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Great Koala National Park back on NSW Labor's election agenda

COVER STORY P 3

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China reducing tariffs on wood products

IN a sign of easing trade 'tensions', China appears to be reviewing some of the punitive trade tariffs and unofficial bans imposed on Australian exports. An early January order of Australian coal by China Energy Investment Corp signalled a resumption of coal trade after a three-year halt, following strained relations between the two countries.



Australia log exports ... prospective Australian softwood log exporters are expressing optimism that stalled log exports to China may recommence.

China and Australia's relations had been fractious since 2018 when Canberra banned Huawei Technologies from its 5G broadband network. The relationship deteriorated further in 2020 after Canberra's call for an

international inquiry into the origins of Covid-19, which triggered a raft of trade reprisals by Beijing on Australian exports. Aside from coal, exports of barley, beef, cotton, wine, lobsters and logs were all hit with restrictions of varying degrees during 2020.

Now according to the Ministry of Finance of China, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council has announced that some commodities' imports and export tariffs will be reduced, including wood and paper products.

This is to designed to accelerate construction activity in China, and to promote exchanges between domestic and international markets with regard to the construction industries.

China will implement a provisional import tax rate lower than the most-favoured-nation tax rate for 1020 commodities. The commodities list includes wood and paper products.

At present China is a major importer of logs and other wood products. As a bulk commodity, changes in

the price of logs and other wood products are affected by various factors, such as tariffs, shipping prices, and the prosperity of the Chinese real estate market.

Prospective Australian softwood log exporters are expressing optimism that stalled log exports to China, which were allegedly halted due to the discovery of

'live forest pests' rather than officially subject to the same punitive tariffs as Australian wine and barley imports, may recommence in the near future.

“ CHINA HAS ANNOUNCED THAT SOME COMMODITIES' IMPORTS AND EXPORT TARIFFS WILL BE REDUCED ”

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Great Koala National Park back on Labor's election agenda

Experts call not to ignore the science, which shows that sustainable native forestry has no impact on koala numbers

HERE we go again. With another election looming in NSW, the Labor Party has once more announced that it will establish a Great Koala National Park if elected in March. Labor has promised to spend \$80 million establishing the park, comprising existing national parks and state forests between Kempsey and Coffs Harbour.

Australian Forest Products Association NSW CEO Victor Violante has repeated past advice for Labor not to once more ignore the science, which shows that the state's sustainable native forestry industry has no impact on koala numbers.

He said the park would result in the closure of the hardwood timber industry on the NSW Mid North Coast. "NSW forest industries are at the forefront of koala conservation and firmly believe that koala protections must be based on science and evidence to ensure the survival of this iconic species."

Violante added, "NSW's sustainable native forest industries are part of the solution and play a vital role in forest management and mitigating the threat of catastrophic bushfires."

"However, the Great Koala National Park as proposed by anti-forestry groups would



1/ Research found that past timber harvesting did not influence koala occupancy.
2/ Victor Violante ... advice to Labor not to once more ignore the science about koala conservation.

see much of the North Coast's prime timber-producing state forest locked up, despite the science showing this will do nothing to help koalas."

NSW Environment Minister James Griffin has called Labor's promise a "plan for a plan", labelling it "embarrassing".

Griffin said, "What we've seen from them is a plan to spend \$80 million to consult on potentially creating a new national park. That \$80 million on consultation will not see a single dollar go to helping protect a single koala."

that used advanced koala detection technology found that timber harvesting has no impact on koala numbers.

He said the study found that past timber harvesting did not influence koala occupancy. There was no difference in results between heavily harvested, lightly harvested and old-growth sites.

"Research carried out by the NSW Department of Primary Industries also concluded that time since harvesting and the amount of

Cont P16

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On the cover: Timber harvesting has been shown to have no measurable impact on koala population numbers

Timber demand and supply – the challenge for 2023

The first in a new four-part series on what's driving the timber market. JOHN HALKETT

BASIC economic theory tells us that demand and supply are linked. As I recall, the theory is that changes on the supply side impact on the demand side. In a timber industry context, consistent increases in demand for building and construction activity mean that in the absence of additional timber supply, we risk the demand for building products being filled on the supply side by substitute products such as steel framing for house construction.

This is the first instalment of a four-part series on supply and demand in the timber



Oak casket ... people rely on wood and wood products daily, from the timber-framed house to the vital paper roll in the urban loo or outback dunny; from baby's cradle to granny's coffin.

most frequently used essentials.

Australia's forest products consumption is substantial. Given the extensive nature of our own forests, it is surprising to learn that Australia imports about a third of all the timber and timber products consumed here.

The current strong demand for timber products in the building and construction

industry as background to the Australian Timber Supply Summit to be held in Melbourne on 28 and 29 August, 2023. This series will explore supply side issues in more detail in the next couple of instalments, but for this instalment, let us look at demand.

The reality is that people rely on wood and wood products daily – from the timber-framed house to the vital loo paper roll; from baby's cradle to granny's coffin; from blowing your nose to the printed record; from kindling wood to crafted heirloom. Wood is one of society's basic,

sector – notably structural softwoods – has largely been driven by Federal Government initiatives. These include programs aimed at improving housing affordability, providing incentives for building activity directed at maintaining employment, funding aimed at enhancing the prospects of apprentice employment and related measures.

Collectively, these measures have increased residential and commercial construction activity. This has placed substantial pressures on supply chains for building products more broadly, but for timber products in particular given that – relative to other building products – timber is high bulk and low value. This has exacerbated related supply chain logistics and transport challenges.

“AS THE CURRENT RENTAL CRISIS SUGGESTS, THERE IS A HOUSING SHORTAGE IN AUSTRALIA.”

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From P 4

While the backlog of incentive-driven work is still under construction, a national housing accord between governments, investors and industry to build affordable homes was announced by Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers on 25 October 2022. The housing accord aims to build a million new houses over five years with the Federal Government to provide an extra \$350 million to build 10,000 houses on top of existing commitments.

The accord references the intention of State and Territory governments to also build 10,000 homes. The accord comes on top of a string of affordable housing initiatives for low-income earners, including the Housing Australia Future Fund to build up to 30,000 social and affordable houses in five years.

Additionally, natural disasters have added to the demand on builders in Australia. Over 5000 homes are estimated to have been

damaged in the 2022 East Coast floods, and many are still waiting on repair. Finally, as the current rental crisis suggests, there is a housing shortage in Australia driven in part by new residential dwellings failing to keep up with the increased number of new households over the past decade.

All of this indicates construction will be a major focus for Federal and State governments for several years. The

Federal Government and several State governments have in place 'wood first' policies that prioritise the use of timber products in residential and commercial building construction. Timber products meet the demands of environmental building rating systems better than other building materials and also contribute to meeting the Federal Government's net zero 2050 climate change abatement goals.

Timber consumption in

Australia is expected to rise by about 1% per year and paper product use by somewhere between 1.5 and 2% per year. Groups like London's Gresham House estimate the growth in demand for timber products will be even higher internationally, with 3.1% annual growth in global timber consumption forecast by 2050.

The outlook for demand is clearly a steady increase, but this may not be the story on the supply side. It is a classic paradox of demand and supply heading in different directions. As Australia and the rest of the world clamour for more timber products, supply will become increasingly restricted, which we will look at in our next part.

INPUT FOR HOUSING CONSTRUCTION: STRUCTURAL TIMBER, ANNUAL GROWTH

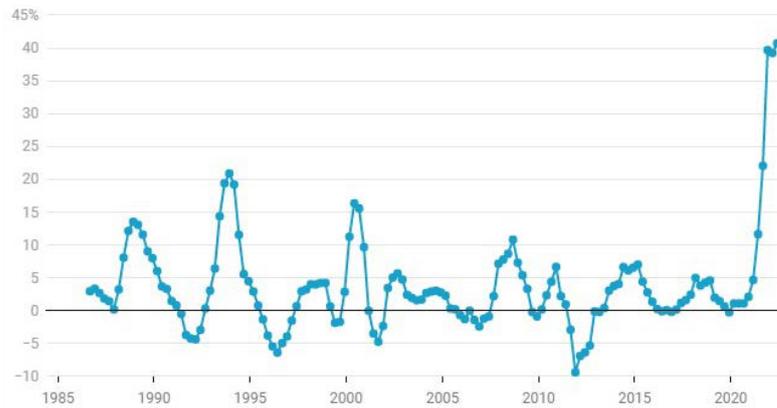


Chart: Centre for Future Work • Source: ABS • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

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Australian white paper production halt

A lack of timber supply has caused an indefinite suspension to the local production of white office paper

THE last ream of Reflex white paper for the foreseeable future came off the production line at Opal Australian Paper's Maryvale mill last weekend.

Timber supply shortages caused by court orders limiting VicForests' operations have been given as the reason behind the suspension in production, with manufacturer Opal Australian Paper saying, "To be viable the alternative supplies

must match a range of strict criteria including species, availability, volume, cost,

logistics and long-term supply. Despite our best endeavours, Opal has been unable to source viable alternative wood supplies to replace the VicForests shortfall."

As a result, the company is considering the permanent closure of white paper production at the mill. It previously produced up to 200,000 tonnes per year. The paper is used in a range of office and school supplies, most notably reams of Reflex copier paper. Opal says that the company "remains focused on securing the future of the Maryvale site which has a key role to play in manufacturing paper for the Opal Packaging Division".

At least 37 employees are currently stood down on full pay till mid-February, with the company in active talks with the Victorian Government and union representatives about their future. Haulage costs for appropriate logs outside the VicForests-controlled areas

and pulp costs from international suppliers are both uneconomical. Packaging grade materials continue to be produced at the mill as they rely on a different log supply.

Line operator Trevor Patton told the ABC, "It was very surreal – for us guys that have been there for anywhere between 10 to 20 years, it was a bit strange to see that last ream.

"We took a photo and we were smiling in the photo ... but that wasn't the way we were feeling at the time. It was a very sad moment."

“IT WAS VERY SURREAL... A VERY SAD MOMENT

In addition to the potential job losses from this major regional employer, Reflex paper has been the most popular copy paper in Australia for many years (estimated at 80% of the market) and the other white paper products from the mill also fill a major role in Australian stationery supplies. Their loss will see yet another jump in Australian business costs as the gap is filled with more expensive imports.



Trevor Patton (left) and colleagues from the Maryvale paper mill with the last ream of Reflex white paper



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JANUARY

30-31: International Conference on Agricultural and Forestry Engineering – Sydney, NSW.

The International Research Conference is a federated organization dedicated to bringing together a significant number of diverse scholarly events for presentation within the conference program.

Events will run over a span of time during the conference depending on the number and length of the presentations. With its high quality, it provides an exceptional value for students, academics and industry researchers. Visit: <https://waset.org/agricultural-and-forestry-engineering-conference-in-january-2023-in-sydney>

FEBRUARY

6-7: International Conference on Forest Biology and Dendrology – Melbourne, VIC.

International Conference on Forest Biology and Dendrology aims to bring together leading academic

scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Forest Biology and Dendrology. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Forest Biology and Dendrology. Visit: <https://waset.org/forest-biology-and-dendrology-conference-in-february-2023-in-melbourne>

7-8: 6th European Biomass Trade and Power Summit – Copenhagen.

On site and virtual. Attractive economics and spreads for wood pellet burn across Europe has boosted biomass demand, despite record high pellet prices. High power demand and a rebound in carbon prices has been the catalyst but a shortage of wood pellet supply will likely reduce industrial

wood pellet consumption in Europe. Visit www.cmtevents.com/aboutevent.aspx?ev=230202&or_email=huiyan@cmtsp.com.sg

APRIL

25-26: Institute of Chartered Foresters National Conference 2023: Connecting Trees, Farmers and Foresters – ONLINE EVENT.

Exploring how to integrate trees into the farmed landscapes and build relationships between farming and forestry. For further information see: <https://www.charteredforesters.org/event/national-conference-2023-connecting-trees-farmers-and-foresters>.

MAY

18-19: The Forest Industry Engineering Association – Melbourne.

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25-26: National TABMA Australia Conference – Hunter Valley, NSW. For any queries contact events@tamba.com.au. For bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/993638>

AUGUST

29-30: Timber & Forestry enews Australian Timber Supply Crisis Summit – Melbourne.

Early warning alert. For any queries relating to the conference, please contact CORP COMM. Email: info@corp-comm.com.au Phone: +61 3 5977 0244

OCTOBER

15-19: ANZIF Conference: Embracing our natural capital: The science, technology, and art of managing forests for all values – Twin Towns Conference Centre, Coolangatta, Queensland.

Further details from Forestry Australia at: <https://www.forestry.org.au/>



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British forestry puts price on flood mitigation

Trees and woodlands deliver over £400m each year in fight against flooding, new study finds

A LACK of forestation has long been acknowledged as a major factor in increased flooding risk. Now, new UK research has put a monetary value on how much forests are worth when it comes to protecting communities, and there are lessons that can be learned for Australia, too.

New research published in mid-January by Forest Research estimates Great Britain's trees contribute over £400m annually in benefits. The flood regulation service of Great Britain's trees, forests and woodlands as an annualised central estimate gave annual values of £843 million and £420 million compared to bare soil and grass, respectively. The valuation is based on the role trees, woodlands and forests play in intercepting rainfall, storing water and reducing the potentially devastating surface runoff that causes flooding.

Given the increased likelihood and frequency of extreme weather events as



British forestry contributes over £400 million per annum to lowering flood risk.

a result of climate change, the report highlights how woodland expansion can be a natural, cost-effective method of protecting homes and businesses.

British Forestry Minister Trudy Harrison said, "Communities across the country know all too well the potentially devastating impacts of flooding – from damage to homes and businesses and the disruption of critical infrastructure to the tragic loss of life.

"This report provides the best picture yet of the integral role that our trees, woodlands and forests play in protecting at-risk communities from flooding. With more severe weather events forecast in the future, there is even more

“SOILS WITHIN FORESTS RECEIVE, STORE AND DELAY WATER

incentive to accelerate our tree planting efforts."

Forests help to reduce flooding in numerous ways. Firstly, evaporation from leaves and branches helps to reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground. This process, known as interception, is significantly greater for woodland compared to other land use types. Secondly, the soils within forests receive, store and delay water, helping to reduce rapid run-off and peak flows. Finally, the presence of trees, shrubs and large woody dams along rivers and on the floodplain creates a barrier effect that slows the passage of flood waters downstream, in addition to delivering biodiversity benefits.

As a result, tree planting can significantly affect the volume, pathway and timing of surface run-off, reducing the risk of downstream flooding. Responsible forestry management practices help to maintain and secure this key environmental service.



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Central London's tallest mass timber office building has been unveiled

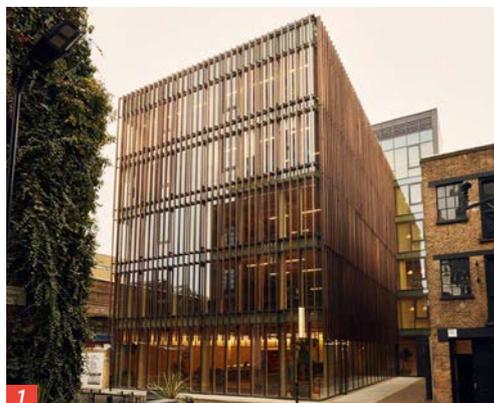
The Black & White Building optimises efficiency

CONSTRUCTED from prefabricated timber components that were precision engineered offsite to slot together at its Shoreditch location, the Black & White Building by London studio Waugh Thistleton Architects has just been unveiled.

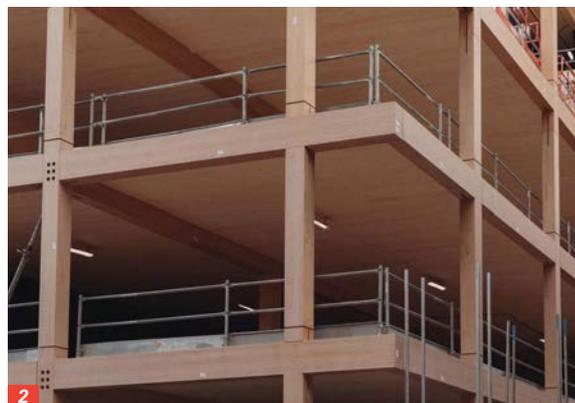
The 17.8-metre-high office building, which the studio says is the "tallest mass-timber office building in central London", was built from a combination of beech, pine and spruce timber with a slatted tulipwood facade.

The foundation and lower ground floor of the 4480m² building were made from concrete, with the rest of the structure constructed from CLT. Curtain walling is made of glulam, while columns and beams were constructed from LVL, which the studio said helps save on space.

Waugh Thistleton Architects associate director David Lomax said, "We're talking about typically, at the lowest level where the loads are greatest, about 100 millimetres



1



2

1/ Tulipwood louvres keep the office cool in summer, while allowing warming winter light in.
2/ The fully engineered timber office building was designed for maximum efficiency.

on each side of the column saving in its dimensions.

"[The LVL] is made out of beech, which is a hardwood so it performs much, much better. [It's] smaller columns."

The building, which Waugh Thistleton co-founder Andrew Waugh describes as "visibly sustainable", is dismantlable rather than demolished at the end of its life, with its materials reused.

According to the studio, by using engineered-wood materials rather than a traditional concrete and steel

structure, the building saves "thousands of tonnes in CO₂" as it generates much less greenhouse gas.

The building also has at least 37% less embodied carbon than comparable concrete structures, according to clients The Office Group.

It was named the Black & White Building as it replaces an earlier building on the site, a Victorian brick warehouse with a timber interior that had been painted black and white.

The existing building was deteriorating and not suitable for a retrofit, instead, the new

building is able to be a model of efficiency in its running as well as its construction, with 80 photovoltaic panels on the roof and tulipwood louvres helping to provide passive cooling across the exterior through summer months.

Timber beams from the Victorian warehouse that previously occupied the site were kept and turned into wooden sculptures that decorate the ground-floor lobby. The resulting building celebrates timber inside and out.

Source: Dezeen

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New Zealand announces Forestry and Wood Processing Industry Transformation Plan

NEW Zealand's Forestry Minister Stuart Nash recently announced the Forestry and Wood Processing Industry Transformation Plan (ITP). Minister Nash claimed the ITP will increase wood processing in the country and grow a low-carbon, high-value timber industry.

"The ITP sets the path for future export growth that does not just rely on exporting logs and instead opens up domestic opportunities, such as converting wood into high-

“THE ITP SETS THE PATH FOR FUTURE EXPORT GROWTH



1/ New Zealand timber industry transformation plan setting a path for future export growth that does not just rely on exporting logs and instead opens up domestic opportunities for timber product manufacturing
2/ New Zealand's Forestry Minister Stuart Nash ... transformation plan seeking to increase wood processing and grow a low-carbon, high-value timber industry.

tech low-carbon products, like construction materials, including timber frames, fence

paling and decking, and into bio-materials such as liquid and solid fuels," he said.

Minister Nash stated implementation of the ITP will create more employment and lift sustainability.

"We will also develop our domestic woody biomass industry that takes forestry by-products such as branches, bark, chips, and sawdust and turns them into products such as pellets and particleboard, and into biofuels to power our transport, make plastics and pharmaceuticals, and replace high-emissions materials in our buildings."

Minister Nash reported that the government had allocated NZ\$27 million to support the delivery of the ITP and has earmarked a further NZ\$155 million to support ITP-related initiatives and projects.



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Grants open for wood processing facilities

APPLICATIONS are now open for the Australian Government's Accelerate Adoption of Wood Processing Innovation Program grant round. Announced in the Budget, the program is run by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as part of a suite of initiatives totalling over \$300 million to support Australia's forest industries to innovate and improve the capacity and capability of the sector.

First Assistant Secretary for Agvet Chemicals, Fisheries, Forestry and Engagement,

“PROGRAM WILL SUPPORT PROJECTS THAT MAKE BETTER USE OF EXISTING TIMBER



The grants are designed to fund privately owned wood processing facilities to increase and/or diversify production capabilities or capacity. For example, the ability to process smaller logs or install new technology to create new products.

Emma Campbell, said the funding will enable the use of innovative technology for timber production in privately-owned wood processing plants.

“Demand for wood and wood products is expected to increase significantly over the next 25 years, here in Australia

and around the world,” Ms Campbell said.

“This program will support projects that make better use of our existing timber, add value to existing products, create new products or reduce the industry's carbon footprint.

“By investing and upgrading Australian wood processing facilities, we will encourage different types of products and better use of materials to meet Australia's future wood demands.

“The Australian Government has committed \$110 million in grant funding over four years from 2022–23 to 2025–26.”

Grant funding of between \$1 million and \$5 million will be available. The grants will be co-contribution with applicants contributing a minimum of 60% of the overall project value.

Applications close on 28 February, 2023 and projects must be completed by 30 June, 2026.

For more information and to apply, visit the www.grants.gov.au.

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Belarusian companies falsify timber origins

Central Asian states are being put at risk to provide cover for Russian and Belarusian timber exports to the EU

KAZAKH journalist Kanat Altynbayev has reported on a troubling boom in timber exports from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to the European Union following the EU bloc's ban of timber among a raft of imports from Russia and Belarus.

Kazakh exports in 2022 grew 70-fold, and Kyrgyz exports almost 18,000-fold compared

to the same period in 2021. Remarkable for two Central Asian countries that produce practically no wood. Trees cover just 5% of Kazakhstan, and only 6% of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan banned logging and export of high value trees (such as walnut and juniper) in 2007, and extended the ban on felling all trees in 2016, according to the State Agency for Environment and Forestry.

The Belarusian Investigative Centre (BIC), working with regional organisations including Siena (Lithuania), Kloop (Kyrgyzstan), Vlast (Kazakhstan), Re:Baltica (Latvia) and Fundacja Reporterów (Poland) found that after the EU sanctions went into effect, Russian and Belarusian timber exporters



The steppe of western Kazakhstan in the early spring is not famous for its forests.
Credit: Carole A at Wikimedia Commons

started sending their products to the EU, passing them off as being of Kazakh and Kyrgyz origin.

Lithuania's customs service first disclosed the suspicious boost in timber imports from Central Asia, the BIC reported.

Cargo haulers presented falsified customs declarations giving the products' countries of origin as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, according to Lithuanian customs officials.

"The telltale signs are absolutely undeniable," said

“ KAZAKH EXPORTS IN 2022 GREW 70-FOLD, AND KYRGYZ EXPORTS ALMOST 18,000-FOLD

Vygantas Paigozinas, deputy director of the Customs Department of Lithuania, as quoted by the BIC.

"We find markings on packaging, extra sets of documents that directly show that the goods come from Russia or Belarus and not from the countries in which the declaration was made at the initial stage," he said.

Meanwhile, the Siena Investigative Journalism Centre learned that Vivalsa, a local company, is involved in selling banned products in Lithuania.

Before the war, the company sold wood pellets supplied from Russia, but after the sanctions came into force it began selling the same products under a different name, supposedly of

Kyrgyz and Kazakh origin.

Saulius Girčys, director and co-owner of Vivalsa, admitted to undercover Siena journalists posing as buyers at the seller's warehouse that the goods were from Belarus.

Russian and Belarusian exporters obtained certificates from Central Asian countries for their products and sent them to the EU, yet the wood was never physically located in its region of 'origin'.

Similar cases have been uncovered throughout the Baltic States and more are suspected.

Kazakh and Kyrgyz businesses have decried the use of their nations as fronts by Russian and Belarusian timber companies, saying the practice puts the two smaller states at risks of sanctions from their global trading partners.

The relationship has been described as a 'one-sided game', with Russia exploiting its neighbours for its own benefit. Attempts to enforce local regulations and comply with the international sanctions regime have been met with threats of 'economic costs' from powerful figures including Russian Foreign Ministry official Alexander Sternik on December 22 at a conference in Moscow on "Central Asia and the Ukrainian Crisis".



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Nannup timber mill closure

AFTER almost 100 years as a major employer in the town 280km south of Perth, the Nannup timber mill in ceased operations on 18 January. The decision by operator Parkside Timber is a direct result of WA's native logging ban. It leaves 45 staff without work and a town unsure as to its future, but the WA government says the closure is premature and that Parkside had timber supply guaranteed through to the end of 2023.

As part of the WA State Government's transition support for timber workers, workers who have lost their jobs are eligible for a one-off payment of \$30,000, plus a top-up payment of \$1000 for every year of service, capped at \$15,000. Retraining is also

“GOVERNMENT SUPPORT WON'T GUARANTEE THE SURVIVAL OF THE TOWN



Parkside Timber's Nannup mill has closed with the loss of 45 jobs hitting the small south-west WA town hard.

on offer for workers.

Nannup Shire President Tony Dean told the ABC that while the government support will help workers, it won't help to guarantee the survival of the town.

"There are no jobs created in Nannup," he said. "If they want a job, it's fine to be retrained — but that job won't be in Nannup. Nannup is based on agriculture and timber and wine and [if] you take one of those main planks out, which is the timber industry, you have a local economy that is going to struggle."

The closure of the mill

removes an estimated \$3-5 million in wages from the town per annum, and Dean emphasised that there is no potential for other industries, such as tourism, to make up the shortfall.

As part of the WA State Government's support package, there are plans for timber towns like Nannup to receive job-boosting grants for diversifying existing businesses and funding for new industry. However, the specific \$10 million fund for building new industries is not yet available.

"It hasn't opened quite specifically because the

timber mills haven't all fully closed down yet," said WA Forestry Minister Jackie Jarvis. "They were guaranteed timber supply right through until the end of 2023 under their existing contracts so Parkside has made the decision to close up their mill early."

While the fund is now expected to open shortly, Shadow Forestry spokesman Steve

Martin said the government had not been realistic in the impacts of their policy.

"That's extraordinary for the government to expect a private business that needs to make a profit to just plough along as normal until the very last day before they shut down the industry," he said.

"Why would you invest in a business? Why would you repair equipment if you know at some time in the very near future your industry is gone? The government needs to stop sitting on its hands, get down there and find employment for these people."



New resilient timber homes program launched

FWPA is driving solutions to lower the cost of rebuilding after disasters

AUSTRALIANS are five times more likely to be displaced by a natural disaster than someone living in Europe. While the associated social and financial costs are growing significantly, our challenge is to explore ways of mitigating the effect of these adverse events while also addressing the cause.

The new Resilient Timber Homes Program is an initiative of Forest and Wood Products Australia Ltd, supported by a range of industry partners and organisations. Resilient Timber Homes are an efficient and sustainable solution to the challenges caused by our rapidly changing climate, which are becoming increasingly critical for our communities, environment and economy.

This program will

“OUR CHALLENGE IS TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF DISASTERS”



14 Murray View Drive, East Albury, NSW. Timber homes can be designed and built with a resilience focus.
Credit: Chad Muller at Captured Space

demonstrate how timber homes can be designed and built with a resilience-focused “Code+” approach, to provide better safety and wellness to their occupants, as well as increased value for investors and the community as a whole. The program identifies solutions to deliver the benefits of resilient timber construction to Australian homeowners and occupiers.

The extreme weather events experienced in Australia recently are severely impacting our communities and economy and require more sustainable solutions when it comes to housing.

Resilient Timber Homes are likely to significantly drive growth in the demand for innovative, sustainable, and

TALKING TIMBER



With Eileen Newbury
Head of marketing and communications and head of WoodSolutions program

competitive wood-based products and services over a number of years. Increased demand will also result in a stronger and more resilient supply chain, a win for both the environment and the building sector.

The program is designed to engage designers, planners, developers, builders, suppliers, insurers, and authorities involved in the domestic dwellings market in a synergistic approach.

A comprehensive WoodSolutions Technical Design Guide will be developed as part of the program, along with a national design competition to inform and further support RD&E initiatives.

If you would like to get involved, more information about the new program is available from the Resilient Timber Homes program page - www.woodsolutions.com.au/resilient-timber-homes



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- A static softwood plantation resource
- **Decades of native forest lockups have decimated hardwood timber supply**
- A reducing hardwood plantation area
- **Australian construction and building industries increasingly at the mercy of timber imports**
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- **How bad can it get?**
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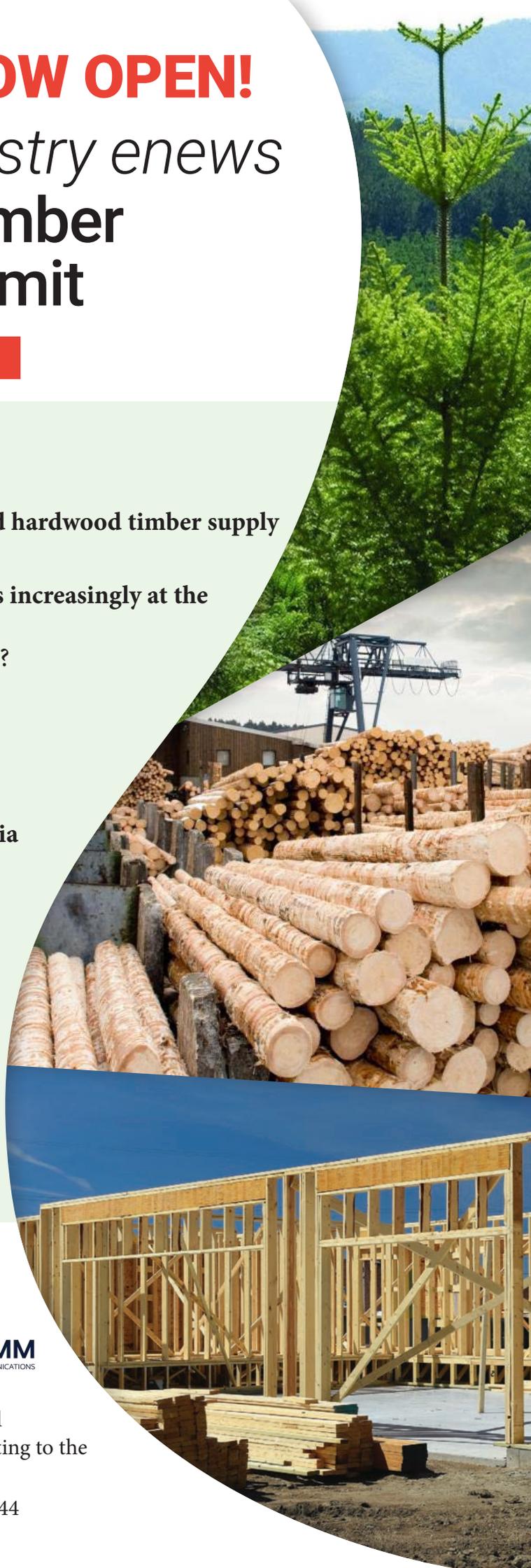
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From P 3

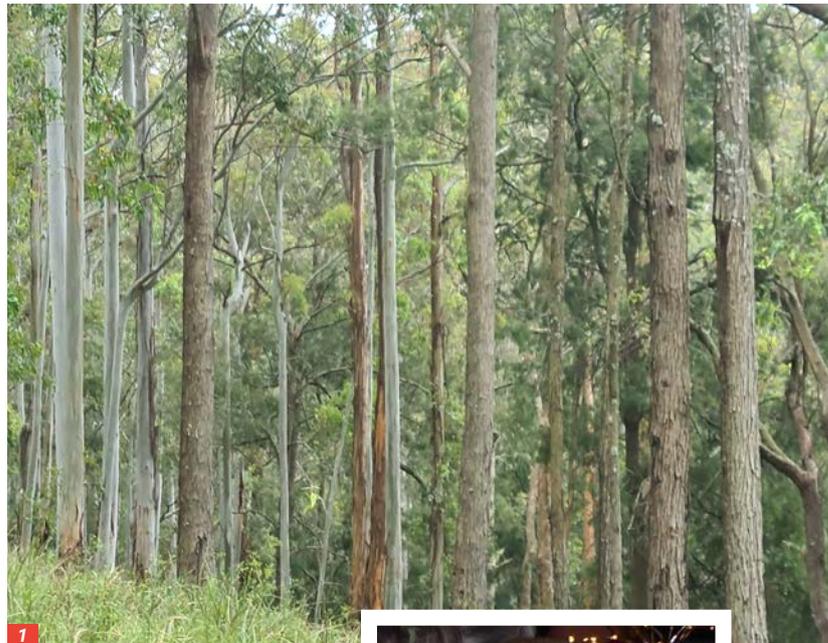
harvesting in the local area did not influence koala occupancy and there was also no difference between National Park and state forest sites.”

Mr Violante stated the koala park as proposed by anti-forestry groups would mean the closure of NSW’s hardwood timber industry and increase the reliance on timber imported from countries at high risk of deforestation and illegal logging.

“The facts are that NSW’s native forest industries regenerate the forest by law after harvest, ensuring no net loss of forest area. Also, the industry only operates in ‘regrowth’ forests that have previously been harvested. Selective harvesting means koala habitat trees are retained, and all our old growth forests are protected.”

“Evidence also shows that Labor’s plan will not support koala conservation. Closing

“ PAST TIMBER HARVESTING DID NOT INFLUENCE KOALA OCCUPANCY



1 / Forest industry only operates in ‘regrowth’ forests that have previously been harvested. 2/ Carlie Porteous ... forest management needs to be done correctly, by the right government entity and the right skilled workers.

the native timber industry would cost the NSW economy more than \$1 billion a year in economic activity, and mean higher housing construction costs, lengthy delays on new home builds and renovations, and fewer firefighting resources in bushfire-prone areas.”

The Australian Forest Contractors Association is also cautioning NSW Labor about any decisions that remove the effective



management of forest areas by highly skilled operators, should the ALP win state government. AFCA General Manager Carlie Porteous affirmed that forest management needs to be done correctly, by the right government entity and the right skilled workers.

“This koala park proposal has to potential to lead to native environments that are not well managed for natural disaster preparedness and access,” said Porteous. “The careless nature of this announcement will mean increased uncertainty in the forestry sector and potentially a mass exit of skilled labour. The same skilled labour these

communities turn to during catastrophic fire events like those experienced in NSW in 2019 and 2020.”

Ms Porteous called for the NSW Labor Party to ensure it conducts its consultation in a balanced, transparent and fair way if it truly wishes to make a difference in the endangered classification of koalas.

“The industry supports the science. We would encourage a prospective Labor Government to be thorough in its engagement process and not to fall into the trap of confusing ‘land-clearing activities’ with well-managed forests,” Ms Porteous concluded.

Expansion of Australian Apprenticeship Priority List welcome

THE expansion of the number of occupations covered by the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List is welcome news to builders around the country says Master Builders Acting CEO Shaun Schmitke.

The list has been expanded from 77 to 111. This means more apprentices and their employers can access support through the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System which includes direct payments to apprentices and

a wage subsidy for employers.

“There’s been an addition of eight new occupations in building and construction added to the list taking it to 47 in total,” says Schmitke.

“The Federal Government has heard the cries of builders in recent months who have been grappling with labour shortages. Master Builders has long called for targeted efforts to incentivise the retention and completion



Retaining apprentices is vital to replacing an ageing construction workforce.

rates of apprentices and today’s announcement is an active step in tackling low completion rates.”

A place on the list means eligible employers can access a 10% reimbursement of the first and second year apprentice wages and a 5% reimbursement of third year wages. Additionally, eligible building and construction apprentices will receive \$5000 in four payments during their apprenticeships to help with expenses and may be eligible for the Government’s New Energy Apprentice Support Payment.

Severe heat and drought have led to record US fir deaths

US Forest Service researchers say fir trees in the Pacific Northwest have died off in record numbers in 2022 after three years of severe drought and heat waves.

"We're calling it Firmageddon," said Danny DePinte, who runs the aerial survey program for Oregon and Washington State, in an interview with Canada's Globe and Mail.

In some parts of Oregon, more than half of the fir trees have died, clearly visible from the air as the evergreen conifer turns brick red. It's the worst mortality event recorded since the agency started tracking forest health in 1947.

"When I was flying over, it was the extent of it that set us back," DePinte said. "You'd see it goes up one side of a mountain, and then it just keeps going."

These trees are mostly white fir and California red fir, but the problems affecting them extend into the British Columbian forest regions as well, which are already under attack from the western balsam bark beetle, mountain pine beetle and unprecedented forest fires.

A 2020 report from the



1/ Tree die-offs in the Pacific Northwest are the inevitable result when conditions are hotter and drier than native species can adapt to.

2/ Danny DePinte of the U.S. Forest Service has seen the creeping influence of 'Firmageddon' in the Pacific Northwest.

Canadian Council of Forest Ministers identifies the trees species that are at highest risk in the foreseeable future: In the boreal forest which stretches from the Yukon and northern B.C. to

Newfoundland and Labrador, the most vulnerable are white and black spruce, aspen and conifers. In B.C.'s southern interior forests, both pine and fir are succumbing to wildfire, insects, drought and extreme weather.

The report warns that climate change is moving faster than most tree species can adapt: "Over the next several decades, the climate in Canadian forests will shift northward at a rate that will likely exceed the ability of individual tree species to

“ IN SOME PARTS OF OREGON, MORE THAN HALF OF THE FIR TREES HAVE DIED

migrate. While most tree species can migrate naturally up to a few hundred metres per year via seed dispersal, the climatic conditions in which each species thrives may move north by several thousand metres per year."

Forest pathologist Mike Cruickshank studies the impact of stress on trees. "We're looking at drought tolerance. We're also looking at insects and disease resistance. We're just looking for the best and the toughest individuals we can find," Cruickshank said.

The extreme weather over the past two years, according to his research, will result in more die-offs. It usually takes two years for the damage to show.

Trees can adapt to heat by drawing up moisture from the ground to cool themselves. Or they can survive droughts by putting on growth early in the spring and then switching to a dormant cycle. But not both at the same time.

"One of the big problems is heat plus drought. It's not just drought, and it's not just heat. It's the two together. That's really bad," Mr. Cruickshank said. "And that's what we are seeing."

Source: US Forest Service

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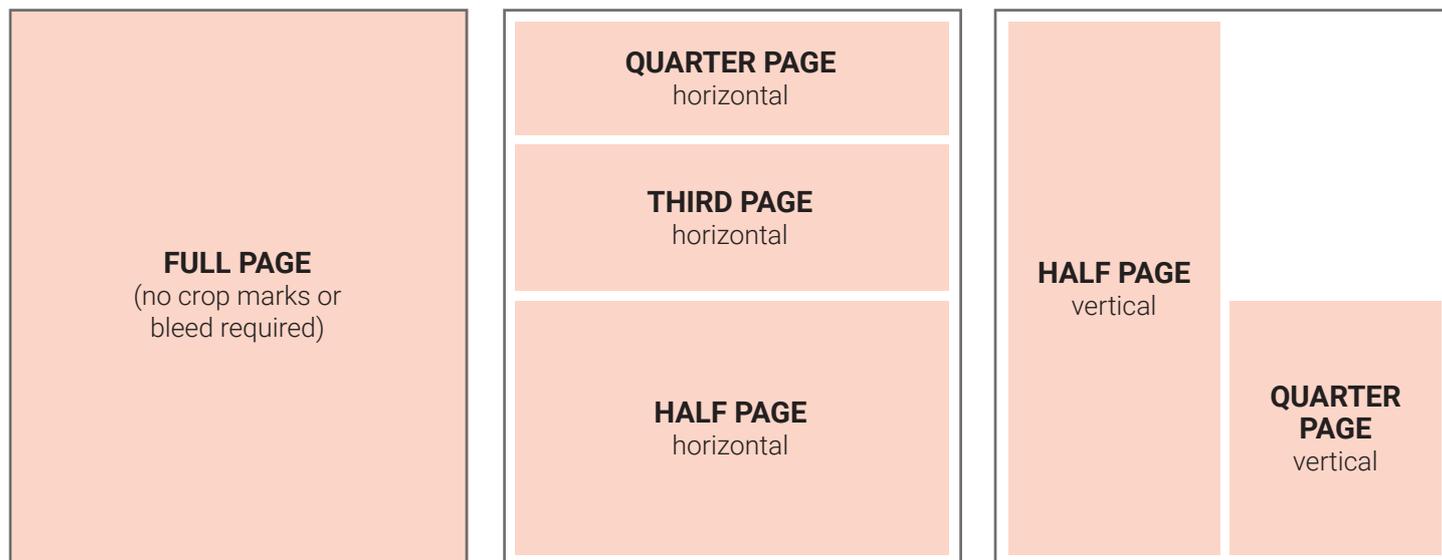
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