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Calls for input to AS/NZS 4708 revision

COVER STORY P 2



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Responsible Wood standards revision

Stakeholders are invited to engage with AS/NZS 4708 updates.

STANDARDS revisions are a vital part of keeping them fit for purpose. Every five years, Responsible Wood, an Accredited Standard Development Organisation (SDO) with responsibility for developing and maintaining Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4708-Sustainable Forest Management conducts a periodic review of the standard.

As Responsible Wood commences planning for its upcoming review, it has put out a call for nominations from interested stakeholder groups, including Forest Growers, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, Scientific Communities, Business and Industry representatives, Trade Unions, and Local Authorities, to join the Standards Reference Committee and Working Groups.

It's an important time for comprehensive input on the standard, with many – including some conflicting – global changes to regulations around sustainable timber and the ongoing political stoush over forestry in Australia.



Industry stakeholders are invited to comment on the proposed revisions for AS/NZS 4708. Photo: Responsible Wood

Having a fit-for-purpose standard that reflects the rigour of sustainable timber management and certification in Australia and New Zealand is an important part of securing the ongoing social license for timber harvesting.

“Sustainable forest management is built on the principle that forests are a renewable resource; when managed properly, they can provide timber, carbon storage, biodiversity conservation, and community benefits for years to come,” said Simon Dorries, CEO,

Responsible Wood.

“The AS/NZS 4708 Standard ensures that native flora and fauna species are actively protected and promoted within certified forests. It’s not just about harvesting timber it’s about maintaining healthy, functioning forest ecosystems.”

AS/NZS 4708 specifies environmental, economic, social, and cultural requirements essential for demonstrating sustainable forest management and continual improvement

practices. Responsible Wood schedules a revision every five years in response to advancements in international sustainability standards set by PEFC International, with particular emphasis this revision on alignment with the recent EU Deforestation Regulation.

The revision process is an essential step to ensure the standard remains aligned with international sustainability benchmarks, industry best practices and evolving stakeholder expectations.

Dorries emphasised the inclusive nature of this revision process: “Our standards are globally recognised because they represent robust, science-based criteria and indicators reflecting the expectations of all stakeholders. The periodic review process ensures our forests and products remain among the most sustainable and responsibly managed in the world.”

Accordingly, input from stakeholders across

Cont P 3

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From P 2

the sector and beyond is sought. Forestry has increasingly become a political battleground in Australia, mostly due to public misunderstanding of the actual processes in the sector and an activist class that sees it as a comparatively easy target.

One major benefit of the standard is being able to point to the rigour of the data and processes that underpin it.

As Matt de Jongh, sustainability manager at Responsible Wood, said, "We recognise the growing public scrutiny around forestry, but what's often missed in the debate is the level of rigour behind certification. Our standards are science-based, developed through consultation and independently assessed to ensure real outcomes, not just promises."



Certified timbers are labelled at point of sale, making it easy for the buying public to identify them and have confidence in their purchase. Photo: Jonathan Tibbits

"Not everyone is always going to support the outcomes, but the rigour of the standards and the certification process is internationally accepted."

He added, "There's been a lot of noise lately, but the facts speak for themselves: certified forests (native or plantation) provide real environmental benefits, positive community

and regional outcomes, store carbon in timber products and are independently audited to ensure that future generations inherit forests that are healthy, diverse, and productive."

The scope of the planned revision will include:

- Alignment with the PEFC International Standard PEFC ST 1003:2024 with a special focus on alignment with the

EU Deforestation Regulation.

- Consideration of feedback provided previously by stakeholders over the life of the Standard.
- Consideration of any feedback received during the project development and consultation process.

Responsible Wood is also

Cont P 7

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Plantation grants welcomed

Industry figures call for program extension.

THE recent announcement of the Albanese Government's latest round of grants awarded under the Support Plantation Establishment Program (SPEP) has been welcomed by Australian forest industries.

The grants are part of a governmental forest industry support package that includes around \$300 million to help improve the capacity and capability of the sector and aims to help establish up to 36,000 hectares of new long-rotation softwood and hardwood plantation forests across Australia.

More than \$2.3 million in funds will support the establishment of five new plantations in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania, establishing a mix of softwood and hardwood plantations totalling over 1200 hectares.

These five new projects are in addition to 41 others worth \$26.2 million. Total funding through the program now exceeds \$28.5 million since the first grants were announced in 2023. Approximately 15,000 hectares of new plantations have now been approved for establishment across the country. The SPEP is providing funding to support the establishment of up to 36,000 hectares of new softwood and hardwood plantation forests nationally.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Julie Collins MP said, "Demand for timber is expected to grow in the coming decades.



1

1/ Plantations require at least 30 years for structural timbers, so the sooner we get trees in the ground, the better.

2/ Angus Spreckley from Plantation Pine Products, which was awarded \$7.04 million in funding to support the establishment of 3520 hectares of new plantation forests last year.

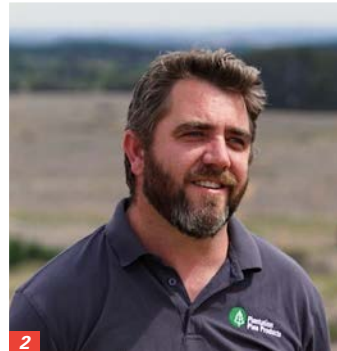
Images: courtesy Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

That's why over 14,500 hectares of new hardwood and softwood plantations [is being] established throughout Australia as part of the Support Plantation Establishment program.

"There is still time to apply for grant funding to establish new plantations. The current batch of applications is open to 8 May, and the final application deadline for this round is 5 November with all projects needing to be delivered by 30 June 2027.

"This support is important as Australia's plantation forest estate has been in decline for over a decade. Action now will increase Australia's future timber supply and mitigate against our future dependence on imported timber," Collins concluded.

The news has been met with approval from forestry and timber companies and associations, however, a significant program extension



2

is needed to build Australia's sovereign capability in timber and wood-fibre for the decades ahead, said Diana Hallam, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA).

"We welcome and thank the Government for this latest tranche of plantation establishment grants and the Commonwealth's ongoing investment to support a range of measures for forestry and the supply chain," Hallam said.

"To continue the critical ongoing investment in timber tree production plantings – as part of AFPA's 'Australian Timber. Australia's Future.' Election Platform [click here to download] – we're calling on all sides of politics to commit to providing a \$200 million extension for the program to boost domestic supply, enhance sovereign capability and fight climate change by helping decarbonise

the economy with increased timber and wood-fibre use."

Hallam pointed out that Australia – and the world – is turning more to carbon friendly resources and materials for construction, energy, packaging and a range of other products, saying, "We need new plantations in the ground now to meet the increasing future demand for timber and wood-fibre. Furthermore, as global trade becomes more uncertain, we need to focus on growing and using more of our own locally and sustainably produced resource, rather than importing more from overseas, often from countries without the rigorous environmental standards we have in Australia.

"I again thank the Government for its commitment to plantation establishment and look forward to working with them and all sides of politics during the Federal Election campaign to secure the best possible future for Australia's sustainable, renewable and essential forest products sector," she concluded.

Round three of the program is open for applications until 5 November 2025 with the government providing up to \$2000 per hectare of new long-rotation plantation forest established to eligible projects.

Despite the government being in a caretaker period, applications for Round 3 of the grants remain open, though decisions will be held over till after the election. In practice, this will make little difference as the current batch of the funding round won't close until 8 May, after the 3 May election. For more and for application details, click here.

Industry memorial for Colin MacKenzie

THE passing of Colin McKenzie has left a great void in the industry (see *Enews* 843 for Timber Queensland's obituary honouring his life and work).

Timber Queensland and Colin MacKenzie's family will honour his life and significant contributions to the forest and timber industry at a memorial event in Brisbane on Wednesday, 21 May from 3–5pm. All Timber Queensland members, along with Colin's friends and colleagues from across the country, are warmly

invited to attend.

A colleague, mentor, visionary and friend, Colin's impact on the forest and timber industry was profound, with Timber Queensland, the broader timber and building industry and the community all owing him a great debt for his tireless efforts. Colin's legacy is one of dedication, innovation, technical excellence, and unwavering support for colleagues and the sector. This gathering will provide an opportunity to share memories,



Colin MacKenzie was a dedicated engineer and mentor. Image: courtesy Timber Queensland

reflect on his impact, and celebrate his life among friends and peers.

Timber Queensland asks that people hoping to attend click here and register interest in attending by Friday 11 April to assist with arrangements. THE TQ team will contact those who are listed to confirm the venue, which will be close to the CBD and selected based on the number of attendees expected.

Please feel free to circulate this notice to your networks.

Mortgage buffers may drop

THE Coalition this week promised to relax rules around approving home loans if it wins government in the upcoming Federal election.

Currently, the financial regulator requires banks to add a 3% safety buffer above the loan interest rate when considering whether someone applying for a home loan will be able to make their loan repayments.

This 'serviceability' buffer was lifted to 3% during Covid when rates were at all-time lows. However, the size of the buffer is considered by some to be too large and to be a

significant barrier, particularly for younger would-be buyers.

Shadow Housing Minister Michael Sukkar said the 3% rate is out of date, and the Coalition will ensure it is lowered if it wins at the May 3 poll.

"Nearly 40% of potential first home buyers are not able to get finance for a loan ... primarily because of that serviceability buffer," Sukkar told ABC Radio National.

The news has been applauded by the Housing Industry Association (HIA). "The proposal to review mortgage lending rules and

the serviceability buffers to tilt the scales back towards supporting first home buyers into home ownership is a strong and timely response to one of the most significant barriers to home ownership," HIA Managing Director Jocelyn Martin said.

"HIA has consistently raised concerns about lending regulations that no longer reflect today's economic reality. The current settings – particularly the 3% serviceability buffer – are unnecessarily restrictive and are people out of homes loans they could otherwise

adequately service."

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA), which is the body that sets the buffer rate, confirmed it at 3% in late November, saying it had taken account of "high household indebtedness and a pick-up in credit growth, persistent cost-of-living pressures, a weakening jobs market and heightened geopolitical risks."

However, the low level of mortgage defaulting during recent rate climbs has given the Coalition confidence that a lower buffer is a practical option.

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RW/1-10-1

Buy up before the rules change

The temporary instant asset write-off limit increase ends 30 June.

THERE was a lot to slug through in the Budget. One piece of bad news for small businesses in particular is that the temporary lift in the instant asset write-off limit from \$1000 to \$20,000 is not being extended. The popular lift in the scheme has run over the past two budgets and allowed small businesses with an aggregated turnover of less than \$10 million to deduct the full cost of eligible assets costing less than \$20,000.

The write-off allows businesses to claim an immediate deduction for assets such as technology, machinery, office furniture and equipment and motor vehicles, rather than depreciating it over time. It can be used for multiple assets if the cost of each individual asset is less than the relevant limit and for new and second-hand assets.

The budget move has left many in the business community displeased.

Australian Chamber of



Assets such as computers are currently eligible up to \$20,000. Image: Shutterstock/Drazen Zigic

Commerce and Industry CEO Andrew McKellar has argued the extension should be legislated permanently. "The instant asset write-off could help to underpin investment and productivity in the small business sector," he said.

"It should be made a permanent feature of the tax system for investments worth up to \$50,000 and available to businesses with an annual turnover of up to \$50 million."

Master Plumbers

Association of NSW CEO Nathaniel Smith said, "This terrible decision in an already fragile economic landscape reveals a disgraceful disregard for the backbone of our economy. It is utterly

“IT SHOULD BE MADE A PERMANENT FEATURE OF THE TAX

unacceptable; this move directly jeopardises a small business's ability to invest in the essential tools and equipment that our tradies desperately depend on."

In his Budget Reply speech, Opposition leader Peter Dutton committed the Coalition to make the instant asset write off permanent at an asset cap of \$30,000 for small businesses with turnover of up to \$10 million.

While there are hopes the limit extension will also return as an election promise for Labor during the campaign, small businesses may be wise to get any applicable asset spending done sooner rather than later.

In better news, the energy bill relief scheme was extended for small businesses in the Budget and the government promised \$20 million for its Buy Australian campaign – which we probably need to do anyway given the upcoming chaos from the US tariff saga.

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Australian Forest Products Association

APRIL

10-11: Forestry Australia 2025 Forest Carbon Summit – National Press Club, Canberra. For full details and to register, visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-forest-carbon-summit/>

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.sydnebuildexpo.com>

14: AFCA National Forum & Dinner – Gold Coast, QLD. SAVE THE DATE. More details to follow.

11-17: Japanese Wood Architecture Tour – Japan. Tour the world's oldest and most impressive wooden buildings. From Hōryū-ji, the world's oldest wooden building to the World Expo in Osaka - home to the world's largest wooden ring building. For more information and view the program, visit <https://www.woodsolutions.com>.

[au/events/woodsolutions-sponsors-tda-japan-study-tour?](https://www.woodsolutions.com)

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>

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

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. For more information visit <https://www.wcte2025.org/event/df0d5655-c16d-47df-b4a6-457a7dc63d96/wcte-2025>

29-JULY 2: 5th International Conference on Timber Bridges – Rotorua, New

Zealand. The focus is on timber bridges and the current need for resilient infrastructure to support thriving communities. For more information and to register your interest, visit <https://ictb-conference.org/2025/>

SEPTEMBER

2-3: Timber Queensland Biennial Conference "Doing Timber Business in Queensland" – Brisbane. For more information, email admin@timberqueensland.com.au

OCTOBER

13-14: Timber Construct 2025 – Melbourne. To register your interest, visit <https://timberconstruct.org/>

20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore. For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/home>

20-23: Forestry Australia 2025 Conference – Adelaide Convention

Centre, Adelaide. The conference theme is 'Restoring forests and landscapes to secure Australia's future' and aims to develop both local and national collaboration. For more details visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-conference/>

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

23-24: Field Trip – Vietnam. (Follows on from the woodchip and biomass seminar in Singapore.) For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/fieldtrip>

24: GTTIA – The Barn, Mt Gambier, SA. Nominations are now open for 2025 Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards. Nominate online: <https://gttia.com/nomination-form/> For full details on award categories and submission guidelines, visit: <https://gttia.com/2025-award-categories/>

From P 3

welcoming feedback from stakeholders on any matters that the planned revision should cover in addition to those listed above.

de Jongh highlighted the strategic importance of the revision, saying "Aligning our

standard with international benchmarks such as PEFC ensures that Australian and New Zealand forests continue to lead in global sustainability efforts whilst being fit for purpose at the national level, and supported by science."

Stakeholders interested in contributing feedback

or nominating candidates for the revision committee and working groups are encouraged to contact Responsible Wood directly. Feedback can be provided in email to sdorries@responsiblewood.org.au or by post to Standards Review, PO Box 768, New Farm Qld 4005.

The scope of the revision will be finalised once consultation is completed and will be published on the Responsible Wood website: <https://www.responsiblewood.org.au>

On the cover: Forestry experts visiting certified plantations in Tasmania last October. Image courtesy Responsible Wood.

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Greens announcement welcomed

A push for truth in environmental claims will benefit all.

THIS week saw the announcement of a Federal Greens policy to crack down on misleading corporate environmental claims by making greenwashing illegal and enforcing mandatory nature risk disclosures for businesses and governments.

This has been welcomed by many in the timber sector, as the sustainable nature of our business is often lost in the noise from steel building product advertising and environmental activists. Particularly in construction, timber products have been unfairly labelled as causes of deforestation and the significant environmental impacts of competing materials have been minimised.

Other policies in the package include 1% of the Federal Budget going towards the environment, an end to native forest logging, closing loopholes and imposing a moratorium on clearing koala habitats, a climate trigger to ensure new mines and developments are assessed for their environmental impact and a \$20 billion biodiversity restoration fund over the next decade, with investments in threatened species recovery, waterway rehabilitation and invasive species management.

CEO Diana Hallam said the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) welcomes the push to 'stamp out misleading and ambiguous environmental claims', noting that activists continue to spread lies about our sustainable forest industries.

"While we disagree with



1/ Greens leader Adam Bandt with a volunteer. The new policy has been welcomed by AFPA. Photo: courtesy The Greens

2/ Dinner goes walkies with the wood table as AFPA shows what life would be like without wood products. Photo: AFPA



a number of aspects of the minor party's Green Australia policy, including its outdated and longstanding plans to cease sustainable native forest harvesting, the announcement that the Greens want to crack-down on misleading and ambiguous environmental claims is very much welcomed and refreshing," Hallam said.

"Radical activists consistently create and promote disinformation about Australia's forest industries and particularly the sustainable native forest harvesting segment of the sector – and we'd welcome action on that."

AFPA listed common disinformation pedalled about sustainable forest industries, including:

- That native forestry is 'deforestation'. This is completely untrue. Deforestation is a permanent land use change, while every tree in our native forests harvested for timber and wood-fibre in Australia is regenerated and regrown for the future.
- That native forestry is a key reason for the extinction of native flora and fauna. Again, completely untrue. The Federal Government has listed

forestry as having the least impact out of 11 categories on forest dwelling flora and fauna, well behind land use change, fires, climate change and feral species.

- That plantations can replace native forestry. Not true. Native forestry is essential for flooring, decking, power poles and other appearance grade products. Without it, we'd have to rely more on imports and carbon intense non-renewable substitutes. Australia's plantations are predominantly softwood, with our smaller amount of hardwood plantations predominantly for the pulp market.
- That Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are a 'loophole' to national environmental laws. Again, not true. An RFA is an alternative mechanism to achieve the objectives of the EPBC Act through a federal-state intergovernmental agreement and the creation of millions of hectares of national parks. They are not a bypass of the EPBC Act and this has been confirmed by the Federal Court of Australia. "There are many more examples about the myths and disinformation surrounding

Australia's sustainable forest industries which is a primary reason that as part of AFPA's election campaign, we've launched forestfacts.com.au – a new website dedicated at countering exactly what the Greens want to address," Hallam said.

"I look forward to working with the Greens on cracking down on activists pedalling 'misleading' and 'ambiguous' environmental claims and call on the other parties to support the initiative."

Meanwhile, AFPA has been taking its own initiative with a new ad that shows what happens if you try living without Australian timber and paper. Multiple scenarios are shown – from no more Amazon packages to your dinner table going walkies mid-meal, house frame disappearing and a grim prospect on the loo.

Filed in-house and with solidly convincing performances from the AFPA team in the starring roles, you can catch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6D452lywiY>. Definitely one that's worth sharing on your socials as the election campaign plays fast and loose with facts!

NZ log transporters achieve top ratings

Two trucking firms have been rewarded for a focus on health and safety.

TWO Nelson-Tasman transport companies, Stuart Drummond Transport Limited and Borlase Transport, have achieved the prestigious five-star rating in the Log Transport Safety Council Health and Safety Contractor Audit, placing them among only 14 companies nationwide to receive this elite recognition.

This achievement represents the highest level of safety excellence in the log transport industry and reflects both companies' unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest possible standards in their operations.

"We are incredibly proud to have achieved a 5-Star rating in the Health and Safety Contractor Audit," said Harry Llewellyn, general manager of Stuart Drummond Transport. "Safety has always been a top priority for our company, reflected in both our resources and the commitment and dedication of our entire team. It's rewarding to see that when tested against a rigorous industry audit, we have achieved the highest result."

"This achievement is truly a team effort – from our workshop team to our drivers and office staff. High standards must be demonstrated across all areas of the business, and this result is a testament to the collective dedication of our team."

Borlase Transport is similarly pleased. "Reaching this five-star benchmark



1 & 2/ TGreen Stuart Drummond Transport Limited and turquoise blue Borlase Transport trucks have both reached the highest level of safety excellence in log transport. Images: courtesy OneFortyOne

reflects years of continuous improvement and our team's daily commitment to safety," said Steve Borlase, business manager for Borlase. "We're proud to be part of this exclusive group of transport operators who set the standard for safety in New Zealand."

Both companies serve as key transport partners for OneFortyOne's New Zealand Forests business, handling the critical task of safely transporting logs from forest to market.

"Working with partners who prioritise safety at this level is fundamental to our operations," said Shaun Truelock, general manager of OneFortyOne's New Zealand Forests business. "Their achievement of this five-star rating reinforces our confidence in their operations and aligns perfectly with our values of safety, excellence, and responsibility. When you see these trucks on the road, you can be confident they're meeting the highest safety standards."

The Log Transport Safety Council Certified Contractor Audit is a rigorous assessment that evaluates transport operators' health and safety systems, operational

procedures and compliance standards. The five-star rating represents exceptional performance across all measured criteria.

This recognition comes at a time when safety standards in the transport industry are increasingly important, with customers and communities

alike expecting the highest levels of responsibility from operators handling large loads on public roads.

Both transport companies look forward to maintaining these elite standards and continuing their successful partnerships with clients who value safety excellence.

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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

Victorian Timber Innovation Grants

This provides grants for native timber industry businesses to explore, invest and implement opportunities to support their transition under the Victorian Forestry Plan.

The Forestry Transition Program provides support for workers, businesses and communities who are impacted by the cessation of commercial native timber harvesting in Victorian State forests.

The Victorian Timber Innovation Grant Program aims to support impacted forestry businesses to explore, invest, and implement new business opportunities.

The Program will support Victorian forestry businesses to:

- Explore, test or deliver new or innovative business models
- Diversify and reorientate core business activities into alternative industry sectors.

A cash co-contribution is not a requirement for projects with a total value of up to \$250,000 where jobs will be retained or created. For projects with a total value of



Forestry businesses affected by the closure of native timber harvesting in Victoria are eligible for these grants. Image: Shutterstock/ronstik

over \$250,000, a minimum 1:1 cash co-contribution will be required by the applicant for every dollar over \$250,000.

Businesses that meet the following criteria can apply for a Victorian Timber Innovation Grant:

- Have or had a Timber Sale Agreement, Forest Produce Licence or Forest Produce Agreement issued by VicForests that was current as of 1 January 2023;
- Have or had a timber harvest/haulage contract with VicForests that was current as of 1 January 2023;
- Are a haulage sub-contractor contracted since 1 July

2020 to a business with a current VicForests harvest and/or haulage contract, and derived at least 30% of annual revenue from that contract based on an average of the last 5 financial years;

- Are a road contractor who has had a contract since 1 July 2020 to a business with a harvest/ haulage contract with VicForests that was current at 1 July 2023, and had at least 30% of - Annual revenue derived from road construction or maintenance operations on the road network used for hardwood log haulage based on an average of the last 5 financial years;

- Are a road contractor who has had a contract with VicForests since 1 July 2020, and had at least 30% of annual revenue derived from road construction or maintenance operations on the road network used for hardwood log haulage based on an average of the last 5 financial years;
- Are a seed collector who has at least 30% of annual revenue from the VicForests contract, based on an average of the last 5 financial years;
- Are a business undertaking forest-based activities which has had at least 30% of annual revenue derived from a VicForests contract based on an average of the last 5 financial years.

GRANT DETAILS

Provider: VIC Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)

Amount: Up to \$1,000,000

Closes: Round 3 ends 30 Jun 2025

Location: Victoria

Who Can Apply: Businesses

Co-Contribution Required:

Unspecified by Provider
<https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/forestry/grants/timber-innovation-grants>

Free public transport for LIGNA visitors

TRADE fair operator Deutsche Messe is serious in its goal of making LIGNA 2025 carbon neutral, having secured an agreement with the ÜSTRA network to make public transport free for all trade fair participants. All exhibitors and visitors to Deutsche Messe trade shows – including LIGNA 2025 – are automatically authorised to use local public transport within the ÜSTRA network with a valid visitor or exhibitor trade show ticket. This regulation also applies to media representatives with a valid trade show press pass.

“With the new Climate Ticket, we are enabling all LIGNA participants to travel to the trade fair conveniently, cost-effectively, and sustainably,” said Dr Jochen Köckler, CEO Deutsche Messe



A LIGNA ticket now includes public transport in the Hanover region.

AG. “Just in time for LIGNA’s 50th anniversary, this is a great early birthday present. As a company, we are actively contributing to reducing CO₂ emissions while also easing the burden on transport infrastructure and enhancing Hanover’s attractiveness as a trade fair location.”

The LIGNA visitor ticket, exhibitor pass, or valid press pass will now serve as a ticket for local public transport in Hanover and the surrounding region (ÜSTRA network). This regulation applies even if different information is printed on previous tickets.

LIGNA is the world’s leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing and has been attracting leading machinery makers, innovators and experts for fifty years. LIGNA 2025 will be held in Hanover from 26 to 30 May and has attracted over 1200 international exhibitors for this, its 50th anniversary year. As well as leading sawmill technology, harvesting systems and machinery for fabricating everything from quality trusses to leading EWP CNC solutions, specialists in energy recovery from wood will be demonstrating how to get the most from your waste.

For more visitor information on the LIGNA climate ticket, click here.

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AKD celebrates women staffers

Real life stories show the benefits of a diverse workforce.

MARCH may be over, but some companies live the values of International Women's Day year-round, so it was lovely to see one of them taking time to interview multiple women staff members for a fuller view of the careers of women in the timber sector.

AKD has long benefitted from hiring practices that include gender and cultural diversity and this year it spent March highlighting the stories of women employees. Each was featured as a tile on its social pages that linked to the interviews. The list of staffers included new staff members and one who had been with the company for 45 years, some of whom started with AKD and others who have made a career change into the sector.

The roles they occupy are diverse and tell a full story of the company's activities. Janice McDonald has been a vital part of AKD since 1980 and serves as NSW Payroll Officer for the Tumut and Gilmore sites. Beyond ensuring employees are paid correctly and on time, she is the go-to person for payroll inquiries, site events, weighbridge operations, and a variety of administrative tasks that keep daily operations running smoothly.

Over the years, she has seen firsthand how the industry has evolved, particularly for women. While traditionally male-dominated,



Janice McDonald and Kavitha Ponneelan were two of the women celebrated by AKD in their month of posts.

she told AKD that she has always valued the strong sense of teamwork at AKD. "We work well together as a team," she said, though she acknowledged the challenges women have faced, particularly around pay equity.

She noted that AKD had provided support for her to succeed in her career and that things had improved for women in her time with the business at the same time the roles available have expanded, saying, "I've seen real progress, with women now working in our maintenance department as Fitters and Electricians. AKD has also been very supportive with family leave and flexibility, which has made a big difference in my career."

McDonald was recognised for her service at AKD's Lumber Legends celebration, which she said was "filled with laughter, shared memories, and a strong sense of camaraderie as we were thanked for our longevity with the company."

Kavitha Ponneelan joined the company in 2017 and now plays a crucial role as national business analyst in AKD's



finance team. By examining economic trends and industry data, she provides key insights that help AKD identify opportunities, assess risks, and make informed strategic decisions.

Ponneelan was inspired to pursue a career in the timber industry by a combination of factors – AKD's strong support system, her eagerness to learn, and the opportunity to make an impact in a traditionally male-driven industry. Though she has faced challenges, particularly in making her voice heard, she has built strong relationships by consistently demonstrating her skills, knowledge, and willingness to contribute.

"The responsibility I hold now is something I deeply value, especially when it comes to writing professional, detailed reports in my second

“ THIS INDUSTRY MAY BE TRADITIONALLY MALE-DRIVEN, BUT YOUR UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE IS VALUABLE ”

language, English," she said.

The support and training she has received have been key factors in her success. "It's encouraging to see AKD's continued commitment to creating an inclusive environment where equal opportunities are a priority," Ponneelan said.

She advised women entering the industry to "Stay confident in your skills and embrace every opportunity for growth. This industry may be traditionally male-driven, but your unique perspective is valuable. Seek mentorship, continue developing your skills, and don't shy away from challenges – persistence and a strong support network will help you thrive."

The other women highlighted were Dimi Hughes, national IT project manager; Danielle Smith, Yarram loader operator; Taylor Towers, Victoria sales & service manager; Rachel Scilley, national freight & logistics manager; Marina Milic, technical Victorian manager and Tanya Carr, Caboolture Greenmill operator.

Congratulations to AKD both on hiring such a capable set of employees and on highlighting the accessibility and attractiveness of the timber and forestry sector for women who may not have previously considered it as a career path.

You can read the full set of stories by clicking here.

Komatsu Forest's PC Xtreme Series

BRETT Jones, MD of Komatsu Forest P/L, says a close collaboration with Komatsu Ltd's Osaka factory has aided the delivery of the new Xtreme Series excavators with unique forest specifications for forestry application – a real alternative to purpose-built track machines.

This collaboration has resulted in over a dozen cost-effective configurations of the PC270-8, PC300-8, PC350-8 and PC400-8 models which cover most aspects of today's Australian and New Zealand logging operations. Note the forestry modifications:

High/Wide Undercarriage:

The 3.5m wide track frame, designed by the Osaka factory, offers 850mm of ground clearance. The frame is equipped with full-length track skis, reinforced idlers and heavy-duty guarding

throughout for enhanced durability.

Forest Safety Cab: The cabin was originally developed for Komatsu North America where it was utilised for their Log Loaders in the forestry industry. This purpose-built forestry cabin has been through a full destruction test and meets the required forestry cabin ratings of ISO 8082-2 ROPS, 8083 FOPS, 8084 OPS.

Special Forest Booms: The Working Gear (WG) boom sets were developed by the Osaka factory with the boom tip designed to accept any directional head. The plumbing on the WG booms has been designed with SAE flanges to ensure ease of installation and the booms are fitted with 500-hour bushes.

Heavy Duty Cooling Package (AKG): The standard Komatsu



The Komatsu PC270LL-8 is the smallest of the Log Loading Xtreme Carriers and is fitted with the Osaka factory High Wide Undercarriage. Photo: Komatsu

cooler package is replaced by a purpose-built forestry cooler package from AKG, one of the largest global suppliers, in several models. The open fin core is the key to this cooler design being 7 fins per inch and comes standard with an automated hydraulic reversing fan.

Auxiliary Hydraulic Cooler:

An additional hydraulic cooler is fitted in models for medium applications where the standard Komatsu cooler

is retained. The additional hydraulic cooler provides increased capacity for harvester/processor applications. It comes standard with an automated hydraulic

reversing fan.

IQAN Control System

(Optional): The IQAN system manages the diesel engine and hydraulic pump output while providing fully proportional electronic crane controls. It controls all the crane functions including rotator and slew functions which allows the machine to optimise engine and hydraulic pump flows, reducing fuel consumption to 20L/hour (PC300HW).

Komatsu

PC270HW



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Housing remains election focus

Construction inflation has dropped, now we just need more builds.

IT'S been a big 10 days for economics and with the Budget, the election announcement and Tuesday's interest rate hold, you could easily have missed an important fact. In last Wednesday's inflation figures, construction inflation, which hit 21.7% in July 2022 and was one of the major drivers in our overall inflation jump, has dropped to 1.6%; below the overall monthly inflation rate of 2.4%.

This needs to be viewed in context, as some builders have been offering discounts in a bid to move past the post-HomeBuilder hangover period. But much of the movement seems to have come from a genuine recovery in capacity for both labour and materials; a fact very much to be welcomed as governments around the country struggle to deliver builds in the face of the housing crisis.

One group pushing hard on this front is the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), which has been lobbying both Federal and State governments since its inception and was quick out of the gates last week with its comprehensive election platform, 'Changing Housing for Good', calling on all political parties to commit to addressing Australia's escalating housing crisis through significant expansion of social and affordable housing.

"Housing is at the eye of the cost-of-living storm. In this election, we know increasing community housing is the best solution to this crippling problem and it has overwhelming public support," CHIA chair Chris Smith said.

The election charter calls for four key commitments:

1. Legislate a comprehensive



1/ Property Council chief executive Mike Zorbas has welcomed support for build to rent.

Image courtesy Property Council

2/ Build to rent options like Nightingale Marrickville are common overseas but new in the Australian market.

Image courtesy Nightingale



National Housing and Homelessness Plan: A 10-year, evidence-based plan enshrined in legislation to ensure enduring national leadership beyond electoral cycles.

2. Adopt a '1 in 10 in 20' target: Aim for one in 10 homes to be social and affordable within 20 years, up from less than 4% currently.
3. Ensure climate resilience in social housing: Address poor energy performance in social housing to reduce emissions and tenant energy costs.
4. Invest in community housing sector capacity: Overhaul the National Regulatory System and expand support for not-for-profit housing providers.

CHIA is also calling for the Federal government to increase investment in social and affordable rental housing supply to \$2 billion per year (up from \$500 million) and lead the development of a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning to ensure affordable rental housing in new developments.

Economic analysis from

Swinburne University of Technology (to download, [click here](#)) demonstrates that quadrupling the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) from 30,000 to 120,000 homes would deliver \$12.79 billion in social and economic benefits over 25 years, including secure housing for workers and avoided social costs such as policing and health care issues.

"This research explodes the myth that social and affordable housing is purely an expense," CHIA CEO Wendy Hayhurst said. "In fact, it provides taxpayers with a powerful economic return while also building a more inclusive and healthy society."

Tuesday's announcement that the draft instrument Income Tax Assessment (Build to Rent Developments) Amendment (Expanding Affordability Requirements) Determination 2025 is now in force has been welcomed by CHIA, along with the Property Council of Australia and National Shelter. These regulations support the delivery of desperately needed affordable rental housing, with the build-to-rent (BTR) legislation projected to deliver 80,000 rental homes over the

next decade.

Property Council chief executive Mike Zorbas said, "Of these [80,000 homes], 8000 will be affordable, with 1200 ready to be rented in the near future. This is the largest ever Federal effort to help relieve pressure on renters.

"We look forward to working with the government and industry colleagues on future details and supporting the important commitment to future drafting banning 'no cause' evictions."

The legalisation contains changes proposed by CHIA, National Shelter and the Property Council, championed by Housing Minister Clare O'Neil and independent Senator David Pocock, and ultimately supported by the crossbench.

These changes mean tenancies will now be offered for a minimum of five years, with affordable tenancies defined to be available to people on moderate and low incomes. At least 20% of the affordable tenancies will be available to low-income earners where rents are capped below 74.9% of the market value or 30% of household income, whichever is lower.

Hayhurst said the legislation will unlock affordable rental accommodation urgently needed by lower income workers: "When done correctly, BTR provides tenants the sort of stability they badly need but can't get because private ownership is out of their reach.

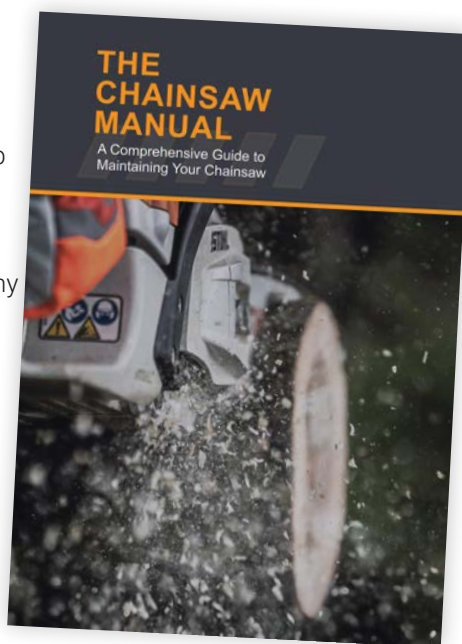
New chainsaw book recommended

THE UK's *Forestry Journal* is a respected monthly publication with a long history of serving the British forestry sector. So when its reviewer recently looked at David J Daniel's *The Chainsaw Manual* and said, "I firmly recommend every workplace have at least one copy in their workshop, and I can attest, as with two recent saw maintenance courses I delivered, I will be showing my own copy to every trainee I encounter from here on," that's a stonkingly good recommendation. (For full review click [here](#), subscription required.)

Daniel is a qualified NPTC Assessor and Lantra Instructor with 25 years of industry knowledge and expertise. He's written a manual that is suitable for beginner and advanced arborists or foresters, and

while it is designed for those working in the UK, the practical resources like a chain chart and step-by-step maintenance guides for popular global brands make it a valuable addition to any worksite.

As Daniel is the first to make clear, the book is in no way a substitute for appropriate training on chainsaws, but for qualified users it is a comprehensive guide that will make life easier on many occasions. Designed as a ring-bound text so it can lay flat in front of you whether in the office, on site or in your truck, it offers step-by-step



The book is a very practical guide that also includes comprehensive safety advice and international standards.

instructions and plentiful colour photos and illustrations to guide users through maintenance, sharpening and

adjustments on even intricate parts like the carburettor in petrol saws. Trouble-shooting tables for identifying and rectifying problems means you don't need to be an expert to work out where the issue lies.

More than just chainsaw care, the book includes a section on international standards and regulations – particularly helpful in an industry that sees many move around the globe during their careers – and a lengthy section on hazards and risk evaluation, including advice on control measures. Even business owners who never pick up a chainsaw will benefit from the better understanding of risk it imparts.

Available for £22.50 from Summerfield Books, click [here](#).

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Wood volumes analysis

The Australian Wood Volumes Report is reassuring, but industry experts warn it isn't a complete story.

ABARES last week delivered its *Australian Wood Volumes Analysis* report. The report was announced as a 2022 election commitment and has arrived just in time for our next visit to the polls.

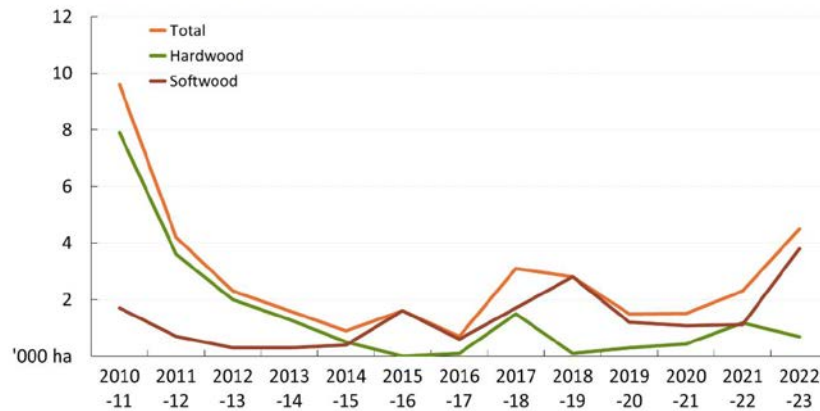
At the time of its commissioning, Australia was in the grip of construction material shortages caused by the layering impacts of Covid, the long fallout of the collapse of the global supply chain and the demanding but profitless boom of HomeBuilder. The report's aim was to give confidence that Australians have sufficient access to forest and wood products for the construction sector, from a range of sources.

On a top-level analysis, the news is reassuring. The report notes that domestic demand for structural softwood sawnwood may grow as much as 50% by 2050, incentivising domestic innovation. At the same time, domestic softwood sawlog availability is expected to increase 70% by 2050 – the largest volume of softwood sawlog availability on record.

It is open about the fact that the plantation estate is coming out of a period of decline (for both hardwood and softwood) and notes the positive effects of the ACCU and SPEP funding in recent increases in the estate volume, as well as transition funds for plantations in Victoria and Western Australia after the closure of their native timber harvesting industries.

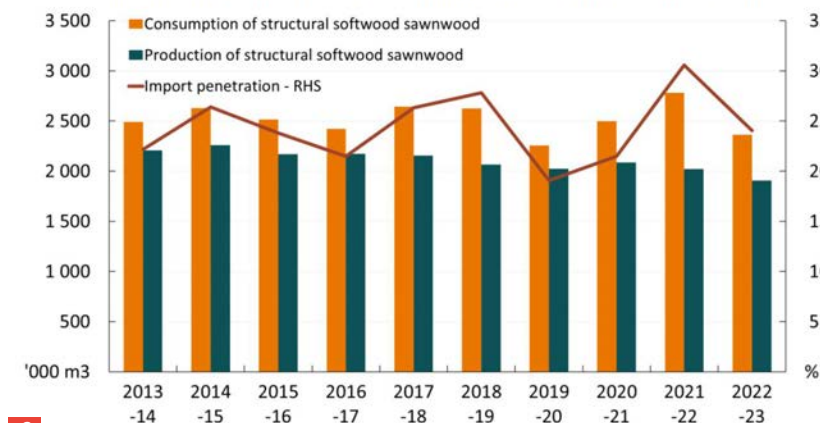
Importantly, the analysis debunks claims made by critics of the Australian native forestry sector. Political anti-forestry campaigns often

Figure 2 Annual softwood plantation establishment doubled in 2022-23



1

Figure 10 Imports meet periodic peaks in consumption of structural softwood sawnwood



2

1/ After a period of decline, annual softwood plantation establishment has recently doubled.

2/ Import penetration of structural softwood sawnwood has been about 20-30% in Australia over the decade to 2022-23 Images: courtesy ABARES

anchor their complaints in the assertion that the vast majority of Australian native timber harvest is for woodchips and paper pulp. The report makes it clear that almost a third of native hardwood products are used in high-value appearance grade products and another third goes into structural-grade products, reflecting both the worth and durability of these timbers. It is hardwood plantation timbers (frequently native species) that are predominantly used for woodchip and pulp, though

the quantity of these used for sawnwood and veneers in structural engineered wood products (EWP) is also rising.

The report notes that the harvested area and value of the native forestry sector is small compared to plantations, representing

“DOMESTIC SOFTWOOD SAWLOG AVAILABILITY IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE”

11% of the annual forestry sector GVP in 2022-23, however the value per log is significant: the decreasing value of the sector is due to the removal of many hectares from the area available to timber harvesters.

Sawmill numbers are declining in Australia, but total sawlog input numbers remain steady as mills increase in their scale. Wood processors are having a major impact on the sector through quality and quantity specifications. New EWP processors and other innovations are also having notable effects, including increased efficiency in both capacity and

resource utilisation per cut log. The report cites chemical and physical treatments applied to EWP to increase strength, durability and lifespan as just one area in which innovation is helping to change the future of wood products.

Imports are described as a reliable resource, particularly for occasional spikes in demand caused by the Australian housing market. Paper and packaging products remain the largest

From P 16

and most consistent subset of wood imports. The report acknowledges that current global conditions will increase the complexity of international supply; it is worth noting that it was written after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and commencement of the Israel/Gaza conflict but before the re-election of Donald Trump and his tariff campaign.

The demand section of the report sets up a challenge to the timber industry, noting that the extent of future increases in demand will depend on 'preferences' – which for us translates to how well we make the case for timber taking a more dominant role in Australian construction.

The forest products sector has largely welcomed the report, but says it highlights that improved government policy settings are needed to ensure the sector can be a sustainable manufacturing force, strong regional employer and key economic driver for the country into the future.

Diana Hallam, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), said, "Our sector is under enormous pressure following native forestry closures in Victoria and WA while we're also dealing with a two-speed supply issue, where short-term we have a surplus of timber following the construction market slowdown and longer term we can see supply shortfalls because we don't have enough trees in the ground.

"While the ABARES forecast in growth of timber to 2050 is welcome, this is largely due to the regrowth of plantations and native forestry impacted by fires. It takes at least 25 years to grow structural timber for housing and the future beyond then is more uncertain. That's why we



Diana Hallam, CEO of AFPA, says improved policy settings are required to ensure supply. Image: courtesy Diana Hallam/LinkedIn.

need to grow the plantation estate and retain access to sustainable native harvesting to ensure we can meet consumer needs into the future."

Hallam was far less sanguine than the report about the ability of Australia to count on accessible or affordable timber from international trade partners in the future.

"We disagree with ABARES that Australia can rely on imports to fill a quarter of our domestic market for housing following permanent market disruptions caused by the Covid pandemic and war in Ukraine," she said.

"Illegal and unsustainable logging in developing countries and now US tariffs are impacting heavily on the international market and are likely to continue to do so for some time."

She also flagged the fact that past reliance on imports had delivered unexpected negative effects, saying, "We welcome ABARES' recognition that Australia's reliance on imports was a key driver on price increases during the Covid pandemic."

Hallam noted that Australia's average import unit cost for structural softwood sawnwood increased to a peak of \$911/m³ (in real \$2023-24) in November 2021, a 58% increase from March

2021, excluding the concurrent massive freight and insurance costs increases.

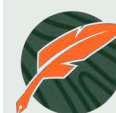
AFPA was pleased to see the report's recognition that the loss of local native timber harvesting will result in a "wide range of possible substitute products, from completely different non-renewable carbon

intensive materials such as tiles, carpets and vinyl, or imports of wood products from a range of countries with differing environmental standards," said Hallam, noting the report's recognition that native forest appearance-grade products cannot be replaced by plantations and that appearance grade hardwood sawmill products make up 38% of all domestically milled appearance grade products, but account for 55% of the value.

"The ABARES Wood Volumes Analysis also again indicates the housing market as the key driver of demand and this demonstrates the key need to drive sovereign capability in timber and wood-fibre supply," Hallam said.

"We welcome this analysis from ABARES and it shows that Australia's forest products sector needs the right policy and funding settings. That's what we're aiming to achieve through our election platform 'Australian Timber. Australia's Future.', that we'll be working to get all sides of politics to sign up to ahead of the Federal Election," Diana Hallam concluded. Click here for the summary or to download the election platform.

To download the full report, click here.



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