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## WA farmed hardwoods boom in price

COVER STORY P 3

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# ATO ruling supports timber workers

## Victorian native timber workers made redundant get a tax win.

IN a landmark class ruling, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has decided that government top-up payments will usually be treated as genuine, tax-free redundancy payments.

The ruling applies to top-up payments received by employees impacted by the transition away from native timber harvesting under the Victorian Forestry Transition Program. It reads in part: "If an employee receives a Government top-up payment (GTU payment) under the Program and satisfies the criteria of section 83-175 with reference to an objective assessment of their circumstances, that payment will be a genuine redundancy payment and will be non-assessable non-exempt income (tax-free) up to the limit worked out under section 83-170."

Concessional tax rates will apply to other benefits that fall outside these conditions.

The tax-free and concessional rates also extend to casual, piece rate, and seasonal employees who



AFCA's Tim Lester with Member for Lyons (TAS) Brian Mitchell MP. Photo: courtesy Tim Lester/Twitter

have received Government redundancy payments.

Victoria's Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence welcomed the decision, saying, "We advocated for this landmark decision, which is making sure our native timber workers can access the full amount of the Government's Top-Up Payments and get the financial support they need.

"We continue to support native timber workers throughout the forestry transition and help

“THEY WERE FACING A SUBSTANTIAL TAX HIT SO THIS WILL EASE SOME OF THAT PRESSURE

communities plan for the future."

The Victorian Government also noted that the ruling provides further details as to how tax will be applied to other Victorian Forestry Worker Support Program payments including Relocation Reimbursement Payments and Hardship Payments. It recommended employees take the ruling to their accountant where it can be applied for the current or previous financial years.

AFCA's general manager Tim Lester told Star Mail journalist Callum Ludwig the ruling was good work by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

"It is an important step because the workers whose lives have been turned upside down because they've lost their jobs, they've been made redundant, were then facing quite a substantial tax hit so this will ease some of that pressure," Ludwig said (click here to read more).

To read the full ruling, click here.

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# Farm forestry pays off in WA

## A savvy investment in land and tree management in the 90s is rewarding this family.

WHEN Western Australia made the surprise decision to ban native logging in its forests from 1 January of this year, the usual claims that plantation timbers would be able to increase and make up the difference were trotted out. And the timber sector, as always,

replied that we love plantation timbers, but they do take a few decades to grow. Meanwhile, on his Walpole farm in southwest Western Australia, Geoff North must have been smiling.

Back in the early 1990s, the Norths looked at their dairy farm's cleared lands and depleted soils and decided to make a change. Across the farm, they planted restored local native bushland and riparian zones, plus woodlots of 30 species of Australian eucalypts. The strategy had multiple prongs: the trees would help to rebuild the local environment, with the bushland areas supporting the return of indigenous plant and wildlife species, while the woodlots allowed the Norths to investigate which species grew best for Australian markets.

And now, as Geoff North told the ABC, prices for those hardwood timbers



1/ *The plantation represents thirty years of tree management.*

2/ *Long, straight logs come as a result of careful management.*

3/ *Small-diameter thinnings and trimmings are sold as firewood to local customers.* All photos: courtesy Geoff and Sasha North

have doubled in the past 12 months. It's been an unexpected but welcome benefit.

"You don't set out planting trees without positivity in the first place, you've got to get yourself wet and dirty," North said.

"In the early 90s, my family and I set out to plant trees for long rotation, sawlog crops, and we did that over 20 to 25 years, planting over 350,000 trees."

The core species include WA Blackbutt, Spotted Gum, Yate, Tuart, Sydney Gum, Tingle and Marri, which are managed extensively.

"Everywhere you don't see a limb, a limb was removed," North said.

The wide-spaced growing conditions come from regular and well-judged thinning, with small-diameter logs being sold for firewood and other byproduct uses. The mature trees are now straight and fat,



with heights up to 50m, and in high demand at local sawmills for sale as structural and architectural timber products including floorboards and cladding.

"The prices that you can get for high-value sawlogs these days is not just a reflection of supply, but also the demand for high-value logs," North said, indicating one tree to the ABC's Andrew Chounding and saying "that's about \$2000 worth of wood."

The Norths also receive an income stream from carbon credits. Accordingly, the farm combines 250 hectares of native forest, now home to the rare and endangered southern ringtail possum plus white and red tailed black

cockatoos, and a long rotation plantation which yields a fully sustainable 2000 tons of hardwood per annum and is replanted sequentially.

"We fell in love with tree farming and realised down the track that we have plenty of benefits," North told the ABC.

"The best way to fight climate change is to basically put carbon pumps in the land, which is what trees are."

With hardwood remaining in high demand in WA, those prices won't be falling soon.

For more on the North's business, click here.

Source: ABC

*On the cover: Turning to trees in the 1990s has paid off for the North family. Photo: courtesy Geoff and Sasha North*

“YOU DON'T SET OUT PLANTING TREES WITHOUT POSITIVITY IN THE FIRST PLACE”

# Spring clean weekend in Mt Gambier

RESIDENTS in the Mt Gambier area can take advantage of Spring Clean Weekend on 23 and 24 November.

Sponsored by OneFortyOne in collaboration with the City of Mount Gambier council, this community-driven event is aimed at tackling the issue of illegal rubbish disposal by covering the costs for large items at the waste transfer station.

Forests and plantations are common dumping grounds for large rubbish including tyres, mattresses and furniture, as opportunities for legal disposal are limited and can be seen as too expensive in the current cost of living crisis.

OneFortyOne Environmental Manager Belinda Williamson said illegal dumping has been a

persistent problem in the forests around Mount Gambier, leading to environmental and safety hazards.

“The Spring Clean Weekend is a trial initiative designed to address this issue by providing a convenient and cost-free way for residents to dispose of their rubbish,” Williamson said.

“We’re encouraging people to bring their unwanted items from the sponsored list to the council waste transfer station, keeping rubbish out of the forest.”

City Of Mount Gambier environment officer Aaron Izzard said the transfer station



**OneFortyOne Environmental Manager Belinda Williamson, City of Mount Gambier Environmental Sustainability Officer Aaron Izzard and ReUse Market Attendant Tanis Alexander.** Photo: courtesy OneFortyOne

will have staff on hand to help and will also take other items that are usually free to dump including TVs, computers and computer products, liquid paint, motor oil, metals and batteries.

“Anything in good and usable condition can also be dropped off to be donated to the ReUse market,” Izzard said.

Williamson emphasised the importance of community involvement in this initiative. “This event is a trial to build on our ongoing efforts to reduce illegal dumping and protect the forest for everyone,” she said.

“While we recognise that this may not immediately solve the problem, it is a positive start.”

The Waste Transfer Station on Eucalypt Drive will be open for the Spring Clean Weekend on 23 and 24 November from 2 – 5pm each day, with sponsored disposal for residential use only. Click here for more details.

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# HIA's Economic and Industry Outlook

## The homebuilding news is improving across most of Australia.

HIA's new Economic and Industry Outlook report contains updated forecasts for new home building and renovations activity nationally and for each of the eight states and territories. The good news: recovery is in sight for homebuilding across almost all of the nation. The bad news: except Sydney, thanks to exceptionally high land prices and costs.

"A national new home building recovery is in sight, but state government housing policies risk stalling the recovery," said HIA Senior Economist, Matt King.

"At the national level, demand for new homes is accelerating and this is largely due to the fact that the RBA hasn't increased interest rates for a year, population growth is still elevated, the unemployment rate remains low and real incomes have stabilised.

"While activity is picking up, the varied nature of activity levels across capital city and regional markets continues to be pronounced. We have confidence that new home



**Detached housing builds are leading the recovery.** Photo Shutterstock

building activity across most markets will continue to improve as we transition into the new year. However, Sydney remains an outlier and there is still no indication of a near-term rebound in both detached house and multi-residential building."

For the September quarter 2024, building approvals increased from Q3 2023 figures by 60.1% in Western Australia, 24.2% in Queensland and 16.3% in South Australia in seasonally adjusted terms.

Detached housing approvals rose 6.1% across the country in September to a two-year high of 9890, while multi-residential remained constrained thanks to factors including labour shortages, credit constraints and material price rises.

"It is anticipated that

**“IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT DETACHED HOUSE STARTS WILL RISE STEADILY**

detached house starts will rise steadily from a trough of 100,230 in 2023 to 115,690 in 2027," King said. "If the supply of land and labour are addressed, there is significant upside potential for this forecast."

He noted that housing policy required certainty and was critical of policies such as surcharges on foreign investors,

saying "The extent of the recovery in new home building will be determined by the ability of governments to ease the barriers to home building."

King warned that the nascent recovery needs support. "Failure to implement policies such as expedited land release, concessions on property taxation and accelerated development approval timeframes risks slowing the rate of home building over the next five years," he said.

## 2024-25 Community Grants Program applications are now open

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# Hyne's new sawmill completed

## Officials open the Tumbarumba Sawmill extension and storage facility.

FOR over 20 years, Hyne has been a major employer in Tumbarumba, southern NSW, with its large sawmill also delivering hundred of related jobs and community support from direct donations to local groups.

During the encircling fires of Black Summer, the mill was saved, but many employees' homes and much of the timber resource Hyne relied on were lost and damaged.

For 18 months, the Hyne team kept work going with salvage timber – trees that had been burned too badly to survive but which still contained usable material. This involved careful planning in both logistics and cutting to extract the best value from the burned logs, as well as lowering the risk of burned trees falling onto roads.

The whole time the Hyne management team was planning ahead. They worked quickly to secure contracts that would guarantee sustainable log supply, and then plans were put in place for a new storage facility that would protect those logs from adverse weather and guarantee the maximum value from each when sawn.

In October, during construction of the new facility, Hyne national projects and reliability manager, Darren Wright, described the construction project as critical investment and part of the ongoing bushfire recovery challenges.

"With the reduction in log volume as a direct result of the 2019/20 bushfires, it is imperative we protect our products from adverse weather exposure in order to



1/ Aerial photo of Hyne's new storage shed at Tumbarumba.

2/ From L-R, the Hon. Michael McCormack, Hyne CEO Jim Bindon, Snowy Valleys Council Mayor Julia Ham and site manager Kristina Kaminski cutting the ribbon at the opening. All photos: courtesy Hyne

extract the maximum value. This storage facility will assist in achieving this," Wright said.

"Being able to utilise both NSW Government and Australian Government bushfire recovery funding to help us meet the construction costs, this has made this critical infrastructure investment possible."

This week, Hyne Timber has officially marked the completion of the new 4700m<sup>2</sup> storage facility with a ribbon cutting celebration held at the Tumbarumba Sawmill.

Joined by the Hon. Michael McCormack MP, the new Mayor of the Snowy Valleys

Council, Councillor Julia Ham and several other key stakeholders, the event celebrated the company's new ability to protect huge quantities of timber from the weather while also reflecting on the devastating impact of the 2019/20 bushfires.

Jim Bindon, CEO of the Hyne Group, addressed the gathering, congratulating those involved on this successful milestone, saying "Many team members and contractors have been involved in the delivery of this storage facility including local companies, Joss Constructions and Wagga Fire. You should all be proud of the

smooth project management and successful completion.

"This facility is a critical asset to protect our products from adverse weather exposure to extract the maximum value from our pine log feedstock since the bushfires."

Bindon confirmed that government grants had played an important role in the delivery of the facility.

"Operational efficiency for this Mill has never been more important and I thank both the Australian Government and NSW Government for their support with bushfire recovery funding which contributed towards the delivery costs. This support made our investment viable," he said.

"I also thank the Snowy Valleys Council for expediting the development approval at the start of the year and the Tumbarumba community for their ongoing support."

Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW and Western NSW Tara Moriarty said the Tumbarumba Mill Optimisation project is an example of the Australian and NSW Government's commitment to building stronger, more resilient regional economies.

"The increased storage capacity at Tumbarumba Mill will ensure this important timber processor can maintain its production of timber supplies for the building sector while securing those local jobs the community relies on," Moriarty said.

"The Australian and NSW Governments are

Cont P 7

## NOVEMBER

### 20: Forestry Australia Webinar - Rapid detection of fire in Australia's forests – ONLINE EVENT, 12.30-1.45pm (AEDT).

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**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)

**MAY 7-8: Sydney Build 25 – ICC, Sydney.** Australia's largest construction and design show.

Enews is a media partner for Sydney Build 2025. For more details visit <https://www.sydneybuildexpo.com>

**MAY 26-30: LIGNA 25 – Hannover, Germany.** The world's leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing plant, machinery and tools. For more details visit <https://www.ligna.de/en/for-visitors>

**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 22-23: Melbourne Build 25 – MCEC, Melbourne.** Victoria's largest construction and design show. For more details visit <https://melbournebuildexpo.com>

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

From P 6

backing projects in the Snowy Valleys region that will boost preparedness for future disasters, encourage economic recovery, aid tourism and bring people together."

Now complete, the new storage facility can store 4000m<sup>3</sup> of timber known in the process as 'Rough Sawn, Kiln Dried' (RSKD) material.

Albury based Joss Construction was appointed to undertake the build with official occupancy granted in October 2024.

The project prioritised utilising local trades and suppliers and injected over

\$5m directly into the regional economy. It was jointly funded through the Australian and NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund and the Australian Government Forestry Recovery Development Fund.

While the Hon. Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories was unable to attend the celebration, she sent a message of support which was read out: "I would like to apologise for not being here



**Flashback to the 1.6 million burnt plantation pine logs processed at the Hyne mill after Black summer. This kept jobs going and reduced risk of tree fall to locals.** Photo: courtesy Hyne

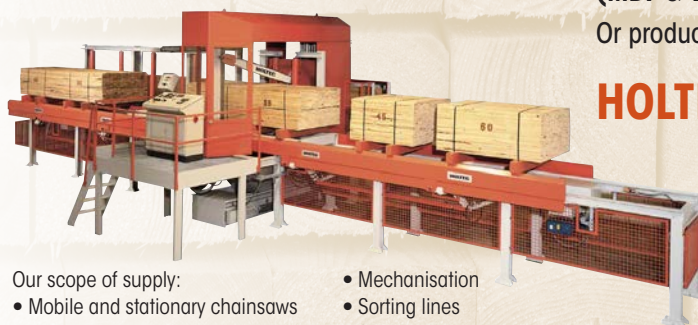
with you in person to mark this wonderful occasion.

"Thank you to Hyne Timber for the invitation to attend today – this new storage facility will prove critical in assisting Hyne to protect its products from weather exposure.

"I'm proud that it was jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments as part of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund and the Australian Government Forestry Recovery Development Fund – it's build alone creating 30 additional local jobs during the construction.

"Well done to Hyne on its successful completion, to all the local tradies, and to the dedicated workforce here. This facility will be of huge benefit to Hyne and the broader Tumbarumba community."

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# Meet your certified supplier: Neville Smith Forest Products

In this occasional series, Responsible Wood visits another of its certified suppliers.

NEVILLE Smith Forest Products (NSFP) is a trailblazer in Tasmania's forestry sector, renowned for its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and responsible sourcing. During a visit to NSFP's Mowbray facility in Tasmania, Matt de Jongh, Sustainability Manager at Responsible Wood, had the opportunity to explore the company's operations and discuss their approach to sustainable forestry practices with Brett Stevenson, the group forestry resource manager at NSFP.

Founded in 1924, NSFP is known for producing high-quality hardwood products, all sourced from sustainably harvested regrowth and plantation forests, with an emphasis on Tasmanian Oak. NSFP was among the first in the timber industry to embrace sustainable forestry practices, long holding PEFC certification for its commitment to environmentally responsible harvesting.

"Our focus has always been on sustainability and innovation," says Stevenson. "We believe in using every part of the tree and finding ways to add value to the timber we harvest. This is at the core of what we do and drives us to continually improve."

NSFP's products are used across Australia in building, construction, and consumer sectors, known for their durability and exceptional quality. The company's ethos revolves around respect for the environment, ensuring that every piece of timber is sourced and processed with care.



1/ Matt de Jongh and Brett Stevenson, Group Forestry Resource Manager, NSFP at an NSFP certified sustainably managed private forest estate.

2/ An NSFP certified sustainably managed private forest estate

All photos: Responsible Wood

Sustainability is not just a catchphrase at NSFP—it's a guiding principle. The company sources all its timber from Responsible Wood-certified forests, which ensures that the timber is sustainably harvested, and the forests are managed in a way that promotes regeneration and biodiversity.

"NSFP's approach to sustainability is truly impressive," says de Jongh. "The company takes responsibility for the entire lifecycle of its products, from

how the timber is harvested to how by-products like sawdust and off-cuts are utilised. It's a zero-waste philosophy that's setting new standards in the industry."

One of NSFP's most innovative initiatives is its pellet processing facility at the NSFP Dry Mill in northern Tasmania. This facility converts waste from the milling process into high-value wood pellets for heating and cooking, ensuring that nothing goes to waste. This initiative earned NSFP the EPA Sustainability Award for

Tasmania in 2020.

"Our wood pellet facility is a testament to our commitment to reducing waste and maximising the value of our resources," says Stevenson. "By converting sawdust and off-cuts into pellets, we're not only reducing our environmental footprint but also providing a valuable product for consumers."

## RESPONSIBLE WOOD CERTIFICATION

NSFP holds Responsible Wood certification, which assures that its timber products are sourced from sustainably managed forests. This certification is part of the company's long-standing commitment to responsible forestry practices, ensuring that its operations meet the highest environmental, social and economic standards.

"Having Responsible Wood certification is essential to our business," says Stevenson. "It's not just about meeting regulatory requirements – it's about demonstrating our commitment to sustainability and giving our customers confidence in the products they're buying."

For de Jongh, the certification is a clear signal that NSFP is committed to doing the right thing. "Responsible Wood certification guarantees that NSFP's products are sourced sustainably. It shows that they're leading the way in responsible forestry practices, and that's something to be proud of," he says.



From P 8

In addition to sustainability, NSFP is recognised for its commitment to quality and innovation. The company continuously invests in research and development, finding new ways to enhance the value of its timber products. Its TimberBuild brand, for example, transforms timber shorts – traditionally a by-product of the milling process – into functional and beautiful timber panels used across Australia.

“We’re always looking for ways to innovate and add value to our timber,” Stevenson explains. “Our TimberBuild panels are a great example of how we turn what would have been waste into a high-quality product. It’s about making the most of our resources and ensuring that nothing goes to waste.”

NSFP’s ability to combine quality with sustainability has

made the company a leader in the industry, providing products that not only meet the highest standards but also help protect the environment.

Certification is increasingly important in today’s environmentally conscious marketplace. For NSFP, its Responsible Wood certifications are a key part of its business strategy, ensuring that its products meet the growing demand for sustainable materials.

“Certification is critical for us,” says Stevenson. “It gives us credibility in the marketplace and ensures that our customers can trust that the products they’re using are sustainably sourced.”

De Jongh adds, “As sustainability becomes more central to building and construction projects, having certified products is becoming a competitive advantage. NSFP’s certification under Responsible Wood means the



**NSFP’s Stevenson (right) told de Jongh that certification helped customers trust that their timber is sustainable.** Photo: Responsible Wood

company is well-positioned to meet this growing demand.”

The close relationship between NSFP and Responsible Wood isn’t a one-off. Collaboration is at the heart of NSFP’s success. The company works closely with local communities, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders to ensure that its forestry operations are not only sustainable but also socially responsible.

“Collaboration is key to

what we do,” says Stevenson. “We work with a range of stakeholders to ensure that our operations benefit everyone involved, from the local communities to the environment.”

For de Jongh, this collaborative approach is a shining example of how the forestry industry

can engage with other organisations to achieve shared sustainability goals. “NSFP’s partnerships with local communities and other stakeholders are a model for how the industry can work together to create positive outcomes for people and the planet,” he says.

Click here to learn more about NSFP and click here to learn more about Responsible Wood.



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# Calls for country of origin labels

## Reports of misleading imported timber products highlights need for better consumer information.

CONCERNS regarding the origins of timber sold in Australia have been front of mind in recent months. In the wake of a recent DAFF trial that showed a quarter of the tested products were found to be inconsistent with declared species, origin, or both (Enews 827, 31 October) comes reports of imported timber products masquerading as being from sustainable Australian sources.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Diana Hallam said that these issues highlighted the need for stronger protections to inform buyers of where their wood is from, including 'country of origin' labelling.

"When consumers go into their local hardware store or builders source timber products from wholesalers, they need clear information about what they're buying, and whether it's from a sustainable Australian source, or not," Hallam said.

"We are receiving numerous reports of imported timber and engineered wood products that have been named, presented or marketed in very similar ways to longstanding, leading domestically manufactured products existing in the local Australian market, creating consumer confusion.

"This added to the recent results of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF)



**1/ Calls for county of origin labelling for timber are designed to help consumers.** Image: Shutterstock  
**2/ Food labelling laws in Australia make it clear where products come from.** Photo: Donyale Harrison

timber testing trial which found around a quarter of imported products tested had inconsistencies— is alarming."

While Australian legislation around the illegal timber trade has been beefed up, it has not been enough to resolve the issues.

"Earlier this year the Albanese Government sought to strengthen Australian illegal logging laws that AFPA backed in," said Hallam. "Given the recent ramped up reports of dubious products and the result of the DAFF trial, AFPA's support for the enhanced legislation has been vindicated and we congratulate the Government on its efforts with this issue.

"However, these developments also strengthen AFPA's argument for timber and wood fibre 'country of origin' labelling reforms, similar to our food product labelling regime, that would inform consumers about the origin of the products they're

native forestry in Victoria and WA, some good-faith efforts to secure sustainable supply have been let down by international partners 'green-washing' conflict timbers from Russia and Belarus or illegal Asian timbers. An estimated 10% of imported timbers sold in Australia are thought to come from illegal sources.

In effect, attempts to 'save' Australian forests appear to be having negative impacts on other forests around the world and the average Australian consumer does not have the technical information that allows respected importers to avoid risky sources.

Country of origin labelling would allow consumers to look for local timbers or for trusted international supply nations, just as currently occurs with food.

"The ban on harvesting of Australian native timbers in Victoria and Western Australia has added to the problem with many local furniture and flooring manufacturers now forced to source timbers from overseas forests that aren't bound by Australia's sustainability standards, to continue their businesses," Hallam said. "Ensuring these products are clearly labelled has now become urgent.

"When consumers are informed, they make informed choices, and it makes sense for timber and wood fibre products to be properly labelled. I look forward to working with the Federal Government on improving consumer information for timber and fibre, and fighting against products that, either intentionally or not, purport to be something they're not."



**2** purchasing."

The country of origin labelling legislation for food serves multiple purposes. It primarily allows customers to make informed choices, but it also allows regulators an avenue to demand businesses substantiate those country of origin claims. Regulators are able to enforce accuracy and take action when there has been malicious deception. Regulators also distinguish between producers who have made genuine efforts to comply but made errors in their process or been deceived by third parties and those who have deliberately breached requirements with false or misleading claims.

With Australian timber-related industries scrambling to source new supply chains in the wake of the closure of

# Experts call for sustainable native forestry

The new issue of *Australian Forestry* contains an editorial by CSIRO chief research scientist Dr John Raison and CSIRO honorary fellow in forest science Dr Sadanandan Nambiar pithily titled 'Australia should source wood from both plantations and native forests'.

In it, the two experts make the case for a mixed forestry model, pointing out that our starting position is a significant local timber shortage with growing imports and our urgent need for new housing is only going to make that worse.

Raison and Nambiar are supportive of plantation forestry, but the majority of mature plantation is currently softwoods and hardwoods grown for pulp.

They criticise the naïve view that plantations can make

up the difference when native timber forestry operations are closed, saying "This view is simplistic when we consider the history of Australian plantation development, the types of wood products produced from plantations, current stand growth rates, the diversity of products we need, and the operation of wood product markets and businesses. For now, we simply do not have sufficient plantations to replace the volumes (or quality) of wood currently obtained from native forests; for the future, expansion of the plantation estate requires overcoming



From the editorial, *regenerating regrowth native forest after prior harvesting*. Photo: Raison and Nambiar

major impediments and has a lag time of many decades."

The editorial briefly covers the historic issues with Australian hardwood plantations and the loss of most state funding for plantation growth. At the same time, it makes it clear that investor worries have limited the amount of private sector

money available. Even in a best-case scenario, new hardwood plantations established today won't be delivering mature timber for decades.

According to the authors, the carefully managed sustainable harvesting of a small proportion of regrowth native forests is therefore

the most environmentally responsible option, given Australia has the regulatory framework in place and the alternative – steel framing for housing – represents a significantly worse environmental outcome.

To read the full article, [click here](#).

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# Valuable industry data now available through upgraded FWPA data dashboard

FOREST & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) is pleased to announce the public launch of the new FWPA Data Dashboard, now accessible for anyone interested via an annual subscription. This enhanced platform provides valuable insights and data specifically tailored for the forestry and wood products sector, empowering businesses to make informed decisions based on trusted, impartial information.

"We are excited to make our upgraded FWPA Data Dashboard available to a broader audience," said Erick Hansnata, Statistics and Economics Program Manager at FWPA. "This platform not only enhances FWPA's member experience but also empowers all users in the forestry and wood products sector with critical data and insights."

"Our commitment to providing reliable, impartial information supports effective decision-making, helping businesses navigate an ever-changing market landscape."

The FWPA Data Dashboard is designed to be a valuable resource for organisations across our sector, providing users with essential data and analysis to navigate market fluctuations, identify trends and plan for the future.

For the past decade, FWPA has collated and made available a wide range of data on the forestry and wood products sector.

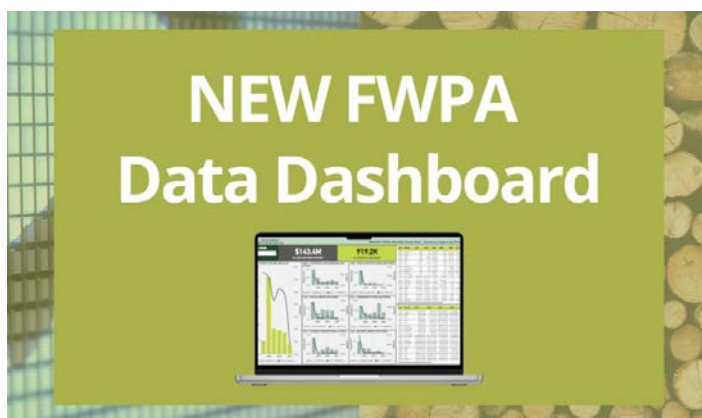


Photo: supplied FWPA

The public domain and industry data included in the FWPA Data Dashboard is designed to enable users to respond effectively to market trends and has applications for a variety of business functions, including leadership, business development, occupational health and safety and human resources.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE UPGRADED FWPA DATA DASHBOARD

The new and upgraded version of the Data Dashboard boasts several key features, including both sector-specific and macroeconomic data, as well as forecasting features available on a number of data series to help businesses make strategic decisions:

- **FWPA Softwood Volume and Price Data** Exclusive Australian softwood industry volume and price data, updated regularly.
- **Monthly Trade Activities Data and Forecast Reports**

on export-import activities and provides forecasts for key trade products.

- **Australian Forest and Wood Products Statistics (AFWPS)**

Utilising the ABARES-FWPA Program, this twice-yearly publication delivers insights into national log harvesting and timber processing activities, including indicators of forestry sector activity.

- **The Weekly Brief Analysis** A data driven update combining most recent industry data with current market and economic developments.

- **Macroeconomic Indicators**

Access key economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), and Wage Price Index (WPI).

- **International Forest Production and Sustainability Data**

Analyse progress towards sustainable development goals by country, using data from the Food and Agriculture

Organisation of the United Nations.

- **ABS Building Activities Data and Forecast** Focused on building activity in Australia, this feature includes data on construction projects and future trends.

## A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE FOR THE INDUSTRY

With a new data series added as part of the redevelopment, the FWPA Data Dashboard is a valuable source of information, forecast data and market analysis.

"The FWPA Data Dashboard includes forecast data and comprehensive market analysis, equipping our members with the insights needed to navigate the dynamic landscape of the forest and wood products industry", said Andrew Leighton, FWPA's CEO.

"The platform is designed with future growth in mind, ensuring that we can expand its capabilities based on the evolving needs and interests of our members and the wider industry," he said.

FWPA's public data dashboard will continue to be publicly available via our website (click here).

Interested in taking advantage of the FWPA Data Dashboard's valuable insights? Learn more about the platform and purchase access by clicking this link.



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# Concerns about ACCU model

## A proposal that may slow or stop native timber harvesting in NSW is raising questions.

AS reported in last week's *T&F Enews* (828, page 3), among the new proponent-led Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme (ACCU) models is improved native forest management in multiple-use public forests, proposed by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

This method involves stopping or slowing down harvesting of publicly owned native forests. Not harvesting the forests for timber or letting them grow older before cutting them down, could enable ACCUs to be issued for storing more carbon. In effect, this could make forests more valuable as untouched carbon stores than as sources of renewable timber for sustainable construction methods (noting that timber buildings also store carbon and that each timber harvest requires replanting and hence more carbon storage).

The proposal has raised concerns among timber industry members whose livelihoods are connected to publicly owned forests.

James Jooste, senior policy manager at the Australian Forest Products Association told the ABC's Alexandra Blucher: "It's asking for carbon credits to halt or stop harvesting operations in state forests. Carbon credits don't create the critical products that we rely on every day from power poles to flooring to decking to cladding in our housing market."

Blucher also spoke with Noel Atkins of Hayden Timbers, who said "If we couldn't access any timber from state forests, that would



**James Jooste (here on a timber education field trip with NSW MPs) said carbon credits don't create the timber products we need.** Photo: courtesy Responsible Wood

essentially mean a 50% fall in volume. So, if we were not able to get that, it would really mean that the mill [near Port Macquarie] would probably close.

"There is a need to maintain a sustainable industry, and we can do that in conjunction with meeting ecological standards. There's no need to close it to achieve it. We can work together."

One of the proposed proponent-led ACCU models that is not currently being prioritised came from Forestry Australia. Its Enhancing Native Forest method features three main types of activity: restorative forestry practices, projects that restore ecological health and carbon through forest restoration and regenerative forestry practices where forests have been degraded by wildfires, pest and diseases, or other significant disturbances; adaptive harvesting practices that reduce carbon emissions and improve carbon storage in forests currently available for timber harvesting, while

allowing for a level of ongoing supply of wood products, by altering timber harvesting approaches or resting areas from harvest; and improved utilisation of harvested wood products, improving carbon storage in wood products by shifting the production of lower grade logs for short-lived wood products into higher grade logs and long-lived wood products.

The proposal was based on a growing body of published work that shows forests that are actively managed can have greater carbon potential.

Before her current parental leave, Forestry Australia President Dr Michelle Freeman said there were huge untapped opportunities.

"There is a growing body of published work that shows our forests are not only more resilient if they are actively managed, but they can deliver greater carbon abatement benefits," Dr Freeman said.

"Our proposed new Enhancing Native Forest Resilience method is specifically focused on

unlocking the carbon potential across all types of native forests – when they remain forest land."

Rather than locking up the forest, the Forestry Australia approach allows for continuing supply of locally and sustainably sourced timber and wood products – unlocking greater opportunities for Australia to meet its Paris Targets.

"This would provide additional revenue streams for our national parks, state forests and private forests, specifically to support more investment in ecologically sustainable forest management, thereby enhancing landscape resilience, biodiversity and social outcomes from our forests," said Freeman.

"It would maximise carbon market opportunities to more landowners, from state government agencies managing state forests and national parks, as well as community groups, not-for-profits, private landowners and First Nations Peoples.

"If we extend the potential options for earning carbon credits, we not only generate extra eligible carbon abatement opportunities for Australia, but we also enhance the resilience and ecological values of the Australian forest landscape while continuing to supply local high quality wood products from areas where that is appropriate, it's a win-win-win."

To watch the ABC report, [click here](#), and to read the Forestry Australia proposal, [click here](#).

# Bush doofs risk plantation damage

THERE are plenty of risks for the average plantation forester: fire, heavy winds, falling trees, heavy machinery, uneven terrain... Now some forestry operations are adding 'addled illegal dance party attendees' to the mix.

Independent publication The Pineapple has this week run a special local news story on the impacts of illegal doof parties being held in Queensland plantation forests, as well as National Parks and State Forests.

Bush doofs (think of the sound of dance music's drum beat to understand the name) are dance parties that at their heart consist of a night or two of loud electronic dance music but may also include environmental or social causes and often casual drug usage. They're nothing new: Nineties kids had a solid illegal rave scene, but the loss of many urban venues to



**Some regional towns and farms have embraced dance music festivals as income streams, but illegal doofs still occur in forests.** Image: Shutterstock

development saw the forest-based events shift from being irregular additions to the inner-city scene to becoming commonplace.

Some of these have become well-known, organised events, with local communities welcoming dance music fans to festivals like Strawberry Fields for

the past 15 years in East Gippsland. Many are now held on farms, for which they are a valuable source of additional income, and thousands of people can attend these sorts of events.

The difference between a music festival and a classic bush doof is simply legality: licencing and insurance costs

to run a festival can be in the tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, while an illegal doof requires nothing more than a sound system and generator. Most illegal doofs are still paid events, with information being circulated on social media about how to attend.

Journalist Vivienne Wynter spoke with HQ Plantations about bush doofs being held on their properties and was told they were occurring from SE Queensland to Kuranda. While attendees have mostly numbered only in the hundreds, there has still been damage to trees and sites and issues with rubbish and human waste being left on the property, as well as drug- and drunk-driving and drunk and drug-affected people becoming lost in the forests.

[Click here to read The Pineapple's full story.](#)

# Arctic trees may worsen global warming

IT'S an article of faith that trees are part of the solution to climate change, and in the vast majority of cases that is true. But in the Arctic regions, new research published in *Nature Geoscience* suggests that planting trees will accelerate, not slow down, global warming.

An international team of scientists has warned of the risks of tree planting at high altitudes. Some northern governments have planned planting for carbon capture as the area in which trees will survive has expanded thanks to existing climate change. Researchers say the conditions in these Arctic and sub-Arctic ecosystems make them poorly suited for tree



**Treeless Canadian tundra in Nunavut.** Photo: ADialla, CC via Wikicommons

planting.

The first and most obvious problem is that trees are darker than snow, and also than much of the low

vegetation and rocks found in the tundra (the treeless plains below the snow line). Darker surfaces significantly decrease the albedo effect, where sunlight is reflected

back into space without being converted to heat, unlike snow, which increases it.

But a bigger problem lies in the soils. Arctic soils store more carbon than all the vegetation on Earth and disturbing them, whether in cultivation for plantations or in root movement for tree growth, risks releasing much more carbon than the trees could hold.

They recommend keeping trees for lower latitudes and looking at herds of caribou in the higher regions, which actually appear to add to net cooling.

For more (in English) [click here](#). Or to read the paper (subscription only) [click here](#).

# COP 29

## Forest finance is a leading concern, as carbon price standards are set.

THE United Nations' 29th Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP29) opened in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Monday.

Unlike previous COPs, the lead-up to this one has been noticeably downbeat.

Whether that's exhaustion from the various disasters caused by the ongoing climate emergency or exasperation from the ignoring of climate in the recent US election and outing of the Azerbaijani hosts as fossil fuel fans, who can say?

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is nevertheless there holding the flag for Australian interests. As part of its presentation, DAFF is warning that climate change is already impacting Australia's forests, noting that historically prolonged periods of drought across the country have caused widespread mortality and secondary insect attack in eucalypt forests and pine plantations.

DAFF's pragmatic approach of defining problems and then working with partners on solutions is echoed in the COP's main forestry stream.

Today (14 November) the COP 29 Forest Pavilion will operate under the theme of Forest Finance, Investment and Trade, with China and Brazil leading the discussions.

The sessions do not shy



**Mixed conifer forests in Diqing, north-west Yunnan, China.** Photo: Ariel Steiner, CC

away from the economic importance of forest industry, with the concept notes stating that forests directly generate US\$250 billion in economic activity annually, a figure that reaches US\$150 trillion per year when accounting for carbon sequestration potential. However unsustainable deforestation (mostly driven by non-timber agriculture and development) is significantly degrading that potential and there is an enormous underfunding of the forestry sector that means it cannot currently out-compete interests such as beef and soy farming. Accordingly, finding ways to finance forestry is a key goal for the sessions.

On Saturday

afternoon, Ross Hampton will lead a panel discussing innovations in private forest finance.

Click here for links to the schedules and concept notes for the events.

Meanwhile, the global carbon credit quality standards have been endorsed at the event. The standards are critical to

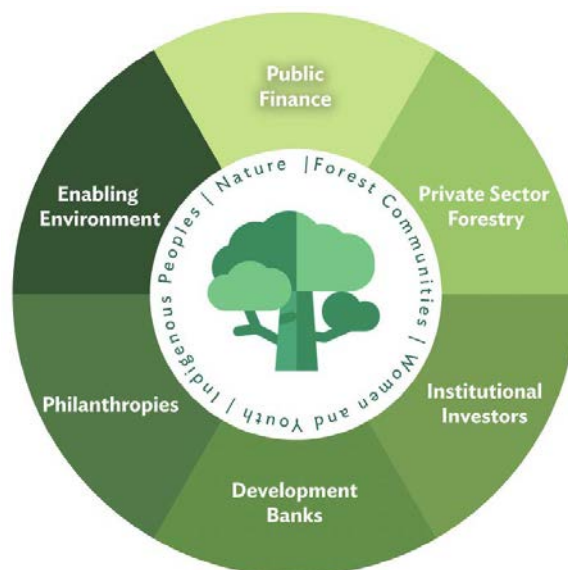
launching a UN-backed global carbon market, which will fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Trump's US election victory has raised concerns about the possibility of a climate finance agreement – essential for offsetting impacts on heavily affected countries such as Tuvalu – as he has said the US will pull out of the Paris Agreement,

but finance specialists say the carbon market may now be operational before that can happen. The fact that major companies function internationally may also help to protect carbon markets as they will be more internationally stable.

One concern around the deal is that while the new standards ensure carbon projects do deliver the climate deals they claim, they do not include protecting the human rights of communities affected by those projects.

Rebecca Iwerks, a co-director at non-profit group Namati told Reuters, "It could actually hinder the development of the market if you don't have a strong standard."



**The forest finance puzzle identified at the COP 29 Forest Finance, Investment and Trade session.** Image: courtesy NFGA



# Asbestos awareness month

After wins around silicosis, doctors warn tradies not to be complacent.



NOVEMBER is Asbestos Awareness Month, and people working in construction-related industries are a particular focus for the medical teams who support the initiative.

The past few years have seen a lot of attention put on silicosis, a serious and potentially fatal lung disease that comes from repeated exposure to silica dust. The banning of engineered stone, with its particularly dangerous fine silica particles, has been considered a real win. Not only does the decision protect stonemasons, but it's also a boon for Australian tradies, who were exposed to the dust on building sites when benchtops and so on were being installed.

During all this, asbestos has slipped a little from front of mind. Which is a major problem, because one in three Australian homes contains asbestos and in some regions where most were built before the products were completely banned in 2003, the proportion is much higher.

If you're working on a building that was built or renovated before the 1990s, it's a safe bet you'll find asbestos somewhere.

The Asbestos Awareness team have set up a comprehensive set of tradies' resources for dealing with asbestos. These include a 20-point Asbestos Safety Checklist, A Tradie's Guide To Safe Practices In Managing Asbestos In Residential Properties and A Tradesperson's Guide to Asbestos Containing Materials in Domestic Properties, along with PPE guides, more management tools and guides for talking about the issues with young workers.

Because the lung diseases caused by asbestos usually take decades to show, many younger workers are casual about the risks, as they were kids or not even born when workers like Bernie Banton were fighting the courts for fair compensation. But the insidious nature of asbestos means that inhaling fibres when young can be enough to deliver fatal mesothelioma decades down the track and, unlike silicosis, the risk isn't directly related to the number of exposures.

Asbestos Awareness month is the perfect excuse to remind your staff of the risks and educate them as

to where those risks can be found and how to mitigate them.

Despite strict legislation being in place to lower the risks of asbestos to both workers and the general public, both ignorance and some bad behaviour is still increasing exposures far beyond where they should be at this time. The asbestos in Sydney mulch crisis earlier this year is just one example of the way asbestos contamination can spread when rules regarding identification and disposal aren't followed.

It's not too late to register your business or organisation to participate in National Asbestos Awareness Month activities, click here for the registration form and links to activities and resources. Whether you fundraise for education through the blue lamington drive or just take advantage of your local council's activities, every action helps to reduce the risk to construction workers and their families, and to the rest of us.

Plus, check out the Asbestos for Tradies list and toolkit by clicking here.



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