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# timber & FORESTRY *e*news

ISSUE 500 | March 1, 2018



## Our 500<sup>th</sup> 'birth-day'



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# Marking 500th 'birth-day' for enews

## Industry intelligence journal's exciting milestone

THIS week marks the 500th issue of Timber&Forestry enews, now a respected Australasian and global industry intelligence 'current affairs' journal.

It has grown as the number one trade publication, providing essential news and analysis for companies and organisations involved in the domestic and international wood business.

More than 15,000 copies are delivered by email and online every week and this is set to rise considerably when a new international database comes on stream next week.

Separate from industry, the valuable database also includes selected builders, architects and specifiers.

The new format and content changes have been welcomed, along with a dedicated website and other initiatives, including a closer focus on major industry, association and government endeavours that affect timber communities in cities, towns and regions.

Key figures behind enews are co-publishers Dennis Neilson, managing



**Keeping industry informed... online every week.**

director, DANA Ltd, based in Rotorua, NZ, and John Halkett, managing director, Forestlands Consulting, Sydney, and managing editor Jim Bowden in Brisbane, who has more than 50 years' experience in trade magazines as a writer and publisher. He was founding editor of Australian Timberman, which he commenced in 1977.

Combined, the team is also closely connected to international trade, export, commodity and supply chain activities.

Their contributions focus on exciting emerging markets for timber – and they reach

places others in the industry don't, facilitating networking directly on the ground.

They are investing this intelligence heavily in close working relationships with the industry's primary regulators and decision makers.

"Acknowledged by readers and industry observers alike, T&F enews provides independent and

**"HITTING THE MARKET ACROSS ALL INDUSTRY SECTORS"**

authoritative information not available through many trade publications or industry associations," Dennis Neilson said.

"The journal has built and maintains strong editorial/advertising links directly across its sectors of interest."

"With 500 issues now published we believe Timber&Forestry enews is hitting the mark across industry every Thursday," Halkett said.

He said more than 42% of readers visited enews each week while a credible opening rate of more than 38% was well above average open rates for other digital publication.

He invited an inflow of ideas from industry. "Keep us informed. We would be grateful to receive your input and continued advertising support."

Halkett said reaching the 'fifth-century' was a major milestone in anybody's language and was a tribute to the founding publisher and editor Dennis Macready and Jim Bowden who started it all 500 issues and 12 years ago.



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# \$43,000 EPA fines for forestry breaches just 'tip of the iceberg'

## The China syndrome: regional timber towns threatened

JIM BOWDEN

HEFTY fines issued this month by the NSW Environment Protection Authority to logging contractors for "unlawful logging practices" is only the tip of the iceberg, say industry stakeholders.

They say 'cowboy' logging operations 'gouging' tonnes of native timbers from private lands has multiplied as Chinese traders offer prices for logs up to three times above domestic prices paid at the 'farm gate' in an Australia-wide buying spree subsidised by the Chinese government.

China's hunt for Australian timber – any species – highlights the looming global shortage of wood fibre.

"This funnelling of Australian logs to China through the back door is now a huge problem; it threatens the very existence of our industry and could tear down our whole regional system," Queensland hardwood sawmiller Curly Tatnell said.

The Queensland industry produces more than \$3 billion in forest products each year and directly supports 10,000 jobs and a further 15,000 flow-on jobs. Many of these jobs are located in rural and regional areas across the state.

More than 70% of

**“IT'S NOT ONLY THE SERIOUSNESS OF IT BUT THE SIZE OF IT**



**1/ Targeted... hardwoods such as these spotted gum logs are in the sights of Chinese buyers.**  
**2/ Curly Tatnell... who will invest in an industry while its resource is being shipped offshore?**

direct industry jobs are in sawmilling and wood product manufacturing with significant economic benefits for the state. After the meat and sugar processing industries, timber processing is the third highest-valued primary industry worth \$536 million annually at the first point of processing.

"It's not only the seriousness of what's happening, but the size of it," Mr Tatnell said.

"And a lot of these logs are coming from state quota forests and nobody in government seems to be doing a bloody thing about it."

He added: "You only have to drive past the Port of



Brisbane to see the amount of hardwood logs waiting for export to China. It's huge and it's going to ruin our industry.

"You have to ask who will invest in an industry while its resource is being shipped offshore in increasing amounts?"

And on another concern, Mr Tatnell said: "Only the other day I was approached by a New Zealand trader who wanted to buy our hardwood logs ... for the NZ market or

Cont P 3



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\*Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA)

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From P 2

for export, I don't know. But I did tell him to forget it. I told him Australian logs stay in Australia."

Another concern by industry watchers was the vulnerability to 'poaching' of timber stands in Far North Queensland.

"What happens if the Chinese discover Cape York Peninsula and its abundance of timbers such as stringy bark – and no regulations?"

"Might their ships turn up in a northern port somewhere and load up the containers. What's to stop them?"

Curly Tatnell, a director of Timber Queensland whose Maryborough-based DTM sawmill is primarily focused on the hardwood structural grade market, confirmed industry would be meeting with state ministers this week and the China issue was on the agenda.



Ready for shipping...logs containerised for export.

He said another industry worry was the loss of logging contractors to private land clearing of timber to feed the Chinese demand.

"I know of at least six contractors who have moved across, but you can't blame them if the money is better," Mr Tatnell said.

"But a lot of 'cowboy' operators are working out

there, too, and they show only contempt for legal harvesting codes of practice."

The NSW Environment Protection Authority issued a total of \$43,000 in fines to two logging contractors and a landowner for three separate environmental incidents arising from unlawful logging practices on private properties on the NSW north coast.

All three incidents allegedly involved multiple breaches of the PNF Code of Practice and resulted in water pollution.

EPA director of forestry Michael Hood said protecting water quality from logging activities was a priority.

"Clean and natural running waterways can be impacted when logging activities don't comply with the rules in place," he said.

"Unlawful practices such as building roads across waterways using soil, not only impacts on the flow of the streams but can cause significant soil erosion and water pollution."

The EPA fined a logging contractor \$20,500 for conducting a forestry operation that did not comply with a private native forestry plan at a private property in Drake, west of Casino.

The logging contractor constructed a waterway

crossing using a large volume of soil that was pushed into the running stream, polluting the water.

The contractor also logged trees within riparian exclusion zones. These protect streams and provide habitat and refuge for animals during and after forestry operations.

In a second incident, a private landowner in Lansdowne north of Taree was fined \$7500 for clearing vegetation along a significant length of a running stream, leaving continuous bare earth, causing soil erosion and water pollution.

**“BUT A LOT OF ‘COWBOYS’ ARE OPERATING OUT THERE, TOO**

A third fine was issued to a logging company working on a private property at Marlee, northwest of Taree. The company was fined \$15,000 for polluting waters after the logger pushed a large volume of soil into a stream so logging machinery could cross. This dammed the natural waterway and caused ongoing water pollution.

In all instances, the EPA required the responsible persons to repair any damage to the sites.

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**MARCH**

**2: Private Forestry Service Queensland timber growers network day – Max Ballantyne’s property, 20 Gaeta Road, Gaeta, near Bundaberg.** 9 am-3 pm. Presented by Bill Schulke and Sean Ryan. Subjects include cooperative timber sales: an option to obtain higher prices; best way for landholders to engage contractors; networking groups, mentoring and property development. Bring a water bottle, lunch, a chair and closed shoes. Smoko provided. Contact (07) 5483 6535 or email pfsq@bigpond.com

**6-7: ABARES Outlook 2018 – ‘Creating Value in an increasingly Connected World’ – National Convention Centre, 31 Constitution Avenue, Canberra.** Australia’s premier information and networking forum for the agriculture and economics sectors. Join delegates from across agricultural industries to hear from leading national and international speakers. Early bird rate if registered before Christmas. Visit [www.agriculture.gov.au/abares](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares)

**7: AFPA members’ dinner – Manuka Oval, Bradman Room, Griffith, Canberra.** 6 - 10 pm. Speakers Senator Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, and NFF

president, Fiona Simpson. Contact: (02) 6285 3833.

**9: Free native management field day – Slacks hardwood property, cnr Berries Road and Isis Hwy (approx. 16 km west of Childers).** 9 am-3 pm. (The field day originally scheduled for February 23 was postponed due to heavy rain). The March 9 event will give updates on legislation, updates on legislation, codes of practice, trigger maps and notification of forest practice; current timber products and what they are worth; latest growth results from 10 yo regrowth thinned trials; optimal tree stocking – selecting the best trees to retain for grazing and timber production; fire management. Contact Bronwyn Lloyd, Private Forestry Service Qld. (07) 5483 6535 or email pfsq@bigpond.com

**APRIL**

**18-20: Timber Queensland’s 2nd Biennial State Conference – Royal International Convention Centre, Brisbane.** ‘Doing Timber Business in Queensland: Room to Grow’. Visit [www.doingtimmerbusinessinqld.com](http://www.doingtimmerbusinessinqld.com)

**JUNE**

**18-19: FRAME 2018 conference and exhibition – Park Hyatt Melbourne.** Focus on timber offsite construction, expanding local and global

markets for timber buildings and the digital future ahead in design, manufacture and construction of timber frame multi-residential and mass timber commercial buildings. Contact Kevin Ezard, conference director, Frame Australia. Mob: 0419 538 638. Email: [kevin@frameaustralia.com](mailto:kevin@frameaustralia.com) Visit [www.frameaustralia.com](http://www.frameaustralia.com)

**20: AFPA Parliamentary Friends of Forestry and Forest Industries Dinner – Mural Hall, Parliament House, Canberra.** 6 pm. Contact: (02) 6285 3833.

**20-21: FIEA Woodflow 2018 – Melbourne, Australia.**  
**26-27: FIEA Woodflow 2018 – Rotorua, NZ.**

The objective, with 30-40% of delivered log costs being contributed by transport, is to improve efficiencies through the wood supply chain. It builds on the success of the HarvestTECH 2017 event. Unique opportunity to learn about innovations being developed and employed to assist in harvest and transport planning, logistics and operations. Visit [www.woodflow.events](http://www.woodflow.events)

**JULY**

**12-14: Inaugural International Furniture Show Australia – International Convention Centre, Sydney.** Presentations by Australian retailers and wholesalers and opportunity

to deal directly with global furniture manufacturers from countries such as China, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Pakistan. Excellent platform for Australian manufacturers to reach out to buyers from within Australia and New Zealand. Contact Australasian Furnishing Association at [compliance@australianfurniture.org.au](mailto:compliance@australianfurniture.org.au)

**AUGUST**

**8: FIEA Forest Industry Safety and Technology 2018 – Rotorua, NZ.**

**15: FIEA Forest Industry Safety and Technology 2018 – Melbourne, Australia.**

Covering updates and developments in forest industry safety, as well as providing a space for sharing ideas on how people, culture, technologies and systems are used to improve the safety of workers. Visit [www.forestsafety.events](http://www.forestsafety.events)

**SEPTEMBER**

**2-5: IFA and AFG conference – University House, Australian National University.** Titled ‘Forests for healthy cities, farms and people’. Title ‘Forests for healthy cities, farms and people’. It will be preceded by AFG’s pre-conference tour from Friday, August 31, to Sunday, September 2. Contact: (02) 6153 3044 or visit [www.forestry.org.au](http://www.forestry.org.au)



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# Forestry innovation hub will strengthen SA timber industry

## ‘Maximising the value from every cubic metre harvested’

SOUTH Australia, the birthplace of the South Australian softwood plantation industry, has been further strengthened as a leader in forestry innovation with the launch last week of a new National Institute for Forest Products Innovation Hub at Mount Gambier.

The institute, which will be hosted at the University of South Australia’s Mount Gambier campus, is backed by \$4 million funding from the federal and state governments and supported by industry contributions.

Assistant Minister responsible for forestry Anne Ruston said the new hub would play an important role in building knowledge on Australia’s plantation forests and revolutionising the way they were used.

Launching the research hub at the Bio Gro Wandilo production site, Senator Ruston and Tony Pasin MP Barker said: “It’s about maximising the value from every cubic metre harvested from our plantations. It’s about moving our wood



*Forestry is truly a sunrise industry... Senator Anne Ruston out in the field with Ross Hampton, CEO, Australian Forest Products Association, Neil Winkley, forester at PF Olsen Ltd, Mount Gambier, and Jerome Coleman, CEO, ForestrySA.*

products up the value chain.”

They said the end result was better returns to business, more investment, more jobs and greater economic prosperity and wealth in the southeast community.

Importantly, the research done in Mount Gambier would have national implications – it could be applied to other softwood plantation regions across Australia.

The innovation hub will work closely with industry to maximise the economic

returns from every dollar spent.

“The hub will strengthen ties between our research institutions and the sector’s strategic needs,” Senator Ruston said.

“Forestry is truly a sunrise industry – there is great potential in the new frontiers

**“GREAT POTENTIAL IN THE NEW INDUSTRY FRONTIER”**

such as bio-materials and bio-plastics.

“The plantation forestry sector is a real success story. Now in its third consecutive year of growth, Australia’s plantation industry increased the volume of logs harvested to a record 26 million cub m in 2015-16.”

AFFPA CEO Ross Hampton said the launch of the research hub was the realisation of a vision which was seeded several

Cont P 7

2nd Biennial State Conference

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From P 6

years ago.

“The research and development opportunities in this plantation region are enormous and it’s important we maximise efficiency of our forest industries and timber resource usage going forward. This Hub will play a key role into the future,” he said.

“We particularly congratulate the regional committee which will advise and guide the hub in its activities going forward.

“Dr Charlma Phillips, Tammy Auld, Phillip Dohnt, Glen Rivers and David Oliver along with Professor



Christopher Saint from the University of South Australia have a vital role sitting on this committee and I wish

1/ **At the hub... pictured at Mount Gambier, from left, are Gregg Bissett, Australian Conservatives Candidate for Mount Gambier, Troy Bell, sitting MP and independent candidate for Mount Gambier, Kate Amorosom SA Best candidate for Mount Gambier, Ross Hampton, CEO of AFP, and Craig Marsh, Liberal candidate for Mount Gambier.**

2/ **Phillip Dohnt**

3/ **Prof. Christopher Saint**

them well.”

Mr Hampton said there were nearly 180,000 ha of plantation forests in South Australia, producing logs valued up to \$321 million in 2015-16.

“This hub will make the most of what is already a huge amount of knowledge and experience in forest industries in the Mount Gambier region,” he said.

The Mount Gambier facility will partner with the Launceston Hub which was launched last year.

“AFPA will keenly examine the progress of both hubs and will provide support to their advancement,” Mr Hampton said.

## Forests hot topic as candidates woo voters in state election

FORESTRY has become a hot topic in the South Australian election on March 17 after a survey by ReachTEL found that two out of three voters intended to vote for a party and/or candidate that best supports the forest industries.

Almost nine out of 10 voters polled in MacKillop and Mount Gambier recognised the sector’s importance to the local economy.

Each candidate in the race for the seat of MacKillop has released a statement or given a quote about the issue, with every candidate pledging support for forests.

“SA Best takes the importance of the forestry industry very seriously,” said the party.

“We have a draft policy and MacKillop and Mt Gambier candidates Tracy Hill and Kate Amoroso have been busy since the release

of AFP’s ‘Building Blocks for Growth’ document, putting their regional perspective into policy.”

Forest grower OneFortyOne Plantations has responded by showing what the company has contributed to the region, and what kinds of policies they would be looking for in a candidate.

It says it has a team that lives and works in the region, and over the past

five years has donated more than \$1 million to various community organisations in the southeast.

The company is also concerned about rising electricity costs, stating: “Businesses are impacted by rising electricity costs (some have reported a 200% increase) and we are no different to any other business, as our mill runs 24/7.”

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# Small home builders to be biggest winners in Aussie renovation boom

MORE than 370,000 small and medium home builders and tradies will be big winners as Aussie homeowners spend an expected \$44 billion renovating their properties over the next five years.

“The vast majority of home renovations are done by the small building businesses which make up 98% of our industry,” Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn said.

“The latest forecast of building and construction activity predicts that the renovation sector will go from strength to strength and continue to build on the decade high \$8.3 billion in activity seen in the last financial year,” Mrs Wawn said.

“Renovations is already a key source of work for small and medium-sized building firms. The \$8.3 billion in renovation activity achieved last year is only the beginning and small builders and tradies can expect an average \$8.8 billion pipeline of work each year.”



Mrs Wawn said the sector would be an important source of growth and jobs as the construction of new homes moderated from the historic high levels seen over the past few years.

“There is great news for builders outside the eastern states and in regional Australia,” she said.

“In fact, we expect

**1/ Upbeat... home 'renos' driving building industry.**

**2/ Denita Wawn... great news for builders outside the eastern states and in regional Australia.**

growth in renovation work to be strongest outside the Melbourne and Sydney markets – South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and regional Australia.

“Young men and women looking for a great career will also be winners as this growth will support more well-paying jobs in the building trades.”

Mrs Wawn said the ‘reno’ boom was going to be great news for communities in every city, town and region where the boom in activity

would mean more than 32,000 Master Builders around the country would continue to boost local economies and create jobs.

Meanwhile, the Housing Industry Association says heavy stamp duty surcharges on foreign buyers will result in fewer new homes being built in NSW.

HIA executive director for NSW David Bare says HIA forecasts envisage that the number of dwelling starts in NSW will fall by 10.6% in 2018 with a further decline of 18.8% next year.

“The downward pressure on building activity is firmly focused on apartments, an area where foreign buyer demand is so important,” he said. “Foreign buyers are being put off by the huge stamp duty bills that now apply. In Sydney, the purchase of a typical apartment now attracts \$91,000 in stamp duty for foreign buyers.

“As a result, the amount of work on new apartments in NSW is projected to decline by 12% in 2018 and a further 25% in 2019.”



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# The double-edged sword of massive wood product exports

BY any measure, Australia's export of raw wood products has grown to be massive, says trade and market analyst Wood Market Edge.

"Whether it is the more than 6.6 million bdmt (bone dry metric tonnes) of woodchips or more than 4.4 million cub m of logs, the exports are very substantial, and the growth in export volumes has been staggering in recent years," says the online trade publication.

"It is difficult to look beyond the headline numbers, and it is hard to ignore the value of those exports. After all, woodchip and log exports alone created \$8347 million of export revenue for Australia."

Softwood log exports were valued at \$583.2 million, hardwood logs \$88.2 million, hardwood chips at \$1100.6 million and softwood chips at \$62.7 million.

No matter how compelling that export revenue sounds, says the WME, the industry needs to remain mindful, at an industry level, of the lost opportunities that it also represents.

**IT'S HARD TO IGNORE THE VALUE OF THESE EXPORTS**

"That doesn't mean we should get caught up in the 'make-everything-here' argument. That is unrealistic and ultimately undesirable.

"But exporting larger dimension softwood logs (in 2017, exactly 70% of softwood log exports were



*The growth in export volumes of woodchips has been staggering in recent years.*

=/> 15 cm diameter at the small-end), while importing an increasing volume of sawn timber may not be extracting full value from resource. At least that is, from the perspective of the domestic economy.

It is a similar but more stark reality with exporting hardwood chips to manufacture pulp, importing some pulp, but in particular, importing large volumes of printing and communication papers (like copy paper) and tissue products (like toilet paper) that are made from hardwood chips.

"At the same time, beyond sawn wood for instance, we note growing imports of most panel products and plywood," WME says.

"Experience tells us we are not at crisis levels, just yet. But we do offer this as a commencement of our engagement on a topic that goes ultimately to the sustainability of the domestic forestry and wood products industries."

Wood Market Edge says there is plenty of work to be done, but inaction is unlikely

to be the secret to success.

The current edition of Wood Market Edge provides the details, and the March edition will also include a detailed analysis of Australia's housing market and its prospects.

All of the data, analysis and intelligence in Australia's only dedicated wood markets monthly publication Wood Market Edge can be ordered by emailing [info@industryedge.com.au](mailto:info@industryedge.com.au)

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# Women in resources sector invited to apply for leadership scholarship

WOMEN currently working in the resources sector have a final opportunity to register their interest in a scholarship worth up to \$8000 to support participation in an accredited leadership development program.

“Funding must be apportioned by the end of March and it is unsure when these grants will be available again,” said Alistair Young of Women & Leadership Australia.

“This fee support opportunity provides women with funding of between \$3000 and \$8000 to undertake a range of leadership development programs.”

Speaking to



*Leadership scholarship... opportunities for women in the forest industry.*

Timber&Forestry enews, Mr Young said he encouraged the timber industry to consider the scholarship program.

He said Women & Leadership Australia has been developing female leaders and supporting the increased presence of women in business and community leadership roles for almost 15 years.

“Based on a simple truth, that women represent an enormously under-utilised national resource, we believe that supporting a greater percentage of women to step

up into leadership positions enables tremendous cultural and economic benefits,” Mr Young said.

The WLA initiative comprises a range of professional development programs, advisory services, networking channels, and on-going research. Since its inaugural forum in 2003, more than 50,000 women have participated, making WLA the largest gender-focused leadership initiative in Australia.

“With so much experience in developing women, we are ideally positioned to respond to the ever-changing needs of contemporary female leaders and their organisations,” Mr Young said.

“Each year, employers across all sectors and industries choose to partner with us to develop the skills and confidence of their female leaders and help provide exciting new career opportunities.”

The funding window closes on March 16. More information and initial expressions of interest are available at [www.wla.edu.au/funding1](http://www.wla.edu.au/funding1) or contact Alistair Young on (03) 9270 9032 or email [ayoung@wla.edu.au](mailto:ayoung@wla.edu.au)

**“TREMENDOUS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS”**

## MBA welcomes new Nats leader

MASTER Builders Australia has congratulated Michael McCormack on becoming Leader of the Nationals and Deputy Prime Minister of Australia

CEO Denita Wawn said MBA looked forward to working with the MP to

advance policies that support the building and construction industry in playing its crucial role in providing employment to more than one million Australians, training more than 50,000 apprentices each year and building strong local economies across the country.

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# Log exports: is it time again for 'precautionary principle'?

GRRR!

Massive tonnages of native hardwood export logs going through the Port of Brisbane are sounding the death knell – a slow death of a thousand cuts – to the Queensland native hardwood forest industry, unless it is quickly brought under control.

Under the federal sphere of control, it's about time Mark Furner MP [Minister for Agricultural Industry Development] shaped up and took a look at the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 and Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Act 1991 and how they impose an export duty of 30% on the FOB value of all native hardwood logs exported from Queensland.

It is also relevant that under the federal Export Control Act 1982 and permit requirements for unprocessed wood, a permit is required for more than two tonnes or more of logs. Where are the feds on this? More worried about SSM, Barnaby, and not upsetting the People's Republic of China?

On the state side of this issue, a species currently being 'mined' in rapacious proportions in Queensland is *Acacia shirleyi* or Lancewood. The word is that the global equivalents, such as African rosewood etc that are dense, red and stable, are well suited to the tastes of Chinese special furniture manufacturers who are turning this species into hundreds of thousands of ceremonial tea tables and joss house chairs. Seems they've almost cleared this out.



1/ On the move... lancewood load from western Queensland destined for China.

2/ Tea time... for Aussie wood?

## INDUSTRY WATCHDOG



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So now we have another gold rush – or tree rush – with Australia the easy target.

Questions we'd like to put to Anthony Lynham MP (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) and his officers:

- Does lancewood grow in a regional ecosystem which permits the removal of only five stems per hectare in relation to harvesting specialty timbers? Are any compliance wonks checking this? I can tell you it is being clear felled. Only a week ago I witnessed a never-ending caravan of trucks making their way to Brisbane full of



lancewood logs. Yes, more wood is being trucked out of western Queensland than beef cattle!

Over many years we have seen greenie bureaucrats use 'the precautionary principle' to stop, impede and disrupt both legitimate and blatant breaches of various environment protection laws and guidelines. Perhaps due to the rate and volume at which this species is being harvested raped and pillaged there is another case for the 'precautionary principle'.

- Well, buggar me, what about the code of practice for harvesting logs from private

native forest? Where are the spy-in-the-sky satellites? Where are the compliance officers? Does this come under Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy or National Parks and Wild Life, whose only concern is probably auditing those poor forestry blokes?

- Finally, with China and the 'free trade' agreements, Canberra and George Street seem to be looking the other way. Gotta sell 'em coal and iron ore and get the tourists.

Well folks, the missus has just given me a bone to chew so over and out.

Grrrr ...

# It's time to come McClean on packaging

## Peta Rabbit hops in to waste management concerns in NZ

A PETITION urging McDonald's restaurants to move to 100% biodegradable packaging has gained traction, collecting almost 26,000 signatures since its creation a week ago.

However McDonald's New Zealand say it already has a commitment to fully renewable, recyclable guest packaging for its restaurants by 2025.

The petition named, "Hey McDonald's! It's time to start using zero per cent plastic, 100% cent biodegradable packaging", was created by Change.org user Peta Rabbit.

The Change.org description reads: "This



*Big Mac... global commitment to recycled, certified sources.*

petition is about the amount of McDonald's rubbish I pick up on my morning walk. This is about McDonald's customers throwing their trash out of their car windows and leaving rubbish in car parks, parklands, waterways, road sides

and beaches."

McDonald's was in a uniquely powerful position to send a clear and direct message to customers and the wider communities their businesses thrived in, Rabbit said.

McDonald's pledged

last month to improve its packaging to "help significantly reduce waste to positively impact the communities the company serves around the world".

McDonald's New Zealand head of communications Simon Kenny said: "While we haven't had any direct contact from the person who set up the petition, they may be pleased to know that in January McDonald's made a global commitment that by 2025, 100% of McDonald's guest packaging will come from renewable, recycled, or certified sources."

Also, she said, by 2025, the company had set a goal to recycle guest packaging in 100% of McDonald's restaurants."

## Snap to it. Photo contest will be forest experience.

Responsible Wood is again promoting a nation-wide photo contest, aimed at further raising awareness of the importance of sustainable forest management and certification. The contest theme – 'experience forests, experience PEFC' – enables participants to submit photos that fit this theme. This could embrace many topics, from forest landscapes to individual trees and plants, from harvesters to families hiking in the woods, from indigenous people to rural village life, from wooden buildings to photos of PEFC/Responsible Wood-labelled products.

The winning Australian entry in the PEFC contest will receive a \$500 gift voucher. The competition runs from Earth Day (April 22) to World Environment Day (June 5) and closes on June 5.

Responsible Wood opens the contest this month. Entries can be submitted electronically or by postal mail. All photos will remain with Responsible Wood for future use and promotion of Australian forest management.

Entries (any number) can be uploaded to Instagram **#RW2018PhotoContest** or emailed to PEFC Photo Contest at [sdorries@responsiblewood.org.au](mailto:sdorries@responsiblewood.org.au) or post to Responsible Wood, PO Box 786, New Farm, Qld 4005. Tel: (07) 3359 1758.



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# Antarctic mission: John muses over frozen land once covered by forests

WITH all the concerns about diminishing tree stands and an impending shortage of wood in Australia, Timber&Forestry enews co-publisher John Halkett was dispatched to Antarctica in February, perhaps to find future suitable land for new forests on the world's coldest and driest continent.

Well, there has been 'scientific talk' about sea levels rising, accelerated melting and climate change – and the Antarctic was covered by forests, once – in the Permian period, 299 to 251 million years ago!

John inspected some forest stands in Chile before boarding the *Seabourn Quest* for a few weeks travelling to the sub-continent, which at 14,000,000 sq km is nearly twice the size of Australia, and returning by way of the Falklands to Buenos Aires for a flight home.

He joins the elite club of travellers who have reached the intangible 66-degree line of latitude.

With a book on forests and climate change in production, John says it was intuitive of him to visit the 'frozen continent' to, among other things, see first-hand the probable impacts of climate change.

"The Antarctic Peninsula is experiencing the fastest rate of warming in the Southern Hemisphere, which has serious global implications for the rate of climate change," John said.

"This will also have real implications and opportunities for forest-based industries."

Meanwhile, fossils



1

**1/ Facts frozen in time... John Halkett researches Antarctica for a book on forests and climate change.**

**2/ Forests frozen in time... geologists have discovered remnants of a 280-million-year-old fossil forest in Antarctica.**



2

now being studied hint of Antarctica's green and forested past.

According to classic geology, this previous lush environment thrived millions of years ago in the Permian age. The shifting Antarctic continent, inexorably plodding at millimetres every year, gradually moved into icy hibernation. The flora and fauna were iced over and slowly fossilised.

But once its green valleys were filled with thriving *Glossopteris* pine and beach forests. The ancient trees were able to withstand alternating months of pure sunlight and darkness, before falling in history's greatest

mass extinction.

One recent expedition uncovered 13 fossil fragments from trees dating back more than 260 million years.

**“ ANCIENT TREES SURVIVED MONTHS OF SUNLIGHT THEN PURE DARKNESS ”**

The landscape would have been densely forested with a low-diversity network of resilient plants that could withstand polar extremes, like the boreal forest in present-day Siberia.

The fossils preserved the biology and chemistry of the ancient trees, which will help researchers investigate more on these high-latitude ecosystems to figure out how some plants survived the extinction event, and why others didn't. What's more, fossil micro-organisms and fungi have been preserved inside the wood.

The specimens look similar to the petrified forests in Yellowstone National Park, which were fossilised when volcanic materials buried the living trees.

The fungi in the wood itself were probably mineralised and turned into stone within a matter of weeks, in some cases probably while the tree was still alive.

The researchers found the prehistoric plants could transition rapidly between seasons, perhaps within the span of a month. Whereas while modern plants take months to transition and conserve water differently depending on the time of day, the ancient trees could fluctuate quickly between pitch black winters and perpetually sunny summers.

Prehistoric creatures learned to adapt to the turbulent climate until the Permian extinction, which was most likely caused by volcanism in present-day Siberia. The event wiped out more than 90% of marine species and 70% of land animals, later making way for dinosaurs.

**Editor's note:** John Halkett has written five books on tree-related topics and numerous scientific papers.

# Young NZ leaders to drive panel sessions at MobileTECH event

NEW Zealand's agri-tech community will be joined by some of the country's best young leaders at MobileTECH 2018 in Rotorua on March 27 and 28.

"In addition to unveiling the very latest agritech innovations, we have lined up three emerging leaders to share their visions on just where the technology is heading, what areas they see as the most beneficial to their businesses and how it will impact on the sector's future," says Ken Wilson, the event's program manager.

Young leaders will include Rachael Phillips, Hamish Best and Patrick Malley who have all 'grown up' with technology ... "and there's no doubt they will be early tech adopters and the future for the primary sector," Mr Wilson said.

Industry speakers on agri-tech digital technologies include David Herries, general manager, Interpine, Conor English, chair, Agribusiness New Zealand, and Bryan Graham, forest industry informatics science leader, Scion.

The global agri-tech industry, supporting farmers and growers with machinery and other kinds of technology, is a multi-billion dollar sector.

Rachael Phillips is a fourth-generation dairy farmer from Te Awamutu. She is in her first season 50/50



*Future in their hands... agri-tech industry is a global multi-billion dollar sector.*

share milking 240 cows on a 70 ha dairy farm owned by her parents. She has been involved in New Zealand Young Farmers for the past nine years and is a Waikato/BOP regional finalist in this year's Young Farmer of the Year.

"I believe the use of technology is essential in ensuring that New Zealand remains as a world leading exporter," Rachael said. "It will continue to help increase efficiencies of production at both farm and processing levels."

Hamish Best is the current vice chairperson for NZ Young Farmers and was runner-up in the Young Farmer of the Year in 2017. He also won the 2010 Massey University Agriculture Student of the year award.

"Technology is always changing and our generation needs to be at the forefront of the next wave of technology change," Hamish said.

Patrick Malley is a passionate Northland horticulturalist and works in his family's horticultural business, Maungatapere

Young Horticulturalist of the Year 2014.

Each young leader will open with a short presentation to outline their views on digital technologies and its use within the primary sector. They will then drive the conversation, with a key question being how agri-tech developers can better collaborate with the next generation of primary producers.

This panel is one of the many exciting presentations at MobileTECH 2018.

Further details at [www.mobiletech.events](http://www.mobiletech.events). Contact Ken Wilson on +61 4 5226 2339 or email [ken.wilson@connexevents.com](mailto:ken.wilson@connexevents.com)

Berries. He is also a co-founder of a start-up horticultural software company. He won the Young Grower of the Year 2014 and

## FREE – NATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT FIELD DAY

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(The field day originally scheduled for February 23 was postponed due to heavy rain).

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**“OUR GENERATION MUST BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGY”**

# Fumigant to replace methyl bromide in the treatment of export logs in NZ

A SIGNIFICANT milestone has been reached in replacing methyl bromide as the standard fumigant for export logs and timber in New Zealand.

The Environmental Protection Authority has released application details for approval of ethanedinitrile (EDN) as a fumigant for log and timber exports.

The forest industry anticipates EDN could replace methyl bromide fumigation which is used on log exports to China and India. Methyl bromide is an ozone-depleting chemical. Regulations due to come into effect in 2020 will make it considerably more difficult and expensive to use.

The chair of stakeholders

in Methyl Bromide Reduction (STIMBR) Don Hammond says approval by the EPA is the critical first step into its use in New Zealand to ensure log exports are free of pests the importing countries don't want.

"Over the past seven years STIMBR and our co-funding partners, including the New Zealand government, have invested more than \$22 million in research on alternatives to methyl bromide, as well as ways to reduce the amounts that need to be used, along with recapture and destruction technologies," Don Hammond says.

He says an extensive review of scientific literature commissioned by STIMBR in

2014 found only one promising fumigant alternative to methyl bromide.

"Plant and Food Research confirmed EDN is an effective phytosanitary treatment for insects which might be found on our logs," Hammond says.

"There are clear advantages of EDN over methyl bromide. EDN has no effect on the ozone layer. It is not a greenhouse gas and does not bioaccumulate because it breaks down rapidly in the environment without leaving harmful residues in the soil or in water."

EDN is currently manufactured by Draslovka a family-owned company based in the Czech Republic. Over the past three years Don

Hammond says Draslovka has made significant investment to develop EDN into a commercially viable and environmentally sustainable alternative to methyl bromide for use globally as a soil and commodity treatment.

The president of the Forest Owners Association Peter Clark says while EPA approval is a vital first step that doesn't mean importing countries will automatically accept its use.

"We are confident that, with the huge wealth of positive data on EDN, that EPA will give its approval," he said. "The process of assuring other countries that EDN is both effective and safe to use, must also be undertaken as a government priority."



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# Crushed wood stronger than steel

## Fibre materials are compressed like a panini sandwich ...

A CHEMICAL bath and a hot-press can transform wood into a material that is stronger than steel, new research shows.

The process, and others like it, could make the humble material an eco-friendly alternative to using plastics and metals in the manufacture of cars and buildings.

"It's a new class of materials with great potential," says Li Teng, a mechanics specialist at the University of Maryland in College Park, USA, and a co-author of the study.

Attempts to strengthen wood go back decades. Some efforts have focused on synthesizing new materials by extracting the nanofibres in cellulose – the hard natural polymer in the tubular cells that funnel water through plant tissue.

Li's team took a different approach; the researchers focused on modifying the porous structure of natural wood.

First, they boiled different wood types, including oak, in a solution of sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfite for seven hours. That treatment left the starchy cellulose mostly intact, but created more hollow space in the wood structure by removing some of the surrounding compounds. These included lignin, a polymer that binds the cellulose.

Then the team pressed the block – like a panini sandwich

– at 100 °C for a day. The result was a wooden plank one-fifth the thickness, but three times the density of natural wood – and 11.5 times stronger.

Scanning electron microscopy showed that the latest process crushes the cellulose tubes together until they crumple and interlock.

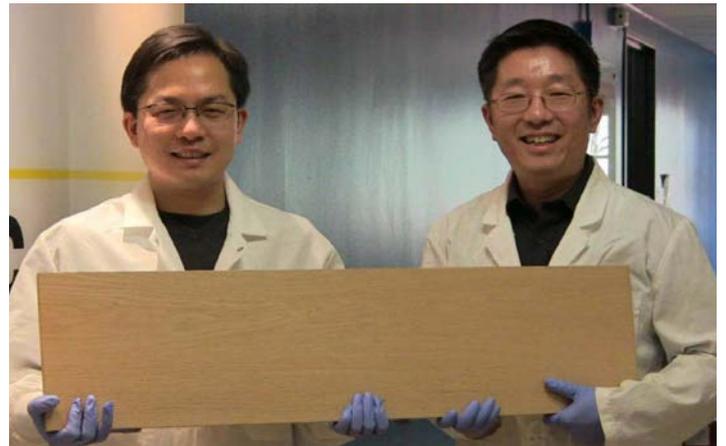
"You have all these nanofibres aligned in the growth direction," says Hu Liangbing, a materials scientist at the University of Maryland, who was part of the team.

To test the toughness of the material, the team fired pellets at it from a ballistic air gun, normally used to test the impact resistance of military vehicles. Five layers of the material laminated together – just 3 mm thick in total – was able to halt a 46-gram steel projectile travelling at roughly 30 metres a second.

**“REMOVING POLYMERS CAN INCREASE THE STRENGTH TENFOLD**

That's much slower than the several hundred metres a second at which a bullet travels, says Hu, but it is comparable to the speed at which a car might be moving before a collision, making the material possibly suitable for use in vehicles.

Some researchers say they are underwhelmed by



**University of Maryland scientists Hu Liangbing and Li Teng demonstrate a two-step process in which wood was "densified" and reduced to about a fifth of its original thickness.**

the group's improvements over previous densification methods. Fred Kamke at Oregon State University in Corvallis says that even without removing lignin, other techniques – such as applying higher temperatures, steaming the wood before treatment, and treating it with resins – can achieve most of the reported increase in performance.

"These other methods are probably much less expensive than a seven-hour boil in a caustic solution," he says. In his own tests, 24 layers of densified wood untreated by chemicals was able to halt a 9-millimetre bullet from a handgun.

Michaela Eder, a plant biomechanics researcher at the Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces in Potsdam, Germany, notes that compressing the wood to increase its density should naturally improve its strength – but it was unclear how much the entanglement of the nanofibres contributed.

Hu and Li say their team's simulations suggest that the increase in strength is consistent with the effects of hydrogen bonds forming when the nanofibres tangle.

Further evidence, they say, is in previous work in which they extracted wooden nanofibres to make paper 40 times stronger and 130 times tougher, but with only a modest increase in density. This suggested the cellulose fibres were bonding to achieve the superior strength, they say.

Hu says that his study's main finding is that removing the right amount of lignin is key to maximising performance.

In his team's experiments, removing too much of the polymer resulted in less-dense, brittle wood, suggesting that some leftover lignin is helpful in binding the cellulose fibres when they are hot-pressed. The wood was strongest when roughly 45% of the lignin was removed.

"I see a lot of potential in this direction," says Eder, referring to both papers.

"What I like is that they're trying to make use of the inherent properties of the wood itself. It's a fantastic material to work on and improve."

(Nature – international journal of science)

# WoodSolutions draws a full house for essential exterior timber design seminar

ALASTAIR WOODARD

WITH more than 140 attendees it was a full house at the beautiful Library at the Dock in Melbourne for a half-day WoodSolutions seminar in Melbourne this week.

Titled 'Essential Exterior Timber Design', the seminar focused on the proper use and specification of timber externally – always a topic of interest with architects, building designers and engineers. But such was the popularity, seats for the seminar filled-out half way through the promotion period.

Following a brief welcome by Dr Alastair Woodard, manager of the Victorian Wood Solutions program, Nick Livanes of Koppers Australia set the scene with a detailed and informative discussion on timber, its natural durability, the needs and importance of preservative treatment in certain external applications, the types of treatments available, and some key detailing considerations to maximise the life of timber used externally.

Douglas Curr from Cabot's Premium Woodcare provided an excellent and highly



**Seminar speakers...** Boris Iskra, FWPA, Nick Livanes, Koppers Australia, and Douglas Curr, Cabot's Premium Woodcare.

informative presentation discussing points to consider when choosing a coating, the different coating technologies, the different timber finishes for exterior applications, and the key points around correct application and on-going maintenance.

To finish off the more technical aspects of using timber in external applications, Joe Ballester from Woodform Architectural discussed the use of solid timber wood cladding, decking and screen products, providing a highly visual presentation of some of the amazing and

innovative jobs completed by Woodform. He provided an excellent insight into the important aspects of product selection and proper design and specification for timber products in these external applications.

An exceptionally inspirational address was presented by Theodore Kerlidis, a director of

“MAXIMISING THE LIFE OF TIMBER USED EXTERNALLY”

k20 Architecture, a very passionate, practical and innovative designer with timber in all of its structural and appearance applications.

Theo had the audience spellbound with his highly articulate discussion on 'Shaping the Environment through the Things We Build'. His presentation case-studied four award winning k20 Architecture projects, all with a high use of timber externally, internally and structurally.

Rounding out the seminar was an informative presentation by Boris Iskra, FWPA's national standards manager, on the 'Use of Timber Products in Bushfire-Prone Areas – the Latest Advances'.

Clearly, following this seminar, the audience felt much better equipped and more comfortable about specifying timber correctly in external applications.

For further information, contact Dr Alastair Woodard at woodard@woodsolutions.com.au

• **Additional coverage, pictures next issue.**

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# Sound German engineering brings elevated driving feel to Astra sedan

WHAT is it about German engineering?

Wandering around Berlin's Potsdamer Platz a year ago, I popped into the Kollhoff building, a 25-storey tower which bears the name of German architect Hans Kollhoff.

With its step-like façade, I wanted to check out the top level where the building tapers to a slender peak and the surrounding 'wings' are covered in grass.

Nothing prepared me for the ride in the Kollhoff elevator – the fastest in Europe – which took less than 20 seconds to reach the top level which has a magnificent view of the platz and was until recently the HQ of the Daimler car company.

So it is with German automotive engineering. Cars are engineered to dominate the open road. With more than 12,900 km of autobahn highways and speed limits of 130 km or more, Germany encourages the building of fast cars.

Another thing that sets German automotive engineering apart is its heritage. Without a doubt, das Deutschland's historic automotive roots run deep.

Karl Benz invented the automobile as we know it over 125 years ago. While Mercedes Benz might be Germany's oldest automaker, Audi produced its first automobile in 1910. BMW has been manufacturing automobiles since 1928, and Porsche was founded in 1931.

But the sleek, new GM



*Fine-tuned to Aussie roads... the new German-engineered Holden Astra LTZ sedan.*

Astra Sedan LTZ that took us to Cleveland Point on Moreton Bay, 25 km from Brisbane, was surely suffering an identity crisis – German-engineered, designed in North America, built in South Korea, Australian-tuned and badged as a Chevrolet Cruze in other markets.

GM Holden, an Australian subsidiary of the US automotive giant, built its last Australian car in October 2017, almost 70 years after it created Australia's first, the FX Holden, in 1948.

Holden has opted to go with the Astra name here to present a unified front on the small car market; adding the four-door sedan to the new five-door hatch. It's built off the same European developed 'D2' small car underpinnings as the Opel-designed Astra and was built in GM's South Korean factory.

But Holden has carried out its own local ride and handling program to tune the suspension for Australian

## MOTORING



### With ORSON WHEELS

conditions and tastes.

One of the biggest changes is the 1.4-litre four-cylinder turbo-charged petrol engine that replaces both of the previous Cruze model's powerplants – a 1.8-litre naturally-aspirated four and a 1.6-litre turbo petrol.

It has the same new generation alloy four-pot found in the Astra hatch, tuned to produce 114kW of power and 240Nm of torque. And with a 113 kg weight reduction, the engine does a good job of pushing the machine.

A unique tune for gravel

road driving also ensures dirt-drivers aren't left in the lurch. Holden has also enabled and calibrated trailer sway control if you need to tow.

The new Astra provides passive entry and push-button start and with forward collision alert there's a heads-up warning when approaching the vehicle in front if travelling too fast.

The sunroof was a nice surprise and rounds out an elegant package that provides plenty of space and visibility.

Inside, the Astra is comfortable and surprisingly luxurious – a leather-wrapped steering wheel and leather seats make it feel expensive and while the car is small it makes good use of storage space. Back seat space is enough for a couple of adults, while the boot could comfortably fit a couple of suitcases and a backpack or two.

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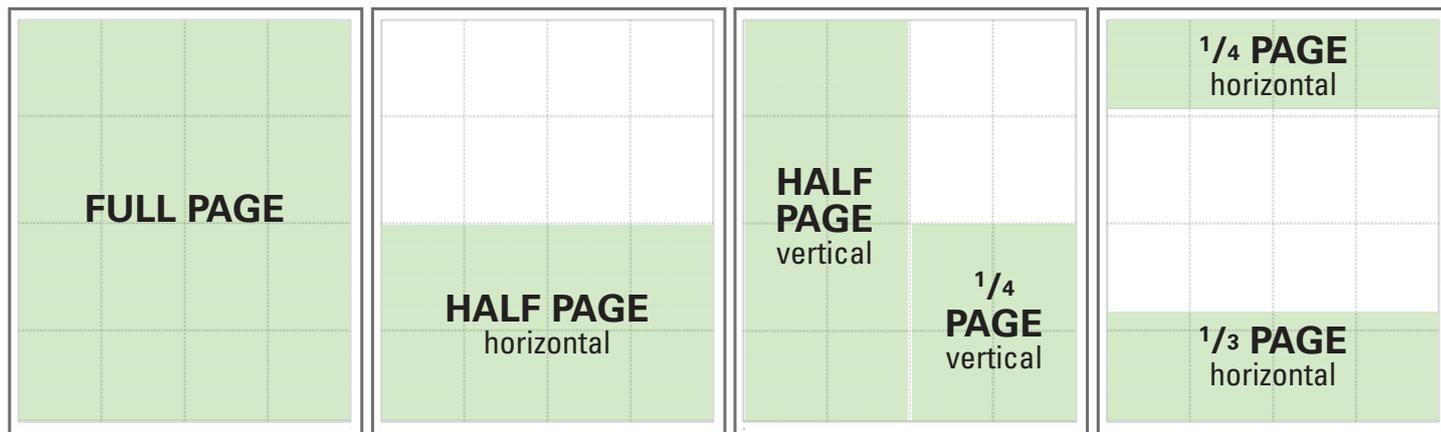
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\* Publishers' claim. The publication draws on a new data-base vault of more than 14,500 emails – a number that grows weekly.

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