adopt renewable materials but also to ensure that they are sourced responsibly, through certified supply chains.

The choices made by the next generation of professionals in balancing development with supply chain transparency will undoubtedly shape the future of our forest industry.

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# Tributes paid to the late Peter ‘Hoppy’ Hopkinson

THE NSW timber and forest industry has celebrated the life of well-known career forester Peter Hopkinson, who passed away recently, aged 94.

‘Hoppy’ as he was affectionately known served for almost four decades with the NSW Forestry Commission.

Hoppy was well-known in the industry for his service to forestry on the Mid North Coast and in the Northern Rivers and Central West. Continuing the family legacy, Peter’s son Glenn Hopkinson followed in his father’s footsteps.

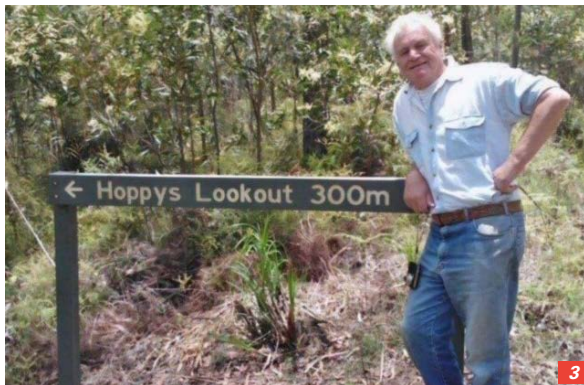
Glenn, who has worked for Forestry Corporation for the past 28 years, said the family wished to thank Peter’s many friends, who have passed on their thoughts and well wishes.

“Dad was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire and came out to Australia with a mate in 1950 as a Ten Pound Pom,” Glenn said. “He kept the original newspaper clipping that he saw in England advertising the need for manual labourers to emigrate from the UK to Australia to help the nation grow.

“After working on a sheep station near Warwick, Queensland, Dad settled into a career in forestry with the NSW Forestry Commission.”

Peter was appointed to the position of temporary forester and after he finished his studies became a forester with the NSW Forestry Commission in 1964, where he was placed in charge of surveys at Wauchope.

In 1970, Peter transferred to Oberon and then to Casino



1/ Members of the NSW timber and forestry industry came together with the Hopkinson family to remember career forester Peter ‘Hoppy’ Hopkinson.  
 2/ Peter Hopkinson working for the NSW Forestry Commission in the 1950s–60s.  
 3/ The late Peter Hopkinson at the lookout named in his honour.  
 4/ Hoppy’s last visit to the lookout with his family a few years ago.  
 5/ The view from Hoppys Lookout. Photos: courtesy of the Hopkinson family

in 1972. He later returned to Wauchope in 1975 where he remained with the Commission until his retirement in 1988.

Testament to the mark that Peter made in forestry, a landmark was named in his honour – Hoppys Lookout, near Yarrawitch.

“Dad came across the vantage point a few years before he retired from forestry,”

from Wauchope when they discovered this spot.

“It is such a scenic vista, looking back to Walcha, taking in the Macleay Valley with views right back to Kempsey. It was virgin forest back then and Dad did the preliminary survey work constructing a trail to the area around the lookout.

“His boss John Mills put

forward a request to name the lookout after Dad. The site was later transferred over to National Park and Wildlife and the decision was made to keep the name Hoppys Lookout. Nowadays there is a good, fixed track up there where you can walk up the hill to enjoy the view.

“We took Dad back to the lookout a few years ago, which was special, and I think we might head up as a family and celebrate Dad’s life.

“It was a place that Dad loved to visit, sitting and taking in the view,” Glenn concluded.

Vale Peter ‘Hoppy’ Hopkinson, 7 June, 1930 – 21 July, 2024.

# New format at LIGNA 2025

NEXT year, the biggest trade fair for the world's woodworking and processing industries will celebrate its 50th anniversary. With that celebration comes a new format: from 26 to 30 May, 2025, Hall 12 at LIGNA in Hannover will be focusing on the circular transformation in woodworking and wood processing.

The theme is a natural extension of LIGNA's work in sustainability over recent years and is guided by the motto 'Thinking in Circles'. With complex planning at both ends of the process – design and manufacture – the circular industry is one in which waste is minimised and components are built for re-use in future items/builds or repurposing of the whole original structure. The result is an economically viable approach that conserves

resources and the environment.

"With LIGNA.Circular, we are highlighting a crucial topic for the industry – circularity and the resource cycle," says Stephanie Wagner, Project Manager of LIGNA at Deutsche Messe AG. "The primary goal is to initially build an active community through moderated event formats, where best practices, potentials, and challenges related to circular value creation can be shared.

"As the first point of contact for a community dedicated to the circular economy in the woodworking and wood processing industry,



**Estonian offsite construction specialist Welement's compact machinery line. These sorts of panels can be reused at the end of building life.** Photo: courtesy LIGNA

LIGNA.Circular aims to build much-needed bridges between users, service providers, manufacturers, and craftspeople," Wagner adds.

Circular economy specialists CADEMI are partnering with LIGNA on the project, with founders Christof Flötotto and Andre Hempel taking the lead.

"A sustainable, circular transformation requires commitment from partners across the entire stakeholder group," said Andre Hempel, co-founder of CADEMI. "Above all, however, it requires the right mindset, skills, and methods."

Fellow co-founder Christof Flötotto added: "Our goal is to establish this format within the industry on a long-term, sustainable basis. LIGNA.Circular is meant to offer a platform that goes beyond mere exchange, actively serving as a catalyst for sustainable developments in the industry."

For more on LIGNA, click here.

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# Guulabaa – Place of Koala wins International Design Award

INTERNATIONAL design firm Gensler has a team of 6000 working in 100 countries, with the goal of “building a better world through the power of design.”

Each year, Gensler awards a Community Impact Award, celebrating the achievements of teams across its firm and projects that showcase the transformative impact of design excellence in a community.

This year, Guulabaa – Place of Koala in Cowarra State Forest has won the Gensler Community by Design Award, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Gensler Australia, Forestry Corporation of NSW, Koala Conservation Australia, WildNets, Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council and Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail.

Guulabaa – Place of Koala is a tourism precinct on the NSW Mid North Coast offering visitors opportunities to learn about koala conservation, Aboriginal culture and modern forestry. Guulabaa means ‘place of koala’ in Gathang, the language of the Biripi people of Port Macquarie. The visitor site also allows families to enjoy a treetop adventure, forest walks or a picnic under The Big Koala sculpture.

Integral to the award is



**1/ Guulabaa – Place of Koala in Cowarra State Forest has won the Gensler Community by Design Award.**

**2/ Tourists will learn about the forest and its koalas at Guulabaa – where kids are already embracing the Big Koala.**

Photos: courtesy Forestry Corporation NSW

The Hub, a series of unique hardwood timber decks, which draw visitors into the trees and provide a koala’s perspective of the forest.

The Hub, designed by Gensler Australia, links Koala Conservation Australia’s world-first wild koala breeding

facility, Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council’s café and gallery, Wildnets and Hello Koalas’ Big Koala, while also providing an outdoor amphitheatre and connection to the forest picnic area and walking tracks.

“Winning the 2024 Community by Design Award for Guulabaa Hub underscores the power of regenerative design,” said Gensler Design Director, Ken McBryde.

“This project not only honours Aboriginal cultural heritage and 60,000 years of innovation but also exemplifies our commitment to environmental stewardship and community-based architecture. We are thankful

for the valuable knowledge and experience gained through our partnerships with Koala Conservation Australia, WildNets, Forestry Corp, builder Frank Maione, TTW, E-Lab, Cundall, MBM and Tensile.

“Engaging with native forest product manufacturers including Big River Timbers and Coffs Harbour Hardwoods allowed us to harness their specialist expertise and capabilities, significantly reducing our project’s carbon footprint.

“A standout experience was learning and designing on Country with Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council, which profoundly enriched our understanding and design approach. We are immensely grateful for the invaluable insights gained from all our partners.”

Forestry Corporation of NSW is integral to the project, having gained NSW Government grant funding for creation of The Hub and engineering partnerships with local timber suppliers.

“This project represents a true partnership in forest management, bringing together local organisations committed to showcasing Aboriginal heritage and cultural practices, forest ecology and koala conservation, forest timber products, art and design, for the visiting public,” said Kathy Lyons, senior manager, country & community with Forestry Corporation of NSW.

“We are incredibly grateful to the local timber industry for supporting this project

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through provision of beautiful north coast hardwood timbers used in Corinthian style pole columns, laminated hardwood beams, laminated decks, timber seating, cladding and timber decking tiles. And to Ken McBryde for incorporating many new products into his designs for The Hub. It's truly a masterpiece."

The partners in Guulabaa – Place of Koala are eagerly awaiting the grand opening of the visitor precinct in December.

"Koala Conservation Australia is delighted to see the Gensler Community by Design Award go to the Guulabaa project," said Maria Doherty, general manager, Koala Conservation Australia.

"It supports our aim of ensuring our Guulabaa precinct is a world-class, sustainable, conservation focused, educative tourist destination and it is wonderful to see our efforts recognised and celebrated."

The Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council has been a partner in the project since its inception, with Forestry Corporation working closely with the council.

"The Hub, the location of our cafe, is home to our art gallery showcasing local Aboriginal artist's work and will provide shade for the amphitheatre. It will be of great benefit to the local community. We can't wait for the opening," said CEO Amos Donovan.

Another attraction on the



1/ The beautiful hardwoods come from local suppliers including Big River Timbers and Coffs Harbour Hardwoods.  
 2/ Gensler Design Director Ken McBryde with builder Frank Maione on site during construction.  
 3/ The hardwood timber decks of The Hub bring visitors up to a koala-eye view of the forest. Photo: courtesy Forestry Corporation NSW

site is WildNets, offering tourists a chance to bounce around the forest canopy or kick back and watch the

wildlife. Its team supports koala conservation while delivering healthy activity options for visitors.

At the front of Guulabaa stands the Big Koala, painted by local artist Pauline Roods and part of the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail that stretches around the whole region.

"Guulabaa – Place of Koalas is an amazing example of collaboration and the clustering of aligned product to create a unique and dynamic precinct integral in the protection of koalas, with tremendous community amenity and be a compelling visitor attraction," said Michael Thurston, General Manager, Destination North Coast.

"Designing and creating a place that fulfills these roles whilst incorporating First Nations Peoples' knowledge and integrating native timbers into the surrounding hardwood forest is an accomplishment that should be celebrated."

This project was delivered thanks to funding from the NSW Government and joint funding from the Australian and NSW government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

For more on the Guulabaa – Place of Koala project, click [here](#).

For further details of the Gensler Community Impact Award, click [here](#).

On the cover: Key Guulabaa contributors with the Big Koala: (L-R) Kathy Lyons of FCNSW; Marius Gaynard, Owner of Wildnets; Maria Doherty from Koala Conservation Australia; Minister for Regional NSW Tara Moriarty; John Shipp, FCNSW Aboriginal Heritage and partnerships manager; and FCNSW CEO Anshul Chaudhary. Image: Forestry Corporation NSW



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# Dust-monitoring calls

## The removal of engineered stone from building sites has not removed silicosis risks.

FOLLOWING on from a ban on the use of engineered stone coming into force on 1 July this year, the Albanese government last week banned its importation nationally. This came after a campaign led by physicians and unions highlighting the significant risks of silicosis from engineered stone – which contains more finer particles of silica than natural stone.

While builders have turned to replacement products that are said to carry lower risk, many of these are visually similar to engineered stone and so the ban delivers an added assurance that those products will no longer be available.

However, the removal of engineered stone has removed only the most significant risk. Multiple common construction products still contain the respirable crystalline silica (RCS) that causes silicosis. RCS is safe when contained within the stone, but becomes a significant hazard when released as dust during cutting, grinding, drilling and polishing.

Accordingly, this month saw the beginning of stronger regulation around all crystalline silica substances, including mandates for wet cutting, dust removal and ventilation, isolation booths and protective breathing equipment. As a rough guide, engineered stone contains up to 97% crystalline silica, while granite typically contains 30%, natural sandstone 70–95%, marble 2% and aggregates, mortar, bricks, ceramics and concrete contain various amounts.



**The engineered stone ban came in response to risks to workers from dust caused by cutting, drilling, polishing and more.** Photo: courtesy WeAre.SA

[Click here for Safe Work Australia's page and links on the topic.](#)

Accordingly, some industry experts are calling for Australian workplaces to also introduce real-time dust monitoring.

Glyn Pierce-Jones, CEO of leading workplace safety technology company Trolex, said, "Even with engineered stone out of the picture and strong workplace safety regulations – as strong as any in the world – Australian worksites still carry risks that can only be reduced if real-time dust monitoring is introduced."

Pierce-Jones pointed to a recent US study in the *Annals of Workplace Exposures and Health* (click here for the study) that examined the levels of background RCS on a construction site in Colorado.

Personal worker and area background silica samples were taken over 13 days and involved workers working on dried concrete/mortar.

The site followed Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

guidelines designed to protect workers from RCS exposure above the permissible exposure limit of 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . The same exposure limit applies across Australian workplaces.

The OSHA guidelines include dust control measures such as dust suppression with water, HEPA filtration vacuum collection systems and drill shrouds.

However, the results suggest that dust controls were inadequate for a number of construction activities, including a walk-behind saw (126  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), dowel drilling (99.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and grinding (172  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

The study's authors concluded that "managers and employees may assume that they will not be over-exposed to silica while employing the mandated dust controls", but the results of their study suggested that even with the implementation of dust controls and work practices, employees may still be at risk of silica exposure above the OSHA Permissible Exposure Limits.

Installing real-time air monitoring delivers actual data on dust exposures in the workplace and also real-time understanding of the risks.

Pierce-Jones notes that work safety agencies in Australia were alerted to the dangers of manufactured stone years after exposure occurred by the dramatic increase in cases of silicosis, which is a cumulative disease that is uncovered by either screening or the development of symptoms.

Studies such as one conducted in 2023 by Monash University School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, found that nearly one quarter of people who had worked with engineered stone benchtops developed silicosis (click here for a synopsis).

According to the study co-author, Emeritus Professor Malcolm Sim, "poor dust control measures have been widely reported in the industry".

While the new regulations are an improvement, the ban on engineered stone also brings a risk of unwarranted complacency, particularly when some natural stones, concrete, tiles and bricks still pose a significant risk.

"Engineered stone brought the danger of RCS into sharp relief because it was impossible to miss the scourge it caused," said Pierce-Jones. "The bans are a crucial step in the right direction and now is the time to shine a light on the hidden dangers of background RCS with real-time monitoring."

# Total Tools data leak risk

COSBOA CEO Luke Achterstraat has warned businesses in the construction and trades industry of the threat of secondary attacks following revelations of a data leak at major Australian hardware chain Total Tools, which could affect more than 38,000 customers.

"It is critical for tradespeople and anyone in the construction industry with online hardware business accounts to be on heightened alert for suspicious activity in the coming hours, days and weeks, as cyber criminals try to use the stolen data for nefarious purposes," Achterstraat said.

"We are warning businesses to be aware of scams and secondary attacks and take steps to secure your sensitive data, finances and client information. Enrolling in the free Cyber Wardens program,

supported by the Federal government, only takes two minutes to help every small business and their employees protect themselves from cyber attacks."

Customer data including names, credit card details, email addresses, Total Tools passwords, mobile numbers and shipping addresses have been compromised in the leak.

COSBOA and its member organisations, including Master Builders Association, the National Timber and Hardware Association, and the Master Grocers Association, are working together to alert small business owners and their employees to take immediate steps to protect their personal and business information.



1/ Total Tools altered customers as once the hack became known and turned to the Australian Cyber Security Centre for assistance.

2/ Total Tools CEO Richard Murray. Images: supplied

Total Tools CEO Richard Murray said the company had informed impacted customers, adding: "In addition... Total Tools has also implemented several additional cyber security measures to minimise the likelihood of this occurring again. Total Tools has also informed the Australian Cyber Security Centre and Office of the Australian Information Commissioner."

The free Cyber Wardens

eLearning program, funded by the Federal government, has been designed to help Australia's 2.5 million small businesses fortify their digital doors against cyber crime.

Businesses concerned they have been targeted are urged to call the Australian Cyber Security Hotline on 1300 CYBER1 (1300 292 371).

To learn more about the Cyber Wardens program, click here.

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# NZ eucalypts: commercial opportunities

Part two of our special on a study regarding eucalypt plantings in Marlborough looks at the commercial possibilities at the ‘right scale’.

By MICHAEL SMITH

FOLLOWING on from last week’s story about planting durable eucalypts in the Marlborough region, we look further at the case study undertaken by New Zealand Dryland Forests Innovation (NZDFI) – and consider two genetically improved durable eucalypt species.

Paul Millen, NZDFI’s project manager, says the study determined the feasibility of establishing a sawmill and remanufacturing hub, supplied with hardwood logs grown within a 40km catchment (one of 12 proposed in northern and eastern areas of New Zealand).

He adds that a previous study based on the hub concept was undertaken by Scion – “essentially a commercial scenario of what it would look like to invest in the forests and develop the sawmill. Wairoa [east coast of the North Island] was the focus, but the study was transferable to any region.”

It would require a sawmill/remanufacturing hub located on a 5-hectare site at Kaituna, with some 52,000m<sup>3</sup> of logs delivered to the mill annually. A smaller post/peeling

“WE’VE GOT TO GET SOME SCALE INTO WHAT WE’RE DOING TO MAKE IT WORK

plant located on industrial land at Riverlands, just south of Blenheim, might also be feasible.

Product supply could include hardwood timbers, vineyard posts and poles, veneers, chip and possibly pellets.

Millen says a sawmill of this scale would create a substantial amount of employment (with additional work in log transportation and other downstream sectors) and generate an annual GDP of some NZ\$82 million (2020 costs and revenues).

He notes that the catchment to supply the logs would encompass north and south Marlborough – two distinct regions and growing regimes.

“In the north, we’re looking at a 30-year rotation growing *E. globoidea* on 3000–3500 hectares to generate a



1



2

1/ A sixteen-year-old durable eucalypt trial at the Pukaka Forest, Marlborough.

2/ Destructive sampling for biomass assessments of *E. globoidea*.

Images: NZDFI

“When you start talking about diversification of the industry, we’ve got to get some scale into what we’re doing to make it work.

“The proposed Riverlands post/pole peeling hub would be supplied with *E. bosistoana* and *E. cladocalyx* – based on a 20- to 25-year rotation on low-productivity, dry South Marlborough sites. And we’re only talking mean annual increments [MAIs] of between five and seven cubic metres per year. That’s quite low compared with a lot of radiata forests which are doing 15 to 20.”

Millen says there are some innovative post-peeling options worth considering, including spindle-less debarking lathes, which produce very tidy, round posts from a range of durable species. “And what excites me is the possibility of using them on-site, resulting in low supply

sustainable supply of logs. Modelling indicates we could be getting a recoverable volume of around 500m<sup>3</sup> per hectare,” Millen says.

## THE RIGHT SCALE

“This is where we need to emphasise ‘the right tree and the right place’ – to which Scion added ‘the right purpose’. And then I’m saying ‘right scale’, which needs to be given more consideration,” says Millen.

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chain emissions," he adds.

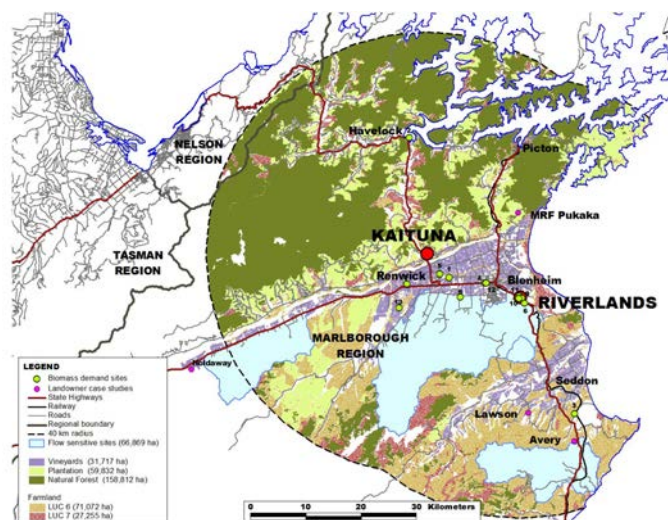
When it comes to biomass, he believes that harvesting and processing residues could feed back into energy for the sawmill and also produce a range of solid biofuel products.

"These match up neatly with some of the larger food and wine manufacturing businesses in Marlborough. Thirteen sites were identified in a study by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority [EECA] with fuel switching requirements from diesel, in particular, to solid biofuel."

## IMPROVED PLANTING STOCK

NZDFI recently released a brochure containing essential information about selecting an appropriate forestry regime, site/species selection, and its improved XyloGene planting stock.

Millen says the tree-breeding programme has genetically improved two durable eucalypt species – *E. globoides* (White stringybark)



**Proposed Marlborough catchment showing the two processing hubs at Kaituna and Riverlands.** Image: NZDFI

and *E. bosistoana* (Coast grey box).

The former grows productively across a range of sites and produces Class 2 durable timber, which is strong, versatile and easy to machine, with an attractive grain. It has an expected in-ground service life of 15–25 years.

The latter grows best on fertile, sheltered sites, and produces hard and strong Class 1 durable timber with an in-ground service life of 25-plus years.

"To achieve genetic gains, elite trees were selected for propagation – and have been tested in New Zealand environments with varying biotic and abiotic factors," says Millen.

"XyloGene seed and seedlings of both species offer superior performance to planting provenance collections imported from Australia or collected in New Zealand."

To learn more about NZDFI's Xylogene, click here.

# New timber facility for Wondai

QUEENSLAND'S Parkside Timber has received development approval from South Burnett Regional Council for its new Wooden and Laminated Product Manufacturing plant at Kemp St, Wondai.

The facility will add significantly to the supply of engineered timber to the local market, with the expectation it will process up to 6000 tonnes of timber per annum and add 10 full-time jobs to the community as well as produce 5000 to 10,000 tonnes of reconstituted timber products annually.

The approved plans include a new glue line building for finger-jointing spotted gum sourced from the Wondai Dry Mill into glue-laminated timber and deck blanks, as well as extra storage and cutting facilities.

Parkside is a family business that grew from a timber supply and building venture begun by Spanish immigrant Bruno Tapiolas Vila shortly after World War II. With second-, third- and fourth-generation Tapiolas family members currently at the helm, Parkside is now one of the largest hardwood millers and timber

manufacturers in Australia, producing world-class timber products to Australia, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

One key concern throughout the company's history has been the sustainability of its log resource. Now, with the addition of the new gluelines, more of that log will be available as quality structural and decking timbers, further increasing the amount of carbon that can be locked away in Australian homes.

The start date for the project is yet to be announced.



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