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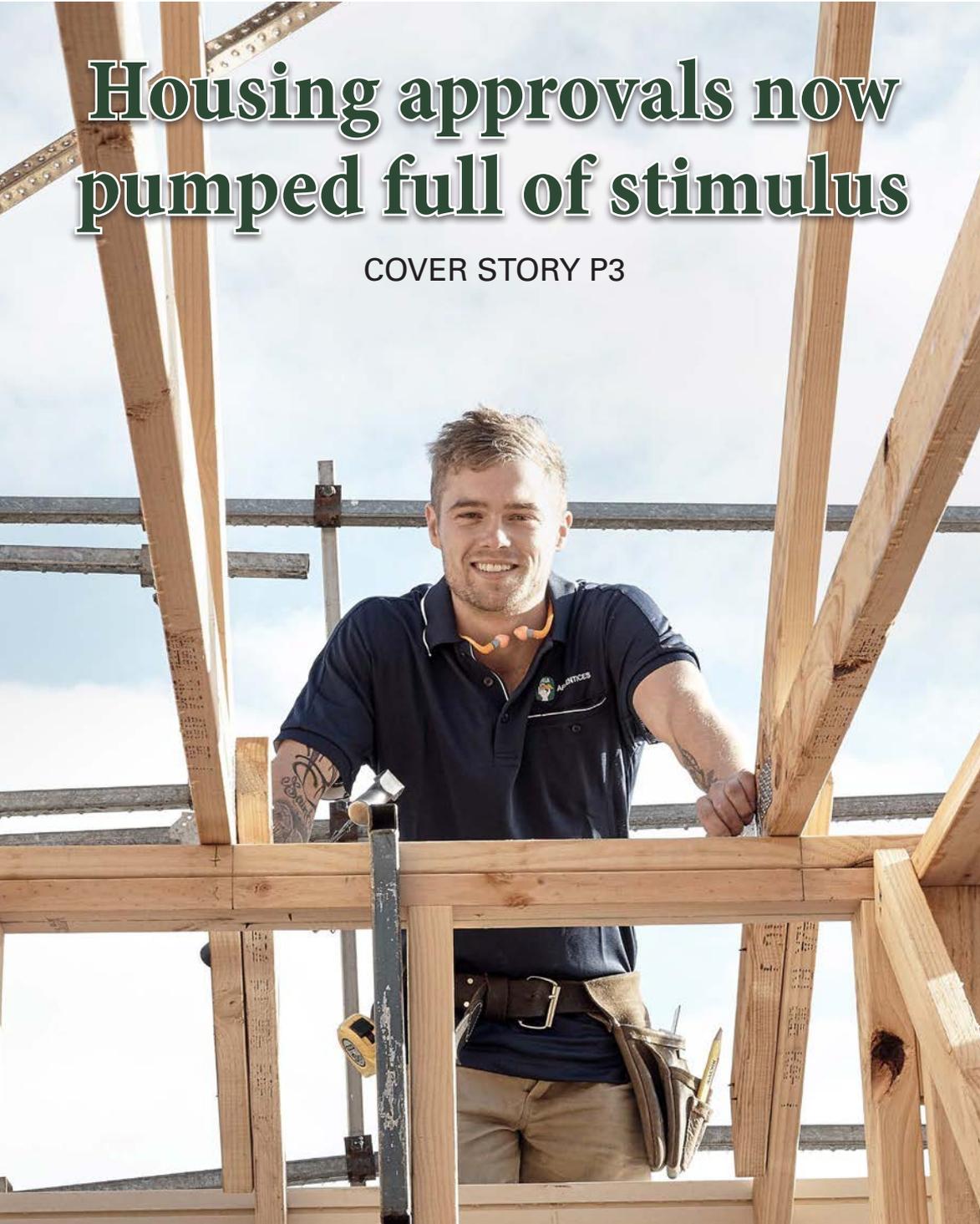
ISSUE 655 | April 29, 2021

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news

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## Housing approvals now pumped full of stimulus

COVER STORY P3



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# Softwood imports at 6-month high but shipping costs, delivery times an issue

AUSTRALIA'S sawn softwood imports lifted to 48,651 cub m in February – a six-month high and a rise of 18.5% on January figures.

Considered annually, imports totalled 500,727 cub m for the year-ended February, up 5.5% on the year prior.

As data shows, imports have not, in aggregate, been able to reach up towards the levels seen towards the end of 2018, but do now appear to be growing their presence in the domestic market.

The constraints on increased imports are more than the obviously super-heated US market and its extensive demand that is drawing large amounts of resource. Many in industry point to the low average prices achieved for sawn softwood products – both domestically produced and imported – as a limiting factor for those considering



Softwood shipments from Sweden, Germany and Estonia have risen considerably.

supply into the Australian market.

Other factors are at play right now, as the pandemic continues to wreak its wicked havoc across the globe. Shipping and freight costs, and timeframes for delivery, have blown out to up to 14 weeks for shipments ex-Europe, with trans-shipment and the Suez Canal jam up good examples of the challenges faced in shipping across the globe.

Shipments from Sweden lifted 118% to 44,687 cub m, from Germany 103% to 51,698 cub m and from Estonia they rose 132% to

21,371 cub m.

Far from leaving the local market to its own devices, major importers are demonstrably doing all they can to raise their supplies to Australia. Their efforts will be all the more necessary as the long pipeline of work continues to be built over the next two years.

[This data is based on the Forest and Wood Products

**“LOW AVERAGE PRICE FOR SAWN PRODUCTS A LIMITING FACTOR**

Statistic Count, April 2021].

Meanwhile, the London-based Timber Trade Federation is advising all timber users and buyers to be proactive in their purchasing strategies against a background of continuing tight wood supply conditions.

A lack of stock on the ground will be an issue well into first quarter 2021 and beyond due to pandemic-related issues and changes in market dynamics, exacerbated by high levels of global demand for timber and wood products.

Companies without a longer-term purchasing strategy will struggle to replenish stocks through just-in-time buying until well into mid-2021.

Suppliers are used to having time over traditionally quite periods in the trade to re-build stocks for the following season. This situation has been turned on its head. The reported price inflation has also made it difficult for some manufacturers to accurately price projects for customers.



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# Detached housing approvals grow in a sector now pumped full of stimulus

DWELLING approvals continued their growth in February, with total approvals up 23.4% on February 2020, totalling 18,931 separate approvals.

Detached houses drove that increase, lifting 65% on the year earlier to a record 13,689 approvals.

On an annualised basis, total approvals are up 7% to 188,590 dwellings, while houses are up 22.4% to 126,535 dwellings.

The important data in the latest figures is the overall upwards trend line of the last year. It seems hard to recall it for some reason, but back

“LOOK TO QLD AND WA FOR REAL GROWTH



**Housing growth has been all about houses and much less about the multi-residential sector.**

a year ago expectations were that housing had turned the corner. It had started to do so ... but then it was pumped full of stimulus incentives and so grew appreciably.

The data also strongly suggests that the growth has been all about houses and

much less about the multi-residential sector.

Approvals for Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia have been particularly strong over the last three months, while

those in NSW show a softening into early 2021.

The Victorian approvals grew 3.8% over the year ended February and are only larger – in the context of NSW (+1.1%) – because they continue to be the largest number overall.

For genuine growth, look to Queensland (+12.0%) and Western Australia (+44.0%) for the significant out-performers.

(Based on Forest and Wood Products Statistic Count, April 2021)

**On the cover: Builders are busy... strong growth in housing approvals across all states.** Photo: Housing Industry Association

## Prices soar in North America

LUMBER prices in North America have reached levels unseen before, driving up the costs of home renovations and general contracting services across Canada.

Ian Dunn, president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, says there are a variety of factors amid the Covid pandemic that have contributed to this increase in cost.

“Lumber is ultimately a commodity and it responds to commodity-type pricing,” Mr Dunn said. He explained that supply and demand has helped increase the price of lumber by roughly 170% in the last six months.

“On the supply side of

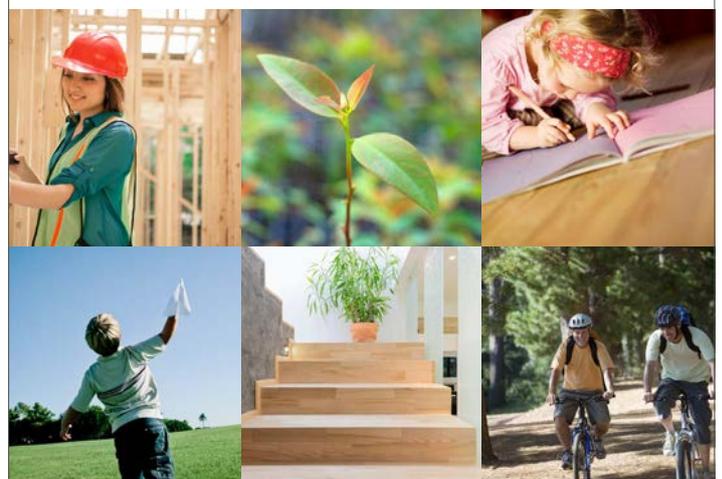
things... and as a result of the health and safety concerns, we scaled back operations in the mills,” he said. “There's fewer people working the mills and that has contributed to the supply gap.”

He added that some sawmills were closed altogether for a period of time at the beginning of the pandemic as well as intermittently due to outbreaks.

On the demand side, Dunn said an increase in the renovation market was heavily contributing to current lumber prices, causing home renovations to become more expensive

(CTV News)

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**Australian Forest Products Association**

# Champion of forest research dies aged 61

INDUSTRY in Queensland is still coming to grips with the death of forest research and development champion Eric Littee, aged 61.

Mr Littee devoted more than 30 years to the R&D program at the DAF Salisbury Research Facility in Brisbane.

“Eric’s official title was technical assistant, but this title does him no justice – he was the ‘go-to-man’ if you wanted something done the right way,” said Dr Rob McGavin, project manager at the facility, in a tribute.

“He was referred to as ‘the master’ who could turn an academic R&D plan into a



**Eric Littee...was the ‘go-to-man’ at Salisbury research facility.**

well running, efficient reality. His expertise in operating wood processing equipment was second to none.”

Mr Littee was the main operator of the R&D sawmilling equipment with specialist skills in spindleless

rotary veneer processing. This expertise saw him travel to Fiji and Vietnam to provide training and support as part of the research team’s

international project portfolio.

Mr Littee was an integral part of almost every project undertaken by the forest product Innovation team at Salisbury, from log conversion, kiln operation, test sample preparation, engineered wood product manufacture through to product performance testing.

“He was more than just a work colleague, he was a mentor to many younger DAF employees and was always willing to share his positive views of work, and life in general,” Dr McGavin said.

“Eric’s passions outside of work including surfing, golf, and of course his family.

“His passing after such a short life is a tragedy.”

**“INTEGRAL PART OF ALMOST EVERY PROJECT”**

## Don’t forget your camera! PEFC photo contest open

LAUNCHED on Earth Day (April 22) five years ago, the ‘Experience Forests, Experience PEFC’ photo contest is back!

PEFC is inviting professional and amateur photographers to submit their best forest photos for the chance to become the 2021 PEFC Photographer of the Year.

Colourful trees, landscapes, children playing, people working or the habitats of animals – photos shared will help us escape to the wonderful world of forests.

To enter the contest visit [www.pefc.photo](http://www.pefc.photo) to see if there is a national contest in your country.

Then head to Instagram and post your forest photo using the contest hashtag of your country. That’s it you’re done and you have a chance to win a national prize with the overall



**Robyn MacRae of Tumut, NSW... a national winner of the Responsible Wood prize in the international PEFC photo competition twice – in 2017 and 2018.**

international winner receiving 2000 Swiss francs (\$2823).

Deadline for entries is June 5 – World Environment Day.

The top 12 photos will be featured in the 2022 ‘Experience Forests, Experience PEFC’ photo calendar on the PEFC International and Responsible Wood members’ websites, and potentially other places throughout the year.

Last year PEFC received almost 8000 photos.

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# Industry sharing experience in managing timber's moisture content in supply chain

INDUSTRY members are being encouraged to share their experience in managing timber's moisture content (MC) in the supply chain.

Unexpected MC changes in timber and wood products can be a cause of concern, and University of Tasmania researchers want to hear industry's first-hand experience with these changes and the problems that they can generate.

"Timber's moisture content can change significantly as it moves through the supply chain from the mill to its in-service location," says timber expert Michael Lee, previously from the UTAS Centre for Sustainable Architecture with Wood (CSAW).

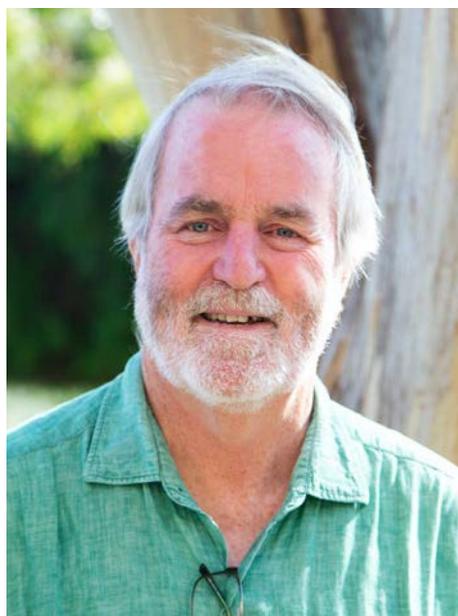
"If these changes are not

well managed, unexpected problems can occur. Both appearance and structural products are affected.

"We are developing industry best practice guidance in this area, and a part of this is uncovering industry's experience with MC change through an online survey, interviewing people and inspecting affected product."

The work is part of an industry-led project funded by the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation.

UTAS is leading the project with nine industry collaborators who operate across the hardwood and softwood sectors nationally. The project aims to pair industry expertise on regular MC issues with the results of detailed monitoring of MC



**Professor Gregory Nolan... we are collecting moisture content data from sensor and timber samples from right through the supply chain.**

wood products with impacts occurring along the supply chain," project leader Professor Gregory Nolan said.

"We are collecting MC data from sensors and timber samples in mills, distribution centres, fabricator workshops, building sites and in service, and from material in transit on trucks and trains."

Michael Lee said the results of this work could really reduce problems for industry and improve customer satisfaction in the supply of timber and wood products throughout Australia.

UTAS is currently inviting industry participation in an online survey of timber and wood products workers. All timber milling, fabrication, joiners, builders and retailers are encouraged to share their experiences with timber's moisture content.

Follow this link for the project information sheet: <https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/IIU1zm1s603jpCm>

Online survey link: <https://surveys2.utas.edu.au/index.php/1?lang=en>

changes in timber nationally over 12 months. Both sets of results will then inform best-practice advice for industry.

"Seasonal variations in temperature and humidity can regularly affect timber and

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# Devastating impact on jobs if native timber harvesting ends in Vic. shires

NEW data from a specialist economic impact consultant indicates around 1110 jobs will be lost if native forest harvesting ceased in Victoria's Wellington and East Gippsland shires.

The Mayor of Wellington Shire and chair of the Native Timber Taskforce Cr Garry Stephens says the number includes direct and indirect jobs, ranging from forestry contractors to transport company workers, through to employees at shops where timber workers spend their money.

"In Wellington Shire alone this could have a devastating impact on the local economy, as forestry is a major employer," Cr Stephens said. "In particular, the towns of Heyfield and Yarram would bear the brunt of this impact and it presents a significant challenge for local government to make the

**“TOWNS OF HEYFIELD AND YARRAM WOULD BEAR THE BRUNT**



*Timber workers are often used in a first response to a fire event... volunteer Brett Robin, a fifth generation logging contractor from Gippsland, Vic, breaks from fire-fighting duty to comfort a baby koala.*

best of a difficult situation."

Wellington Shire Council has asked the state government to share the data and scientific basis on which the native timber phase-out decision was made and awaits a considered response from the government.

"Communities have a right to know and understand the basis for the decisions which affect their lives," Cr Stephens said.

"We expect better of the government out of respect for local communities."

The council supports Timber Towns Victoria

and the CMFEU which is demanding jobs of timber workers be retained.

The East Gippsland Shire also wants to ensure that any industry restructure places communities at the centre of decision-making, that resources are adequate, and that no one is left behind.

Timber workers have unique forestry skills, expertise, knowledge, and equipment that is often used in a first response to fire events. If timber jobs are lost, it is hoped their skills and machinery are able to be retained and used under such circumstances and that contractors are afforded other meaningful work within the forest industry sector.

Wellington Shire Council has also sought greater detail from Victorian government officials about the transition from the harvesting of native hardwood forests to hardwood plantations. The council is not convinced that there is sufficient supply of hardwood or softwood to enable a smooth transition,

Cont P 10



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**MAY**

**20: Close of 2021 Gottstein fellowships, industry awards and scholarships – ONLINE.** Entries currently open. Contact gottsteinsecretary@gmail.com or Helen Murray on +61 419 991 424. Details visit: gottsteintrust.org/fellowships/

**26: Timber Queensland Detailing for Durability – ONLINE.** Free technical webinar with CPD point opportunity. 11 am-12.20 pm. From hazard classes to treatment systems and maintenance regimes, the webinars a guide to the latest research and information for ensuring extended service life. A 'must-attend' for building professionals from engineers and architects, through to builders and end-users with future timber durability in mind. Registration link at www.timberqueensland.com.au

**JUNE**

**16-18: TABMA National Conference – Oaks Cypress Lakes Resort, Hunter Valley, NSW.** Celebrating our 80th year, the conference will aim to "honour our past, treasure the present and shape the future" of our industry. Our daytime sessions will concentrate on "shaping the future", with keynote speaker Claire Madden talking Generation Z. Gala dinner "honouring our past and treasuring the present". Includes the 2020 Andrew Bone TABMA Member of The Year, TABMA Industry Legends and Trainee and Apprentice Member of The Year awards. For more information or to book visit [https:// tabma.com.au/2021-national\[1\]conference/](https://tabma.com.au/2021-national[1]conference/) or contact Alicia Oelkers at [alicia@tabma.com.au](mailto:alicia@tabma.com.au)

**SEPTEMBER**

**1: Australian Forest Products**

**Association Gala Dinner and Symposium – Parliament House, Canberra, ACT.** For further information see: [www.ausfpa.com.au](http://www.ausfpa.com.au)

**OCTOBER**

**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](http://www.forestry.org.au) or phone (03) 9695 8940.

**NOVEMBER**

**10-13: AUSTimber 2021 – Gormandale in eastern Victoria between Yarram and Traralgon.** Nov. 10: Field trips. Nov. 11: Field trips (site

visits by invitation). Welcome dinner. Nov. 12: Show day (9 am-5 pm). Nov. 13: Show day (9 am-3 pm). Contact Dionne Olsen on +61 429 202 929 or email [austimber2020@afca.asn.au](mailto:austimber2020@afca.asn.au)

**14-19: 2021 Gottstein Trust Understanding Wood Science Course – Albury, NSW.** November 14-15 based in Albury with field trips to northern Victoria. November 16-19: Guest lectures and field trip, then relocate by coach to Canberra for three days including a laboratory day and guest lectures at ANU, and a formal course dinner celebrating 50th Anniversary of the trust. Detailed information, registration and the draft program: <https://gottsteintrust.org/course/wood-science-courses/>

From P 9

especially with the recent impacts of massive bushfires.

The Native Timber Taskforce strongly recommends that the

**“WORK WITH COMMUNITIES TO CREATE JOB SCHEMES**

Victorian government:

- Provides the data and scientific evidence that underpinned the native timber phase-out decision.
- Plants more hardwood plantations with suitable species to ensure long-term wood supply needs are met and jobs are maintained.
- Ensures an appropriate level of resourcing exists to support communities affected by this decision to



**Cr Garry Stephens...** communities have a right to know and understand the basis for these decisions.

the extent that no one is left behind.

- Works with communities to identify and implement job creation schemes in new and existing industries to minimise the impacts of the decision on affected communities.
- Does not support the import of hardwood from non-certified overseas sources that generally have lower compliance standards.

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## EVENTS LISTS MAY CHANGE DUE TO CORONAVIRUS TRAVEL, SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS. PLEASE CHECK THE RELEVANT WEBSITES FOR UPDATES.

### MAY

**5-8: Forestry – Bridge to the Future – University of Forestry, Sofia, Bulgaria** (To be held in a hybrid format. Participants will have the choice of attending in person or virtually). For further information see: <https://conf2020.forestry-ideas.info/>

**24-25: International Conference on Forestry Science and Silviculture (ICFSS) – London, UK.** World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology. For further information see: <https://waset.org/forestry-science-and-silviculture-conference-in-may-2021-in-london>

**24-28: XV World Forestry Congress – Seoul, South Korea.** 15th World Forestry Congress. The theme will be: Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests. For further information see: <https://wfc2021korea.org/online/notice.html?act=view&aid=40>

### JUNE

**15-16: Carbon Forestry Conference – Rotorua, New Zealand.** Changes to legislation in relation to climate change and emissions trading, including carbon farming investment opportunities. For further information see: <https://carbonforestry.events/>

**29-1: WoodEX for Africa – Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.** Long established as the gateway to Africa's timber trade, WoodEX for Africa 2021 will be the ultimate machinery, tools and supplies gathering in Africa. Held in conjunction with the 2nd Deck & Flooring Expo and co-located with Africa's biggest construction expo, African Construction Expo. For further information see: <https://woodexforafrica.com/>

### JULY

**2-4: Foire De Libramont 2021 – Libramont Exhibition & Congress, Rue des Aubépines, 50 B-6800 Libramont, Belgium.** The Libramont agricultural, forestry and agri-food fair is a huge outdoor exhibition that offers a showcase for the rural world in all its many

shapes and forms (machinery, livestock breeding, forestry, the agri-food industry, horticulture, study, and R&D). For further information see: <http://www.libramont-exhibition.com/>

**7-11: New Forest Folk Festival – Powells Farm, Salisbury Road, Plaitford, Romsey, UK.** For further information see: [www.newforestfolkfestival.co.uk](http://www.newforestfolkfestival.co.uk)

**23-26: The International Forest Festival – Feanedock National Forest, Leicestershire, UK.** Music, forests, art and ideas. For further information see: <https://timberfestival.org.uk/>

### AUGUST

**9-12: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Santiago, Chile.** Uruguay XXI will host as part of its strategy to promote investments in the forestry and wood sector. This is the first time this event is held in South America and will be hosted by the Chilean capital. The main topics that this conference will cover are sustainable forests for timber production, wood products and connections, wood engineering and architecture, policy, implementation and management, education, promotion and future trends. For further information see: [www.uruguayxxi.gub.uy/en/events/article/145/](http://www.uruguayxxi.gub.uy/en/events/article/145/)

**16-19: 20th Commonwealth Forestry Conference – VIRTUAL EVENT.** An informal forum for foresters, and all those with an interest in the forestry sector to exchange knowledge and experience. It is organized by the Standing Committee on Commonwealth Forestry and covers general aspects of forest management and governance and has a focus on the changing priorities of the forestry sector. For further information see: <https://cfc2021.ubc.ca/>

**30-31: International Conference on Forest Aesthetics and Site Preparation – Australian Museum Sydney, Australia.** World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology. For further information see: <https://waset.org/forest-aesthetics-and-site-preparation->

[conference-in-august-2021-in-sydney](https://waset.org/conference-in-august-2021-in-sydney)

### SEPTEMBER

**22-24: Natural resources, green technology and sustainable development GREEN2020 – Zagreb, Croatia.** Now rescheduled from last year. For further information see: <https://www.sumins.hr/green2020/>

**27-1: LIGNA.21 Making more out of wood – Hannover, Germany.** For further information see: <https://www.ligna.de/en/>

### OCTOBER

**17-21: Prowood Ghent – Flanders Expo, Maaltekouter 1, 9051 Ghent, East Flanders, Flanders, Belgium.** For further information see: [www.tradefairdates.com/Prowood-M9728/Ghent.html](http://www.tradefairdates.com/Prowood-M9728/Ghent.html)

**22-24: International Conference on Forest Biodiversity and Sustainability (ICFBS) – Dubrovnik, Croatia.** World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology. For further information see: <https://waset.org/forest-biodiversity-and-sustainability-conference-in-october-2022-in-dubrovnik>

**26-29: Woodworking Minsk – Sports Complex, Pobeditelei 20/2 Minsk, Belarus.** International exhibition of woodworking and furniture production. For further information see: [www.tradefairdates.com/Woodworking-M3361/Minsk.html](http://www.tradefairdates.com/Woodworking-M3361/Minsk.html)

### JANUARY 2022

**28-29: International Conference on Forest Resources Accounting and Economics – Australia World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, Sydney, Australia.** Forest industry accounting, methodological and issues and environmental accounting for forestry. For further information see; <https://waset.org/forest-resources-accounting-and-economics-conference-in-january-2022-in-sydney>

• Please send events to John Halkett: [johnh@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:johnh@timberandforestrynews.com)

# Group energy procurement tender to help industry reduce electricity costs

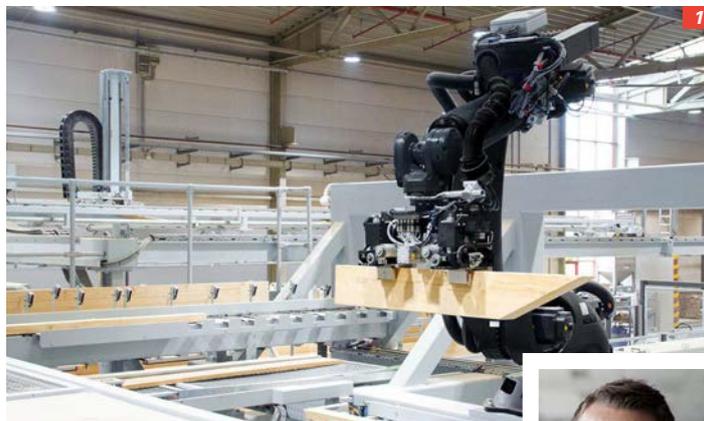
TIMBER Queensland has announced the launch of a 2021 group energy procurement tender for members at a time when the wholesale market is at a low ebb.

Launched in conjunction with fellow association the Waste & Recycling Industry of Queensland, and run by Choice Energy, the group energy procurement tender will help to directly assist members to leverage the power of group buying for their electricity contracts.

A group energy procurement tender involves negotiating competitive rates by optimising the group buying power of a collective of business energy contracts and taking them to market. Typically, this results in better energy agreement opportunities for all parties.

Choice Energy recently helped 41 members of the Australian Hotels Association (SA) save an additional 15% on the total contracted agreements than if secured on an individual basis.

The Timber Queensland



**1/ Group energy procurement tender will help a range of timber businesses to reduce costs and footprint in the processing, wholesale and fabrication sectors**

**2/ Christopher Dean... perfect opportunity to take advantage of a group buy at very low rates.**



group tender will be run in conjunction with WRIQ, the state's peak industry body for waste and recycling. Choice Energy has worked alongside Timber Queensland for several years, helping a range of timber businesses to reduce costs and footprint in the processing, wholesale and fabrication sectors.

An information webinar will be held on May 4 with registrations for the tender closing on Friday, May 14. To

register contact David Perry at david@choiceenergy.com.au or on 0416 135 160.

In late 2019, Timber Queensland engaged Choice Energy to run a group energy tender for members, maximising the power of the collective to deliver superior individual benefit.

"Choice Energy was able to produce some sensational savings for businesses based in the Energex region of Queensland," Timber Queensland

strategic relations and communications manager Clarissa Brandt said.

"This included a softwood sawmill business member who was expected to save \$144,834 in comparison to their previous three-year electricity retail contract," she said.

"A hardwood sawmilling and manufacturing member was also expected to save \$140,900 in comparison to their previous two-year electricity retail contract."

Choice Energy CEO Christopher Dean said energy costs were a significant challenge for timber businesses, especially those in Queensland, which was home to some of the most expensive network tariffs nationally and one of the most complex energy markets.

"While the national electricity market remains quite low in comparison to 12 months ago, it provides the perfect opportunity for businesses to take advantage of the group buy and very low rates," he said.



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**Applications close 9.00m sharp on Thursday, 20th May 2021.**

Further information: [gottsteinsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:gottsteinsecretary@gmail.com) or  
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GOTTSTEIN  
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# Biomass power for Hunter seen as a positive step to tackle climate change

## Biomass from waste products: strong focus on sustainable forestry activity

THE conversion of the Redbank power station at Warkworth, NSW, near Singleton, to biomass energy will be a significant contributor to the Hunter Valley economy, says Joel Fitzgibbon, MP Hunter.

Hunter Energy, the owner of the Redbank Green Energy Park that incorporates the Redbank power plant, has been working with regional waste wood producers to supply biomass from mid-2021.

Mr Fitzgibbon said the biomass project would create 200 jobs during the re-commissioning phase and 50 full-time jobs when completed.

“The project will be a valuable boost to the regional forest-based industry and local sawmills, offering an



“The project has my wholehearted support and I wish it well,” he said.

The power station will be the largest renewable baseload power plant in Australia after the Snowy Hydro Scheme and Hydro Tasmania.

Hunter Energy CEO Richard Poole said the biomass

power station would support the Hunter Valley’s transition from a focus on thermal coal to a substantial contributor to the renewable baseload power needs of NSW.

Mr Poole said the use of waste biomass would be at the forefront of biomass-to-energy production as a part of Australia’s renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission targets.

“We are working with the government to deliver on the



2

approved market for their wood processing residues,” he said.

“This would bring multiple jobs related to the logistics

- 1/ Wood waste converted to biomass at Redbank power station.
- 2/ Richard Poole... reducing carbon dioxide emissions by focusing on biomass for energy solutions.

and transport of about a million tonnes a year of waste wood biomass that would provide the feedstock for this baseload power station.

**PROJECT WILL BRING MULTIPLE REGIONAL JOBS**

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# Senator's Bill to amend EPBC Act will not weaken national environmental protections

THE Senate's Environment and Communications Legislation Committee inquiry into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Regional Forest Agreements) Bill 2020, which was introduced by Senator Bridget McKenzie last year, took evidence during its hearings in Canberra on April 19.

AFPA has prepared a brief to clarify the intent of Senator McKenzie's Bill:

Senator McKenzie's Bill will simply reaffirm how forestry operations have been regulated for more than 20 years and provide certainty for industry.

Australia's sustainable 'native' hardwood timber industries are strictly

regulated to the highest environmental standards in the world through the Regional Forest Agreements (RFA) framework.

RFAs are bilateral agreements between the commonwealth and state governments in Tasmania, Victoria, NSW and Western Australia as an equivalent regulatory framework to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) for the productive use and conservation of Australia's forests, to avoid regulatory duplication and provide certainty for industry.

Industry is facing legal and policy uncertainty due to a Federal Court decision last year that reinterpreted



**Senator Bridget McKenzie's Bill will simply reaffirm how forestry operations have been regulated for more than 20 years.**

how RFAs and the EPBC Act interact.

Senator McKenzie's Bill will remove this uncertainty by making it clear that forestry operations regulated under an RFA also do not require approval under the

EPBC Act, consistent with other intergovernmental arrangements under the Act.

This is because commonwealth oversight of forestry operations for the protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance is enshrined in the RFA framework.

Under the RFA framework, the commonwealth can suspend or terminate an RFA at any time if it is concerned the state government is not meeting its obligations under the RFA, including the protection of Matters of National Significance consistent with the EPBC Act.

Senator McKenzie's Bill will reaffirm this.

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# Respecting diversity: It's quite clear ...one person can make a difference

## Diversity matters and we need to embrace it and take positive steps now

RIC SINCLAIR

OVER the last three months, it is quite clear that one person can make a difference in the consciousness of Australia.

The powerful speech by Australian of the Year Grace Tame, a teenage victim of sexual abuse, has enabled many people to find their own voice and talk about their experience with sexual abuse, bullying or harassment.

In the forest and wood products sector, we also heard a very eloquent and passionate speech at the 2019 AFPA dinner in recognition of International Women's Day. Linda Sewell, then CEO of OneFortyOne, spoke about her own career and the challenges of a talented and ambitious woman who had to deal with overt and covert prejudice.

In telling her story, Linda identified the pivotal moment when one influential person judged her on merit and not gender. Linda got the standing ovation from the audience that she deserved.

One person can make a difference. We can all make a difference.

It is a simple statement of fact that the forest and wood products sector is largely male, white and aging. This demographic is sometimes disparagingly referred to as "male, pale and stale."

Sadly, this is me.

While I can't change my age and ethnicity, I can and do try to respect the potential and contributions of people who are not like me.



*In telling her story, Linda Sewell identified the pivotal moment when one influential person judged her on merit and not gender.*

That is not to say that I am some paragon of virtue. In thinking back over my personal and professional life, I am sure that I have said and done things that today would not make me proud. To those that I may have inadvertently offended, then I say sorry, and I truly hope that I have not caused harm.

I certainly know that I have witnessed bullying, sexual harassment and other inappropriate behaviours and I did not speak up loudly at the time. For that, I am also very, very sorry.

The Australian forest and wood products sector is proud and it is conservative, which is not a good combination for embracing change. But even

in my own working life I have seen change. Perhaps not as transformational or as quick as I or some others may have liked.

One of the innate features of humanity is that we are attracted to people like ourselves. Deep within our psyche is a fear of 'others' and this has a practical implication in how organisations and sectors are built. We try to recruit, retain and promote people like us.

There is a growing body of

**“FOREST SECTOR IS PROUD AND IT IS CONSERVATIVE**

evidence that diversity and inclusiveness matters. And it can make a substantial difference in a company's profitability.

Respected international management consultancy McKinsey and Co. has been measuring and tracking the performance of companies around the world and according to their 2020 study "... companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile". The business case for ethnic and cultural diversity is equally compelling.

From a social licence perspective, surely a sector that better reflects the diversity of the community is also more likely to better communicate and respond to the community's needs and gain its ongoing support.

Through most of my working life, I have played a role in promoting the positive benefits of the forestry sector and its products. I was born into the sector with a family that had deep connections with forestry in northeast Victoria.

There is no doubt in my mind about the socio-economic and environmental benefits of wood products compared to the alternatives.

But I always hoped that we could do better – that we could respond to change better (instead of defending

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the status quo until it was undefendable). We could be more innovative and inclusive. We could invest more in our future.

In my current role, I have the enormous privilege of dealing with the senior levels of the sector, something that my bulldozer-driving father could never have fathomed. And despite our different backgrounds and upbringing, I mostly see people like myself at the senior levels of the sector.

I rarely see people of a different gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability. And this makes me worried about the future sustainability of our sector.

Diversity matters and we need to embrace it and take positive steps now. I am somewhat torn around the idea of quotas and would rather appeal to the better



nature of those in positions of influence. We need to recognise that embracing diversity and inclusiveness is not only morally right, but it also makes commercial and strategic sense.

**“A NEW PUBLIC PLEDGE WEBSITE**

Therefore, I now publicly call on all those in leadership roles within the sector, from CEOs to shift supervisors, to join me in a public pledge: I respect diversity!

**I will make a difference**

**Reflect on my own behaviour and unconscious bias**

**Empathise with those who come from a different position or background**

**Speak out when I see inappropriate behaviour**

**Promote human diversity in all its forms**

**Empower those around me to speak out if they see inappropriate behaviour (including mine)**

**Celebrate changes that have been made**

**Transform myself and those around me.**

To this end, as a personal initiative, I have established

a new public pledge website where current and future leaders can proclaim their support to diversity and inclusiveness. By signing up to this public pledge, then iRESPECT supporters give their permission to others to hold them to account.

You can express your support for this initiative at [www.iRESPECT.com.au](http://www.iRESPECT.com.au)

I am also hopeful that those in leadership positions who support the iRESPECT Pledge will join me in making themselves available to coach and support a wide diversity of talent to help grow the sector.

In my professional capacity as managing director of FWPA, I would welcome anyone to contact me if they would like advice on how their uniqueness can play an important role in the future of our sector ([ric.sinclair@fwpa.com.au](mailto:ric.sinclair@fwpa.com.au)).

## Seedling donations help hospital's koala food program

FORESTRY Corporation of NSW is halfway through the delivery of 25,000 koala food tree seedlings to Port Macquarie Koala Hospital for its annual koala food tree give-away program.

The program will see koala food tree seedlings given to local and community groups wanting to build koala habitat on their land. All up, 25,000 seedlings will be donated to local planting projects to support koala populations, improve connectivity between areas, provide future food and habitat, and improve habitat value.

"The seedlings were

grown at Forestry Corporation's Grafton nursery and have had an exceptional start with the perfect growing conditions and look extremely healthy and luscious," Forestry Corporation partnerships leader Sandra Madeley said.

"These seedlings are grown the Grafton nursery thrive when planted in areas they naturally grow," Ms Madeley said.



**Andrew Cumberland, Koala Hospital volunteer, and Kel and Sandra Madeley with the donated seedlings.**

"The selection of seedlings in the give-away are not only grow naturally in the Port Macquarie Hastings area, they are the favourite food of

the koala, including forest red gum, tallowwood, swamp mahogany and grey gum."

Koala Hospital conservation manager Scott Castle said this is the fourth year that the koala hospital has run the seedling give-away in partnership with Forestry Corporation.

That's 85,000 trees in the ground in areas where there was little or no habitat, and that is a massive positive in my opinion," he said.

Forestry Corporation also provided information and resources to support the planting operations.

From P 10

twin goals of 24/7 reliable baseload power and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by focusing on biomass for energy solutions," Mr Poole said.

"This will be a significant 'first' for Australia. But the great difference is the capacity to provide a significant amount of the continuous baseload power required by NSW, both for business and residential consumption with net zero carbon dioxide emissions.

"It is a significant component of a truly green grid."

Mr Poole said NSW was still heavily dependent on its ageing coal power generators, which represented 79.5% of the state's energy production in 2018.

He said Hunter Energy was aware of growing electricity



**Redbank power station near Singleton... converting to biomass energy.**

supply issues given the looming closure of the 2000 megawatts Liddell power Station in April 2023.

As bush fires raged across eastern Australia in 2019-20, Richards Poole says biomass could be one of the answers.

He said there was a place for controlled burns and mechanical thinning ... "but something less talked about

could be the key to restoring healthy, fire-resistant forests – biomass."

"Biomass will only be sourced from waste

**“SIGNIFICANT COMPONENT OF A TRULY GREEN GRID**

products; trees will not be harvested solely for fuel and will incorporate a focus on sustainable forestry activity and reducing potentially dangerous fuel loads" Mr Poole said.

"Biomass will also include discarded waste wood that is likely to end up

as environmentally unsound land fill."

Mr Poole said electricity was a by-product of biomass projects; it helped fund the work, but it was not the sole reason to do it.

"You do it for jobs, yes, but you do it for cleaner air, the ecosystem, and climate change benefits," he said.



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# California's giant coastal redwoods are world's biggest storehouses for carbon

Sequoias have been around for a long time and can live for 2000 years

YOU can't write a column about trees unless you have something to say about the Californian giants... the world famous redwoods.

Sturdy, stalwart and superlatively statuesque, California's coastal redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) stand out as some of the most impressive organisms on the planet.

Native to the foggy hills of the US Pacific Northwest, the colossal coastal redwoods are the world's highest trees, and among its oldest.

The tallest tree on Earth is a redwood called Hyperion, which stands a staggering 115 m tall. Historically, it turns out that the world's tallest individual redwoods all reached just a little more than 120 m. And the same is true of the very tallest specimens of other giant tree species.

Another feature of giant redwoods is the mats of soil on the upper branches of the canopy that support other plants and whole communities of insects, salamanders and mammals. Some of the canopy-dwelling epiphyte plants up in the canopy are trees in themselves

Along with New Zealand's giant kauri trees, redwoods are among the oldest living



**1/ Sturdy, stalwart, and superlatively statuesque...** California's coastal redwoods stand out as one of the most impressive organisms on the planet.

**2/ Tourist looks up at the General Sherman the giant redwood in California's Sequoia National Park, California... the largest known living single stem tree on Earth.**



the gold rush happened. With the arrival of hundreds of thousands of gold-seekers starting in 1849, the redwoods were savagely exploited because of the demand for timber. Today, only about 5% of the pre-1850 old-growth coast redwood forest remains... fewer than 50,000 ha scattered along the coast.

Along the coastal strip of California rain provides water during winter months. However, in the summer trees have to rely on coastal fog for moisture.

We know that trees are carbon dioxide storage champions, which makes them an important ally in fighting climate change. Coastal redwoods store more carbon dioxide than any other forest in the world. They hold 2600 metric tonnes of carbon per hectare, more than double the absorption rate of the tall conifer trees in the UISW or Australia's eucalyptus forests.

organisms in the world and can live for more than 2000 years – which is to say, some of these grandee dames were alive during the Roman Empire.

The oldest living redwood known clocks in at around 2200 years old.

Before the 1850s, coast redwoods were spread over about a million hectares of California's coast. One of three members of the Sequoioideae subfamily of cypress trees, the coast redwoods and their cousins, the giant sequoias

**TALKING TREES**

**With JOHN HALKETT**

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(*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), hold the records for tallest and largest trees in the world, respectively.

For thousands of years the people of the area managed to live in harmony with these ancient trees, understanding the importance of their unique forest ecosystem. And then



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# Two Maryborough families fire big shot for jobs and growth at munitions factory

BETWEEN Hyne Timber and Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions, hundreds of jobs have been created in Maryborough for both shorter-term construction and ongoing manufacturing capability into the future.

As Hyne Timber was finalising construction of a new glue laminated timber plant in Maryborough's industrial estate, Maryborough born and bred Robert Nioa, CEO of NIOA and deputy chair of RNM, was finalising the location for a new munition's factory.

With the support of both the federal and state governments, the RNM facility was constructed around the corner from Hyne Timber, specifying the Hyne's engineered timber products including glulam and CLT for its construction. Executive director of Hyne Timber James Hyne said it was not only great to see a commercial scale construction project in Maryborough prioritising local timber supply, but it also marked the first mass timber structure for the region ahead of the new Maryborough Fire Station construction getting under way.



Visiting the munitions project in Maryborough... Judy McInnes, John Kleinschmidt, Katie Fowden, Llew O'Brien, James Hyne, Rob Nioa and Eliza Nioa.

"The best way to showcase innovative use of mass timber in construction is a building and we are thankful for the opportunity by RNM to have our products specified to build their new facility," Mr Hyne said.

The new RNM forging facility will produce munitions for the supply to the Australian Defence Force and for export to allied nations around the world via Rheinmetall's global supply chain. When fully operational it will create up to 100 new advanced manufacturing jobs for the region.

Robert Nioa said the work to flow to the local region was

an important factor throughout planning for the project.

"RNM underlined the importance of local input for this work when we appointed Jeff Crabtree as our project manager. We wanted to create as many local opportunities as possible because the region means a lot to our company," Mr Nioa said.

"We have had a very positive experience in constructing this new plant, so much so that we have also

**SUPPORT OF BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS**

just topped out our NIOA headquarters extension near Brisbane Airport," he said.

Federal Member for Wide Bay and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Llew O'Brien welcomed the significant investment from Hyne Timber and Rheinmetall Nioa Munitions in their Maryborough projects.

"It's great to see the pine trees that grew locally in the Toolara plantation are now further growing Maryborough's economy, through its use in the construction of the munitions factory."

He said the Coalition government was also committed to expanding the Australian defence industry, and a \$28.5 million contribution towards the \$60 million RNM facility would put Maryborough on the international defence industry map as well as creating more than 100 jobs and career paths for local people.

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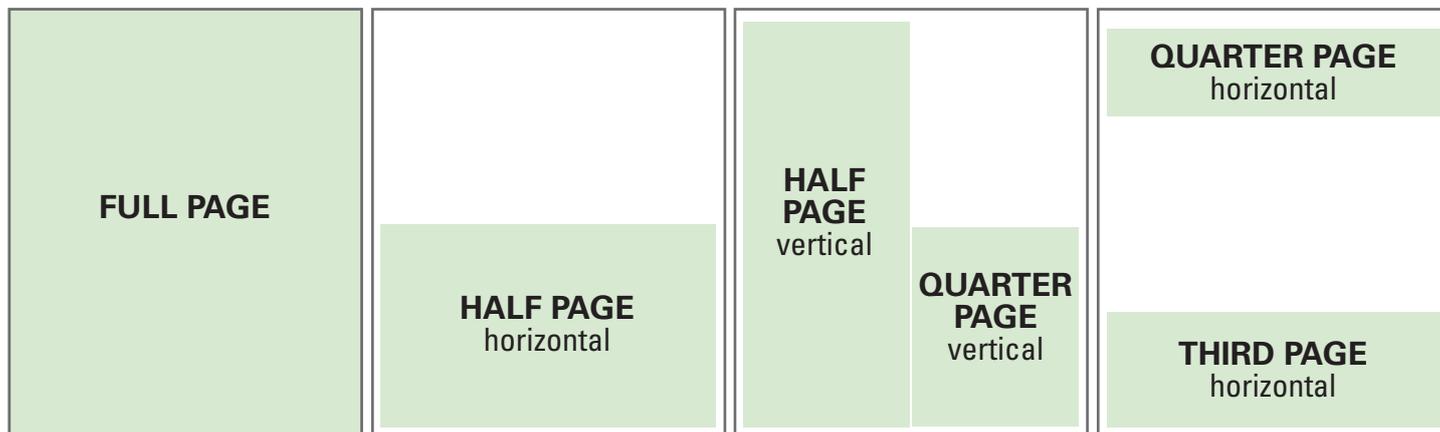
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