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timber & FORESTRY *e*news

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Farewell 2020! Here's to a better year ahead

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our readers



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We miss you ... enews soldiers on after a tough, dramatic and demanding year

WE don't have to tell you that 2020 has been a tough, demanding year.

Seems the forest industry 'won' the trifecta with the horrific summer bushfires, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic – then on top of all that a ban on log imports by China.

Among all this the hardwood industry has had to deal with the shenanigans of the Victorian government on ongoing log supplies, and the shilly-shallying in NSW on forest management and koala policies.

And on the subject koalas, Maree McCaskill of Timber NSW tells us that same old battle continues with no resolution to the koala SEPP ... "except that they were to revert to the old SEPP 44 conditions until early next year when they will try with another Bill."

Supply from Crown land is still critical, she says, and understands all the contractors on the NSW southern coast have been stood down.

"It's looking very grim there," she says. "Supply on the North Coast is a little



Cover of our first edition in 2020... the start of a very difficult year for all of us. Volunteer Brett Robin, a fifth-generation logging contractor from Gippsland, Vic, breaks from fire-fighting duty to comfort a baby koala.

better but the EPA still insists on site-by-site negotiations on top of the IFOA conditions which is making it very hard to harvest."

So, channelling Winston Churchill: "When you're going through hell, keep going." And our industry IS soldiering on.

Tough times indeed, but highlights too. The efforts of the industry in southern NSW to salvage and process fire-killed softwood plantations has been widely acknowledged.

Like others during

this challenging year, Timber&Forestry enews made it through the year in reasonably good shape and we're looking forward to a more productive and rewarding year in 2021. In particular, we're looking forward to some key industry events that were postponed this year. So, expect to see us 'on the ground' at industry conferences, exhibitions and other events in 2021.

This is the last edition of Timber&Forestry enews for 2020 as, along with most

of industry, we take the traditional Christmas-New Year break to refresh and re-charge. The first edition for 2021 will be delivered on Thursday, January 14.

Co-publishers Dennis Neilson, a director of Rotorua-based DANA Ltd, and John Halkett, a Sydney-based forest industry identity, have been encouraged by the response to enews since they took over the digital weekly three years ago.

"In that time, managing editor Jim Bowden has worked tirelessly to elevate the publication to the forefront of Australian and New Zealand industry newsletters," they said.

"Contributing some news articles is challenging enough, so we recognise the efforts of Jim and his team during the chaos of 2020."

We take this opportunity to sincerely thank readers and advertisers for their support through challenging times. We encourage you to keep the faith in the brighter times that we know lie ahead.

Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year.



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‘If China can’t ship its own timber from Australia then what chance do we have?’

THE China-owned Shield Resources which received a \$500,000 grant from the South Australian government to build a freight handling, trans-shipment and loading facility at Bordertown has shut down the project.

The company invested in the new intermodal facility in partnership with ARTC and Bowmans Rail Services offering a new low-cost rail freight solution for the region, especially for the transport of logs destined for China.

The facility was closed this month on the heels of the closure the Flinders Adelaide container terminal at Port Adelaide to timber containers booked for China because of China’s import ban on Australian logs.

SA Timber Processors Association CEO David Quill remarked: “If China can’t ship its own logs from Australia, what chance do we have?”

Mr Quill said one of the major issues facing local processors, whether they be large or small, was the fact that this fibre was being exported, so if the exports were to cease there was a huge opportunity for growth in this region.

“I think that would immediately bring about the potential establishment of a number of different facilities in Mount Gambier or in the



David Quill



Bryan Hayes



Nathan Paine

Green Triangle,” he said.

However, Mr Quill said he did not believe local processors could take on all the extra resources.

“China is without question the biggest export market,” he said.

“I think there’s going to be huge pressure on domestic processors to take additional fibre if the demand to China is stopped indefinitely. I think the demand could be met probably to a maximum of 200,000 tonnes, so it would still be a shortfall of 800,000 plus a year.”

Tasmanian Forest Products Association chair Bryan Hayes said about 100 direct jobs and hundreds of indirect jobs in his state could be impacted by the China log ban on the state.

“It’s a tricky situation because there aren’t immediately available alternatives,” he said.

Mr Hayes said they were now working with the government to investigate “alternative domestic markets”.

“Possibly it may even open up opportunities in the medium to long-term for more investment in downstream processing and

more manufacturing here in Australia,” he said.

South Australian Forest Products Association CEO Nathan Paine said exports “do have a place in the industry”, however, they needed to investigate onshore capabilities.

“We’re also working very

closely with the state government around how we can unlock and unleash new domestic manufacturing opportunities as quickly as possible to ensure that we can really drive new domestic demand

for this product,” he said.

“We need to make sure that there is strong growth [and] domestic demand to ensure that we maintain activity levels in the industry.”

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“HUGE PRESSURE TO TAKE EXTRA FIBRE”

The unusual year that was ... and what forestry sector might expect from 2021

We will find opportunities among these devastating setbacks

IT'S safe to say 2020 was not the year any of us were expecting.

The catastrophic bushfire season and the global pandemic that quickly followed ... disruption to international trade ... a ban on Australian log imports imposed by China ... and legal challenges to the native forest sector.

All of the above have dumped piles of uncertainty upon our industry.

Our sector is resilient, which we have proven time and again. The way we have worked together to address these challenges and develop



solutions is something we should all be enormously proud of. A special acknowledgement goes to Ross Hampton and his team at AFPA who have worked



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tirelessly on many fronts.

Despite everything the past 12 months have thrown at us, FWPA has remained steadfast in its mission to grow the market for wood products and improve coordination along the value chain.



our programs has been commendable. We will continue to take proactive steps to strengthen and support this process, and find the opportunities among the devastating setbacks.

If the past year has taught us anything, it is that we cannot predict the future. Yet as the uncertainty of the impact of Covid-19 and instability in geopolitics continues, there are themes and trends we can safely acknowledge will play a significant role as we move into 2021 and beyond.

First and foremost, we foresee an increased focus on the health and wellbeing of our people. While so much else remains outside of our control, the welfare of our

“ WE HAVE PROVEN TIME AND TIME AGAIN THAT OUR INDUSTRY IS RESILIENT ”

Our team's adaptability and willingness to go above and beyond, to ensure the continued delivery of

Cont P 5

From P 4

workers, members and community is something that remains the highest priority. Research and an openness to adopting new ways of working will play a big part in this.

Increased competition from alternative materials such as steel and recycled plastics will persist. For our part, FWPA will continue to create and disseminate compelling information, as well as provide easily-accessible educational opportunities about the many tremendous benefits of wood. The success of our WoodSolutions webinars throughout 2020 has proven the design and build sector has ongoing interest in learning more about wood and its applications. We will keep up this momentum!

The ever-growing shift towards sustainability, especially around the issues of climate change, biodiversity conservation, and animal welfare will rightly continue to gather pace. Our brand The Ultimate



The success of FWPA's WoodSolutions webinars throughout 2020 has proven the design and build sector has ongoing interest in learning more about wood and its applications.

Renewable™ has already made major inroads in promoting the sustainable nature of wood and forestry among the general public, boosting community acceptance to an all-time high.

Our belief in the importance of research has been demonstrated through our work with AFPA, in support of its formal consultation process to prepare a case for increasing forest grower levy rates. Major Australian growers and members of the AFPA Growers Chamber Research and Biosecurity Funding Working Group prepared a paper outlining how forest

growers can collaborate on an increased program of RD&E, focused on priorities of common interest, as well as a national forest biosecurity surveillance program.

With the many challenges (and opportunities) facing the sector, we must be mindful of our limited resources. We need to work together more collaboratively than ever before to identify and agree our priorities, and this new commitment and approach

“WE MUST WORK TOGETHER MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER BEFORE”

to grower RD&E and biodiversity is a great example of this.

Alongside this, we have commissioned an Independent Performance Review, to determine what FWPA is doing well and areas for improvement. Direct feedback from stakeholders is being sought, through an independent consultancy.

While the review is a requirement of FWPA's statutory funding agreement (SFA) with the federal government, it will also offer useful insights to help guide our future direction.

Arguably, in such uncertain times, coming together in this way and sharing our thoughts, insights and hopes for the future as we strive to build the most robust sector possible, has never been more important.

The results of the review will be published in February 2021, and will guide the development of our strategic direction for these next five, pivotal years.



Hyne Timber Glue Laminated Structure at Mon Repos Turtle Centre, Queensland

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Resilient industry fights back on all fronts after one of our hardest years

Legislation to remove uncertainty over native forests a high spot as year ends

LAST year in Timber&Forestry enews I began my review of 2019 by saying: “This year ends with the smoke of fires choking Sydney and the southern parts of Queensland” ... and noted there were fires in regional Victoria as well.

Sadly, less than a month later, I could have written the same sentence, only changing “This year ends” to “This year began.”

The impact of that Black Summer bushfires is still being felt almost 12 months on. Around 8.3 million ha of native forests was destroyed, of which 2 million ha was multi-use forests.

Some 130,000 ha of our plantations also went up in flames. Downstream costs will eventually be in the billions, and counted in thousands of jobs over the medium term.

For 2020, worse was on its way with Covid-19, which has been a global wrecking ball through economies, jobs, families and communities. But while many industries were brought to a standstill, we were able to persuade policy makers that our industry is part of the essential food and groceries supply chain. We continued to operate safely through the



The faces of bushfire battles won and lost.



year ensuring shop shelves remained largely full – notwithstanding the odd toilet paper panic buying week.

There were dire predictions the slowdown in construction brought about by reduced new housing demand, and almost no migration would savagely hit the timber supply chain. AFPA and others argued for a building stimulus package and with the support of the federal government’s HomeBuilder Program, combined with the various state government incentives, that cliff was averted. Demand has continued, although many are still very worried about the coming year when stimulus measures end.

Unfortunately, as well as the bushfires and the pandemic, our native forestry sector has had to continue to battle against the direct



ROSS HAMPTON
CEO,
Australian Forest Products Association

invasion of their working premises and lawfare undertaken by environmental activists.

In May the Federal Court ruling in Victoria put a cloud over the regional forest agreements. This comes on top of the continuing determination of the Andrews’ Labor government to end native forestry by 2030, and its refusal to listen to the valid reasons why this should not happen. If this

decision stands it will result in the loss of hundreds of jobs, no better outcomes for the environment and simply a transition by Victoria to importing its appearance grade hardwood that will often come from places which do not manage their forests as sustainably as the state currently does.

The Federal Court ruling is being appealed, and it was heartening in the last week of Federal Parliament that Nationals Senator Bridget McKenzie tabled legislation which will remove the uncertainty which now exists. That bill will be debated when Parliament resumes in 2021.

Towards the end of the year it became apparent that 2020 hadn’t quite finished with us yet. Increasing trade tensions with China caught up our round log exports. While some of the timber can be diverted to Australian sawmills, the vast bulk has no other home. This is an unfolding crisis and AFPA is discussing options with the government, and it does understand that new programs or altered funding parameters in the existing program may be necessary to enable local processing to adjust to a far greater volume of pulp and low-quality logs than has traditionally been the case.

There was also some good news in 2020. After many years of campaigning, AFPA was very pleased to welcome the start of the rollout, of the carbon payment opportunities

“PERSUADING THE POLICY MAKERS THAT WE ARE AN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY”

Cont P 7

MARCH 2021

15-18: DANA New Zealand Forest Industry Status and Outlook Conference and Field Trip – Napier Conference Centre, Marine Parade, Napier,

New Zealand. For further information visit www.danaevents.co.nz/2021napier/ or contact Conference Organiser Julie Bell admin@dana.co.nz

OCTOBER 2021

11-14: IFA/AFG national conference 'Your Forests, Our Future' – Country Club Tasmania, Launceston, TAS, Australia. Open to forest scientists, forestry professionals and forest growers. Call for abstracts

and sponsorship opportunities will be released in coming months. Contact Institute of Foresters of Australia. Visit www.forestry.org.au or phone (03) 9695 8940.

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JANUARY 2021

11-14 : World Conference on Timber Engineering (WCTE Santiago 2020) – Santiago, Chile. Topics include Sustainable Forests for timber production; wood products, connections: timber engineering' timber architecture; building and environmental impacts; policies, education and future trends.

For more information see: www.wcte2021.com/

25-29 : B C Wood Global Buyers Mission – VIRTUAL EVENT. Live virtual event to meet and interact with pre-qualified international buyers from around the world. The event to find new sources of high quality, competitively priced Canadian wood products, while

letting you reconnect with current suppliers. For more information go to: <https://bcwood.com/events/global-buyers-mission/>

• Please send any events listings to John Halkett via email: johnh@timberandforestrynews.com

From P 6

for new plantations. The federal government has so far made the changes necessary for this to occur in some of the regional forestry hubs. AFPA continues to argue for all hubs to be treated equally.

I thank all industry members for their support

“ ALL REGIONAL FORESTRY HUBS SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY ”



Victorian government's stand on native forests puts hundreds of forest jobs at risk.

and hard work on so many fronts in what has been, I'm sure you'll agree, one of the hardest years the industry

has faced.

I can assure you the AFPA team will continue to work for you and with all industry

sectors in the year ahead.

Have a Merry Christmas and happy and peaceful New Year.

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Sustainable forest management plays a vital role in building resilient economies

World Forestry Congress in Seoul in 2021 will be the first in six years

AN end-of-the-year quote this week from Labor backbencher and resources warrior Joel Fitzgibbon:

“If you emit a tonne of carbon and you have a forest that absorbs it, your outcome is net zero. This is not a Herculean task; this is something everyone is committed to around the world.”

Appropriate comment as the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation leads a push for the world to scale up efforts to restore landscapes and forests over the next decade, with a target for 2030 to salvage 350 million ha of degraded and deforested lands, an area bigger than India.

FAO says the world has made considerable progress in the past decade; 63 countries, sub-national governments and private organisations have already committed to restoring 173 million ha, and regional responses are making significant advances in Africa and Latin America.

The goal is to meet the ‘Bonn Challenge’, the world’s largest voluntary forest landscape restoration initiative, which was launched in 2011.

“Sustainable forest management can play a vital role in building resilient economies and societies that can withstand pandemics, climate change and other global challenges,” FAO says.

The World Forestry Congress, the largest and most significant gathering of



Countdown to 2021 World Forestry Congress in Seoul.

the global forestry sector, is held every six years – and the 15th congress will take place in Seoul from May 24 to 28 next year.

Forests are at the heart of a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic – that was the key message that emerged in the 200 Days Countdown Event to the congress.

The event, organised on November 9 by the Korea Forest Service, sought to draw international attention to the 2021 congress, themed ‘Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests’.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged nations to “take decisive action” on climate change, which is fuelled by forest destruction.

In his opening ceremony remarks Park Chong, the Minister of the Korea Forest Service said forests were an imperative solution to the climate crisis. The

world should work together to achieve sustainable development.

“As countries respond to challenges created by the pandemic, they are also recognising the opportunities such a crisis presents to shift the global development paradigm towards greater sustainability and greener, more inclusive economies,” he said.

Meanwhile, Canada’s Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O’Regan has launched the government’s plan to plant two billion trees over 10 years, with an investment of \$3.16 billion.

Meeting this commitment, he says, will help Canada address climate change by

“BUILDING A GREEN AND HEALTHY FUTURE WITH FORESTS”

reducing carbon pollution and is a key part of Canada’s efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

“There is no path to net-zero emissions that does not involve our forests,” O’Regan said.

“Planting trees is a natural climate solution that reduces emissions



while providing other benefits such as improved air and water quality, particularly in urban settings; decreased risk of wildland fire to rural communities; and support for biodiversity.”

Canada’s 10-year target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 12 megatonnes by 2050 will create up to 4300 good jobs.

Natural Resources Canada is implementing the plan with support from Environment and Climate Change Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

This approach, which represents a 40% annual increase in the number of trees planted in Canada, will include both urban and rural areas across the country. In 10 years, the additional two billion trees will cover over 1.1 million ha.

ATIF developing international trade to bridge an inevitable gap in timber supply

LIKE other sectors in the timber industry 2020 has been really challenging for wholesalers and importers.

In particular the inability to travel has been a real impediment. Unlike others in the industry, travel restrictions have meant that communications along often complex supply chains for timber importers has been difficult.

This has had implications for business confidence, supply certainty, delivery dates, product specifications, and issues such as phytosanitary requirements and due diligence associated with illegal logging regulations."

In the wake of the 2019-2020 summer bushfires, not unsurprisingly, there has been wide international interest in the supply and demand situation in Australia.

Even before the Covid pandemic resulted in the closure of international borders international visitors had already visited us here to learn about the impacts of the bushfires on supply into the future, notably in relation

“DISCUSSIONS WITH CANADA AND RUSSIA ON IMPORTS



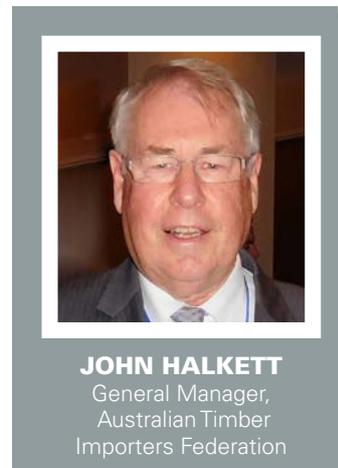
ATIF... developing new international sources of supply of both softwood and hardwood timber products.

to structural softwoods and engineered wood products.

This interest has not abated and ATIF has continued to have a dialogue with a wide range of current and prospective suppliers into the Australian market.

In relation to structural softwood timber products, this has included ongoing discussions with the Canadians, and an emerging interest from Russian suppliers seeking to gain a more thorough understanding of Australian building codes and other regulations relevant to supplying the Australian market.

The continuing vagaries around ongoing supplies



JOHN HALKETT
General Manager,
Australian Timber
Importers Federation

of native hardwood timber in Victoria and elsewhere has also been picked up by suppliers of temperate hardwoods and by new potential suppliers of hardwood timber products

from South America and Southeast Asia.

On the assumption that international travel will recommence next year, ATIF will have a job to do to assist to develop new international sources of supply of both softwood and hardwood timber products into the Australian market.

This in recognition that the summer bushfires have further dampened

the already muted interest in investment in long-run softwood plantations and the ongoing equivocation by state governments in relation to ongoing native hardwood supplies.

ATIF will continue to support its members in working with existing and prospective international suppliers to meet the likely medium-term increased demand in Australia for timber products that are fit for purpose, correctly credentialled and compliant with relevant regulations.



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Standard development work underpins busy 2021 Responsible Wood schedule

BETWEEN the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact of the 2019-20 summer bushfires, 2020 has been a year like no other.

As we move into 2021, Responsible Wood is looking forward to what lies ahead.

The publication of the historic trans-Tasman sustainable forest management standard (AS / NZS 4708) will provide common benchmarks for certified Australian and New Zealand forests.

Two years in development, the new standard will be audited for acceptance by PEFC International, meet the rigorous requirements of a fully-fledged JAS-ANZ accredited sustainable forest management system and meet current and future expectations for forest management in both countries.

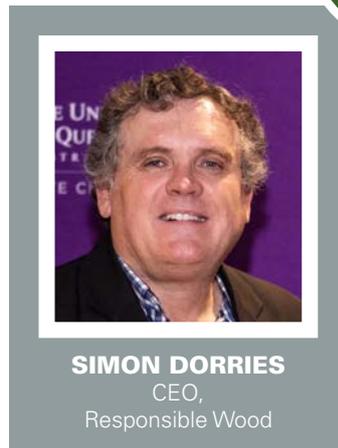
“WINNERS SOON FOR SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM



Megan Graham... grants awarded to regional and rural communities connected to a Responsible Wood certified forest.

In addition to AS / NZS 4708, Responsible Wood will work with the newly-appointed AS/NZS 4707 Standards Reference Committee and Working Group in developing a new Chain of Custody standard for Forest and Tree Based Products.

The Australia-New Zealand Standard (AS / NZS 4708), along with the Australian standard for Chain of Custody for Forest Products (AS / NZS 4707) are key components of the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme.



SIMON DORRIES
CEO,
Responsible Wood

Supporting standard development, Responsible Wood will soon unveil a new website, which will

improve the user experience for members, certificate holders and consumers of Responsible Wood certified products.

Responsible Wood will continue to fly the flag for PEFC in Australia, particularly within our export markets where we continue to collaborate with national PEFC entities in Asia.

And finally, we will soon announce the successful recipients of the Responsible Wood Small Grants Program.

Awarded to regional and rural communities connected to a Responsible Wood certified forest, we have been overwhelmed by the quality of applicants received by grants coordinator Megan Graham.

So, while 2020 will be forever remembered as the year that reshaped the world, Responsible Wood is optimistic for what 2021 may bring.





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From P 3

Mr Paine said there were several projects noted for South Australia's Green Triangle forestry region which would "boost" domestic opportunities including Timberlink Australia's recently announced CLT and GLT plant at Tarpeena.

"What we also need to do is look at how we can get governments to introduce 'wood-first' into their procurement policies," he said, "so that when they're going out to the market for new public



Closed... the log transport facility at Bordertown

buildings ... those public buildings are built using wood."

On another issue, David Quill said the South Australian Timber Processors

“EXPORTS DO HAVE A PLACE IN THE INDUSTRY”

Association, formed to represent the small processors in the region – essentially family-owned companies – questioned the lack of community representation in the Green Triangle and in the structure of the state's Timber Hub.

Mr Quill said the association's application to be a full member of the regional hub was rejected, reflecting the inability of the present hub to truly represent the full interests of the Green Triangle region.

TIMBER DESIGN AWARDS

NOTE: Our second feature on the Australian Timber Design Awards will be held over for the next edition in January.



Expression of Interest

Supply of biomass to Hunter Energy



Hunter Energy is seeking potential biomass residue suppliers to enter into a non-binding Expression of Interest to supply the Redbank Power Station, near Singleton in the NSW Hunter Valley with biomass after the power station is recommissioned from mid-2021.

Biomass can be:

- Sawmill and wood processing residues
- Forest residues from harvesting and thinning
- End-of-life, industrial and other wood waste streams

Prospective suppliers should be able to supply a minimum of 2000 tonnes a year, and should be located within a 400 km radius of Singleton.



For further information contact: **Matt Corbett** via email: mcorbett@rongbuk.com.au or mob: 0434 632 533



AFCA members persevering through the tough challenges they confronted in 2020

IT has been a year of testing times for our members – from the devastating Black Summer bushfires to the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently the China log export bans.

Our members are persevering through all the challenges of 2020 despite the extensive impacts.

As many members were working with forest managers and sawmills to salvage all possible resources, AFCA worked hard on their behalf with state and national bodies to ensure the industry was recognised as ‘essential services’. With this accomplished we then focused on the preparation on working with industry to develop a ‘Covid Safe

Guideline’ for industry in Tasmania that could be drawn on nationally.

Our work also included representing members and forestry contracting businesses on a range of industry committees and groups in developing industry policy and research around safety, training and the long term sustainability of the industry.

The ForestFit project continues to progress with the development and delivery of the training and certification



Training and Consulting to deliver the program.

AFCA has also taken the opportunity to undertake a brand refresh and launched a new logo and website as part of our AGM in November this year. The new brand

celebrates a support network and

synergy between the three elements – the forest, our members and industry. The



three shapes also hint at the shape of Australia, leaves of a tree or a tree itself.

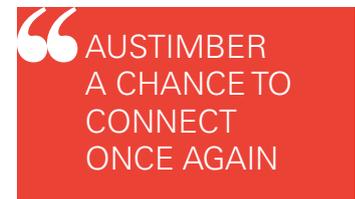
In 2021, industry will have an opportunity to reconnect at AUSTimber 2020-21, having been rescheduled twice in 2020. With all exhibitors, partners and supporters still committed to delivering the show, we are looking forward to another success with field trips, dinners and show days including live demonstrations at the world class HVP Flynn site in Gippsland, Vic.



STACEY GARDINER
General Manager,
Australian Forest
Contractors Association

program, working with the NSW Department of Primary Industries. ForestFit will create a platform for improved business practices, sustainability and recognition of the professionalism of contractors. In 2021, both the training, developed specifically for industry, and the contractor certification scheme will be piloted in NSW.

In 2021, we will also recommence the Professional Ownership and Driver Wellbeing (PODW) Program. These free sessions funded by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator provide fundamental tools, addressing the ‘human factors’, for those at highest risk of a forestry heavy vehicle accident. AFCA has partnered with Australian Trucking Safety Services & Solutions and KJ



AFCA will continue to lead and represent our members and forest contracting businesses with a strong voice to improve business outcomes.

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Kiwi industry players will be chucking a few kōura on the barbie at Christmas

NEW Zealanders love their Australian prawns, but the (almost) equivalent in New Zealand are kōura (freshwater crayfish).

Most of the industry, from forest owners to forest management, tree harvesting and supply chain contractors, and even many wood processors, will likely be celebrating the end of a tumultuous 2020, and will be looking forward to a promising start to 2021.

Most expert opinions of what the 2020 post-Covid lock-down would mean to the New Zealand economy have proven to be way too pessimistic, and the sector finished 2020 looking in good to excellent shape.

The scene for many in early to mid-2020 was very different. Export log prices plummeted early on, and many sawmillers were battling market headwinds.

One major company, Claymark with three sawmills, was in receivership. Two CHH Wood Products sawmills in Northland were closed in April, and production at the CHH LVL plant was very heavily scaled back (by 70%), unable to compete with overseas LVL imports into Australia.

While Australian-based trans-Tasman company Timberlink was expanding its Jubilee Road Mount Gambier sawmill and was planning to build a major new CLT mill at that site, it closed down its only sawmill in New Zealand.

Then to make it worse, unlike in Australia, the government deemed



Celebrating the end of a crazy year... let's have a Waikato green beer and soak it up with a few dozen kōura crayfish on the barbie.

effectively the whole forest industry sector to be “non-essential”, so all harvesting and wood processing ceased for several weeks during what was to be about the most savage Covid-19 lock down that any country experienced.

When the forest sector finally came out of a protracted total shutdown from late-March to mid-May, it quickly ramped up both log and wood products production. It expected, perhaps, only a short respite from Covid-related demand restrictions in both domestic and export markets as merchant stores and builders replenished depleted supplies with the major China log market building up its own depleted imported stocks again.

Indeed log prices zoomed up in May, before falling back soon after. But surprisingly then both demand and prices

“INDUSTRY FINISHED 2020 IN GOOD SHAPE”



DENNIS NEILSON
Principal,
DANA Ltd

came back up very soon after and have continued to improve.

By year's end, even though the US dollar has fallen heavily against the NZ dollar in the last six months, NZ dollar 'at wharf gate' export log prices are at very attractive levels and demand is high.

Furthermore, most pundits are now predicting a healthy start to the log export trade into 2021 – even as Chinese New Year approaches.

China's unfortunate ban on receiving any Australian logs is very much helping demand for New Zealand logs. The



now personal Morrison-Xi trade dispute doesn't look like ending soon.

Indeed, only this week China seemed to formalise its ban on importing Australian coal, throwing that huge industry into some chaos.

The New Zealand wood processing industry (especially sawmilling) has – even more surprisingly – done even better than the log sector (if that is possible) since mid-2020.

The failed pruned log-focused Claymark sawmills were purchased from the receiver by a team led by long-time industry personality Paul Pedersen, and in December were reported to be sizzling ahead at full steam.

The multi-year, multi-owner failed (also pruned log focused) Prime sawmill at Gisborne was taken over by Kiwi Lumber, which by all accounts has finally thrown

Cont P 14

From P 13

off the decades-long jinx hanging over this mill and it is running well.

The major new Red Stag CLT plant was being commissioned at year end.

Unable to travel overseas on holidays (a Kiwi obsession) tens of thousands of Kiwis turned their attention instead to renovating or adding to their existing houses, and to building, buying new ones with a vengeance not seen for decades.

At year's end, this white hot building pace has been tempered by an increasing shortage of imported building components, as Covid-19 related chaos still reigns in many overseas countries and their ports.

Shortages of all trades people is also looming as a potential brake on the pace of building.



New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern at the controls during a tour of Red Stag sawmill.

The housing demand boom is so hot that the average price of a house in New Zealand has gone up 18.5% in the last 12 months (much more in some centres) and that rate has been accelerating.

The growing housing shortage and now home unaffordability, and even rentals in many cities and regions, promises to be the biggest political challenge that the new Labour

government will face in 2021.

There are still challenges in the industry, including (yet) another sawmilling company exiting the business recently – the Australian-owned Craiggpine Timber, which has been taken over by Niagara Sawmilling.

“THERE ARE STILL CHALLENGES FOR INDUSTRY”

Also some industrial low-grade sawn timber export markets remain very price competitive.

However, domestic sawn timber demand is not expected to fall this summer and many export markets are also reasonably firm.

So ... if Kiwis were allowed to, they would be enjoying summer with barbecued buckets full of koura, washed down with Waikato green beer.

However, anyone trying to gather these protected delicacies might be thrown in jail, so a diet of excellent Australian prawns will have to do.

Now we all hope and pray that we do not get 2021 domestic and export wood demand predictions as wrong as most of us got them in 2020.



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Forest fire scars frozen in Robyn's camera

JIM BOWDEN

THE tiny NSW town of Talbingo (pop. 240) on the edge of the Snowy Mountains nestles between the Bago State Forest and the Bogong Wilderness in the Kosciusko National Park – a picture post card location of tall green pines that reflect in the glass-like water that surrounds the village.

This all changed when Talbingo fell directly in the path of the vicious Dunns Road megafire that burned through 600,000 ha in early January.

The town is a microcosm of that Black Summer, a tumultuous moment in time when it looked like the whole state was going up in a fireball.

Surrounded by dense forests authorities could not give a guarantee that Talbingo



VISIONS AND REFLECTIONS AS WE ENTER YEAR 2021

Robyn MacRae against a background of fire-scarred forest on the edge of the small NSW township of Talbingo.

would survive. Terrified residents huddled in an emergency evacuation shelter as strong winds blew glowing hot embers over and ahead of the main fire.

When the danger passed

townsfolk emerged from the centre to put out spot fires and mop up. The town, although very heavily impacted, had fared a lot better than expected.

"One year later the scars on

the landscape are a constant reminder of how close Talbingo came to complete destruction," Tumut-based nature photographer Robyn MacRae said.

Our cover picture by Robyn shows sisters Jess and Lacey Martin, aged 12 and 6, reading a Christmas story and celebrating the festive season in a small pocket of unburned land on the edge of the village.

Robyn was twice winner of a national Responsible Wood photo contest, part of a PEFC worldwide initiative to raise further awareness of sustainable forest management. A teacher in design and technology at the Riverina Institute of TAFE, she is married to Peter MacRae, a forest radio manager at the NSW Forestry Corporation.

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How sweet it is ... Canada's maple tree a flag emblem with pancake syrup fame

A deciduous and delicious native of North American hardwood forests

THE sugar maple tree is emblematic of Canada – it is the centre piece of the Canadian flag.

Of course, the tree is also known for its delectable pancake-smothering syrup and for its brightly-coloured autumn foliage.

Well before colonists arrived, native Americans tapped the trees for their sweet syrup and used the sugar made from it for trading.

The sugar maple, or rock maple (*Acer saccharum*), is native to the hardwood forests of eastern Canada, from Nova Scotia west through southern Quebec and southern Ontario to south-eastern Manitoba and north-eastern US, from Minnesota eastward to Maine and southward to northern Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri.

Sugar maple is a deciduous tree normally reaching heights of 25 - 35 m and exceptionally up to 45 m with a dense crown that grows in an oval shape and offers ample shade in the summer.



1/ The autumn colour of sugar maple trees is spectacular, ranging from bright yellow on some trees through orange to fluorescent red-orange on others.

2/ The sugar maple tree is famous for its delectable pancake-smothering syrup.



The leaves are dark green with five distinct lobes. The small, green flowers grow in groups hanging downward on slender stems. They flower in April and May, producing the 'helicopter' winged seeds that mature in autumn.

The timber from sugar maple trees is solid enough for making baseball bats.

The autumn colour of sugar maple trees is spectacular, ranging from bright yellow on some trees through orange

TALKING TREES



With **JOHN HALKETT**

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to fluorescent red-orange on others. Sugar maples also have a tendency to colour unevenly in some trees and all colours can be seen at the same time. This requires an autumn typical of the region – crisp, frosty nights to slow the journey of sugars out of the leaves.

The sugar maple is an extremely important species to the ecology of many forests in northern US and Canada. It is among the most shade tolerant of the large deciduous trees. Like other maples, its shade tolerance is manifested in its ability to germinate and persist under a closed canopy as an understory plant, and respond with rapid growth to the increased light formed by a gap that appears in the canopy. Sugar maple can tolerate virtually any soil type short of pure sand.

Human influences have contributed to the decline of the sugar maple trees in many regions. Climate change has contributed to this decline by pushing the suitable habitat range for the trees further north, where temperatures are cooler. This has resulted in a gradual northward migration of the species. Also, the increased use of salt over the last several decades on streets and roads for de-icing purposes has decimated the sugar maple's role as a street tree.



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Death of a newspaper – hundreds of them – as moguls put them to bed permanently

KILL that story ... put the story in a box ... use a hanging indent... here's the bones of a story... consigned to the morgue.

Grim words among a glossary of common newspaper terms.

But the death of a newspaper – hundreds of them in fact – was sorry news for regional communities in 2020 after Covid-19.

News Corp Australia confirmed more than 100 local and regional newspapers closed with significant job losses. Where do those trusty editors and reporters go now?

More than 100 of Rupert Murdoch's print newspapers stopped the presses, including 36 which will close altogether. Sixty papers were suspended in April when the coronavirus hit.

Antony Catalano's Australian Community Media followed by shutting the print editions of 60 community and regional newspapers – some of them serving readers for more than a century – and suspended print editions of nearly 100 of its regional mastheads.

As printing presses fell silent across Australia, the vital role

local newspapers play in regional and suburban communities — and democracy — is becoming clear.

Kristy Hess, leader of research into local and community media at Deakin University, says the closure of newsrooms is a huge risk to a healthy democracy.

"We've seen the rise of news deserts in the US, Canada and UK, where there is no designated news source," she said. "We need to be very watchful of what's happening in the Australian context."

Not only was democracy impacted, but so too was social cohesion. In fire-affected towns, this is felt acutely.

"We're extremely concerned about these closures," the chair of Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chair Rod Sims said.

"You want to have proper reporting of local council meetings, local court matters,



Back in circulation... the Border Watch at Mount Gambier.

local business dealings so that someone is watching, corruption can be exposed, and the community is better informed."

As Rudyard Kipling announced: "I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who."

Who will ask these questions now in communities that have lost their mouthpiece?

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This digital technology has

allowed us to deliver more than 15,000 editions every week at the push of a button across Australia, New Zealand and globally. Demographic technology shows our readers 'send on' another 2000 editions to others each week and they in turn pass them on.

We also express our concern and sadness at the passing of some great regional titles.

But there's some good news.

One of regional Australia's oldest newspapers that was closed suddenly in August by Australian Community Media has been rescued by a consortium of independent newspaper proprietors.

Former editor Brett Kennedy returns as managing editor to relaunch the iconic masthead, which first appeared in 1861.

"We're excited to be bringing The Border Watch back as the community voice and watchdog it has always been," Mr Kennedy said.

JIM BOWDEN



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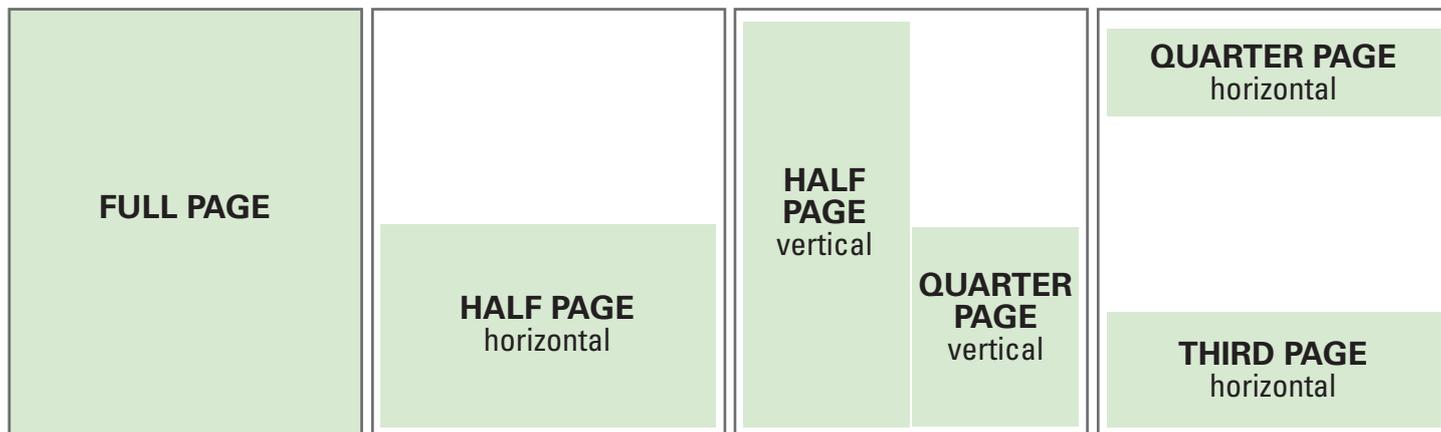
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