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COVER STORY P 6



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National timber and hardware body moves closer

New name for proposed national timber and hardware industry body announced

TABMA Australia and Hardware Australia members are set to vote in an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Thursday 9 March 2023 to determine if the associations will merge into one entity.

Each body has a strong history. TABMA Australia has been providing information, advice, and services to members with practical solutions and education to improve their business management, growth and profitability for over 80 years. Hardware Australia was formed in 2016 when the state bodies that preceded it merged. It has carried on the strong advocacy and education work of those bodies and expanded its role as a peak industry body,

particularly with its strategic partnership with TABMA, starting in 2019.

The merger is an exciting prospect for both TABMA and Hardware Australia. It will provide a stronger voice that is better able to advocate for all members nationally.

Both Boards have worked closely when developing a new name and logo for the potentially merged association. It was important to acknowledge the 80-plus-year history of TABMA and to also properly welcome Hardware Australia members.

The proposed name is highly inclusive and the logo honours TABMA's legacy retaining its important equity. If the merger is approved by members, the merged association will be called the



Proposed new logo if the merger is approved by TABMA and Hardware Australia members.

incredibly proud of the work that has been done to develop a strong proposition for members of both TABMA and Hardware Australia. We believe bringing our two associations together will provide great benefits to our

industries including access to a larger network, more resources, and a stronger and unified voice."

It is a significant decision for members, however, both Boards are confident the approval of the merger will deliver numerous benefits to all members with the overall goal of the merged entity to serve members and provide them with the best opportunities for success.

Both TABMA and Hardware Australia welcome questions from members ahead of the vote in March 2023.



David Little, TABMA CEO

National Timber and Hardware Association (NTHA).

David Little, CEO of TABMA Australia, said: "We are

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Bad news for housing forecasts

New HIA reports put the blame for lower housing sales and starts squarely on repeated RBA rate rises

TWO new reports from HIA deliver a gloomy outlook for housing in Australia over the next 12-24 months. The first saw a substantive drop in new home sales over the past quarter.

“Sales of new homes fell again in January, down by 12.8% for the month, leaving sales in the previous three months a remarkable 46.7% lower than in the previous year,” said Tim Reardon, HIA’s chief economist.

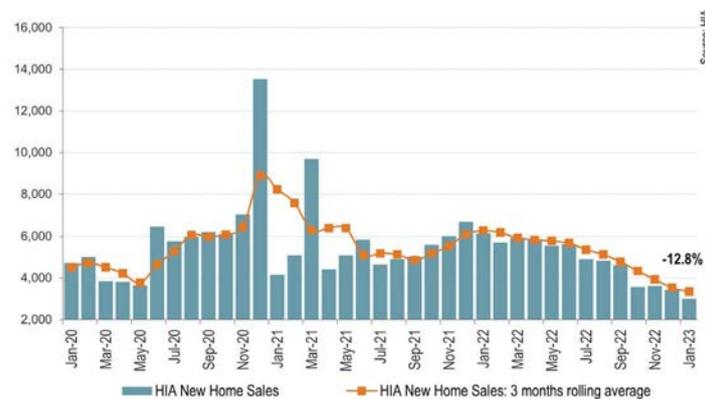
For the three months to January 2023, compared to the same period the previous year, new home sales in NSW were down by 73.1%, followed by Queensland (-53.9%), Victoria (-41.6%), and WA (-21.7%). SA has seen an increase of 2.0%.

“Sales of new homes have stalled in recent months as the adverse impact of the RBA’s rate increases continue to erode market confidence,” added Reardon.

“There is no indication that the market has reached the bottom of this cycle with sales falling in all states ... Without an improvement in access to finance, or a lowering of rates, building activity will start to contract from late this year.”

The HIA New Home Sales report – a monthly survey of the largest volume home builders in the five largest states – is a leading indicator

PRIVATE NEW HOUSE SALES - AUSTRALIA (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED)



Private house sales in Australia have been declining since interest rates first started creeping up but that rate has now increased

of future detached home construction.

“The number of detached houses commencing construction is set to decline this year and next to its lowest level since 2012,” said Reardon.

“There was a large volume of work in the pipeline when rates started to rise in May

2022, and there remains a record number of homes under construction, but this will shrink quickly as market confidence continues to fade. Lending for the purchase or construction of a new home had already fallen to its lowest level since 2012 by the end of 2022, and the full impact of last year’s rate increases is still to flow through to

households.”

HIA predicts the number of detached housing starts will fall below 100,000 starts per year for the first time in a decade to just 96,300 in 2024. There were 149,000 starts in 2021.

“Multi-unit starts were impaired last year by the acute shortage of labour and materials which has seen many projects postponed until 2023,” Reardon said. “The number of multi-units commencing construction should increase as the acute shortage of housing, returning migrants and students, and affordability constraints continue to drive demand for housing.

“Higher rates will further impair the ability of the market to respond to the acute shortage of housing stock.”

The HIA suggested an easing of restrictions on borrowing for first home buyers with less than a 20% deposit to ease the barriers to home ownership and using fiscal policy tools rather than interest rates to address inflation.

“The RBA isn’t going to return the economy to stability by putting the building industry through boom-and-bust cycles,” concluded Reardon. “It doesn’t need to crush the economy in order slow inflation.

HIA FORECAST - AUSTRALIA



Detached housing starts are forecast to drop to the lowest levels in a decade.



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Taking responsibility for our own needs

The second in a four-part series examining the timber demand and supply conundrum in Australia. JOHN HALKETT

This is the second instalment of a four-part series on supply and demand in the timber industry (see Issue 739 for Part 1 on Demand). It forms a background to the critical timber supply summit, which will be held in Melbourne on 28 and 29 August 2023. In this instalment, we look at local supply.

AUSTRALIA should be able to pay our way more responsibly in terms of providing for our

“ INVESTORS HAVE SHOWN A DISTINCT LACK OF APPETITE FOR LONG-TERM TREE PLANTATIONS



Native forest management has the very real potential to occupy the middle ground in the conservation debate.

own timber needs, rather than putting pressure on the forest resources of other

countries. At the very least, we should be self-sufficient. Indeed, we already have the capacity to make a positive contribution to the world's timber needs and help our own balance of payments position in the process. This point is reinforced when it is appreciated that the annual timber growth in Australia's forests exceeds the present annual harvest. Data in the Asia Pacific report, The Ecological Footprint and Natural Wealth, confirms that Australia's forests are growing at a rate four-and-a-half times the rate at which they are being harvested.

There is ample scope in Australia to expand the forest and tree plantation-based industries within the confines of ecologically sustainable forest management. The management of native forests has the very real potential to occupy the middle ground in the conservation debate and to make a greater contribution to the country's economic

welfare.

However, instead of timber products being recognised as a valuable carbon sink and benefit to the Australian economy (particularly in the regions), growth in local forestry has been allowed to languish in the 'too hard' basket.

Some of the reasons for this are harder to change than others.

Australia can fairly

be described as the land of plenty and pestilence. From a forest and timber industry perspective, pestilence comes in form of bushfires and the absence of water. Water constraints generally mean that forests and tree plantations are found, or are planted, not too far from the coast where rainfalls are generally over about 600mm a year. This is generally land highly contested for other agricultural and industrial use and a range of other commercial and development purposes.

Other reasons are equally complex, but more capable of change. Forestry activity is severely hampered by timeframes and the lack of investment. Investors frequently look for short-term returns – the shorter the investment time frame the better. Long-term investments like tree plantations suffer from the compound interest

Cont P 5

From P 4

curse. Einstein is alleged to have said, "Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it he who doesn't pays it." While it's unlikely he took time out from physics for finance, it's an important principle for investors.

Ignoring the prospect of disasters, tree plantation investment means spending much of the funding in the first couple of years and then having to wait 25 years or more for a return. Meanwhile, other investments are already making returns that can be re-invested, and that money makes more money.

The power of compound interest (coupled with pestilence) has meant that investors have shown a distinct lack of appetite for long-term tree plantations. Negligible investment in long-run plantations has occurred in Australia for perhaps the past two decades and the prospect of this changing anytime soon seems remote. However, governments are increasingly contributing towards plantation investment, such as the recent \$120 million to Hancock Victoria Plantations from the Victorian Government and the WA Government's \$350



New plantations are needed urgently, but it's not until at least about 2050 that timber from this resource would enter the domestic market.

million softwood plantation expansion plan.

While these measures are fairly described as a drop in the ocean, they are a start, if one that needs to be matched by other government investments and measures to make timber more attractive for non-government investors. Federally, the Australian Government has identified farmers as a target for expanding our plantation resources, highlighting the established benefits of trees for improving crop and stock profitability as well as providing an additional income stream.

There is zero risk that

the current demand will disappear. A seminal Forest and Wood Products Australia report published late last year concluded that 436,000 hectares of new tree plantations were needed urgently. But even if these plantations were established today, it won't be until about 2050 that timber from this resource would enter the domestic market. The report predicts that by no later than 2050 Australia will have:

- A population between 33.6 and 40.0 million people.
- New housing demand around 259,000 dwellings per year.
- Sawn softwood demand of

6.5 million m³ per annum – almost 2.0 million m³ per year higher than in 2021.

- A gap between demand and domestic production of 2.6 million m³ per year, equivalent to 40.5% of total demand.

So, what to do while we wait for new plantations to be established, grow and mature, if they appear at all?

We could reduce plantation rotation lengths as an emergency, though not desirable, measure or we could use short rotation, smaller logs to produce a range of engineered wood products (which can significantly increase yield at smaller diameters).

This latter option may become a more attractive one thanks to the recent increase in CLT and glulam manufacturing capacity in Australia. This type of timber resource is also well suited to LVL but would require expanded local production capacity.

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Murdoch Uni's Boola Katitjin building opens

The largest timber building in WA will be a central hub for technology learning as well as sustainability

A MIXTURE of academics, dignitaries, students and local First Nations people were on hand to celebrate the opening of Boola Katitjin last week. Designed by Lyons Architects, with engineering by Norman Disney & Young, the building was delivered by Mutiplex and Aurecon. It is the largest timber building in Western Australia – with 1796 pieces of glulam and cross-laminated timber (CLT) used across the building's structural system.

The timber was sourced

from sustainable suppliers in Europe and Australia and, along with solar panels and stormwater harvesting, is a key component of the building's internationally recognised 6-star Green Star rating. The design

includes some of the largest glulam beams in Australia at 26m long and 7282kg, manufactured by HESS timber.

Boola Katitjin translates to 'lots of learning' in Noongar and the building was already delivering on that promise during construction. A world-first robotics technology trial installed up to 100 timber screw fixings (out of over 200,000) on the building as part of a proof-of-concept experiment for automating this labour-intensive task.

The robotics trial ran as a collaboration between Aurecon, Murdoch University and UTS to determine if automation could help to increase productivity, reduce cost and improve workers' OH&S on modular timber builds like Boola Katitjin.

Now, the completed building's four storeys offer new places to learn, study and socialise, while reflecting the University's commitment to both in-person and online learning. In an Australian first, students will be able to see, talk and collaborate with classmates anywhere in the world via Technology Enabled Learning (TEL) desks

in Boola Katitjin.

The building also connects to the University's 2023–2030 strategy Building a Brighter Future, Together – Ngala Kwop Biddi, reflecting the three pillars of Sustainability; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and becoming the university of first choice for First Nations people.

"Boola Katitjin will offer a digital-rich learning environment that uses Australian-first technology and flexible class formats to allow for more innovative teaching approaches and greater engagement with the community and industry," Murdoch Vice Chancellor Professor Andrew Deeks said.

"The name Boola Katitjin was given by Dr Richard Walley, who has a long association with Murdoch. The Beelie Wetlands around the University have been place of learning for thousands of years and we are proud to be adapting to the future of education to continue this tradition."

On the cover: Dignitaries, staff, students and First Nations peoples gathered to celebrate the opening of Boola Katitjin.



1/ The building's design highlights its timber-rich materials and connection to the local environment.
2/ A smoking ceremony formed part of the Welcome for guests and dignitaries at the opening.



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MARCH

27: Field Days at Levendale – Tasmania. The March event is the second of two and will be held in the southern Midlands region, 53 km north of Hobart. The Southern Midlands Council area 53 km north of Hobart. **Time: 9 am-1.00 pm.** Contact admin@pft.tas.gov.au or call (03) 6477 7389 for more details.

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

15-18: Ligna trade show – Hannover, Germany. The world's leading trade fair for the woodworking and wood processing industry is jointly organized by

Deutsche Messe and VDMA Woodworking Machinery. It showcases the entire range of products and services for the primary and secondary industries – tools, machines and systems for custom and mass production, surface technology, wood-based panel production, sawmill technology, energy from wood, machine components and automation technology, as well as machines and systems for forestry, round wood and sawn wood production.

18-19: The Forest Industry Engineering Association – Melbourne. Woodtech would be showcasing new innovations, new products and new equipment to improve local sawmilling, wood manufacturing and wood panel company's operating efficiencies - and profitability. For bookings: <https://www.eventalways.com/woodtech>

25-26: TABMA National Conference and Awards – Crowne Plaza - Hunter Valley, NSW. TABMA Australia and Hardware Australia will be joining forces and hosting a national conference and awards program in 2023. TABMA and Hardware

Australia are proud to announce the 2023 Timber & Hardware National Conference to be held in the Hunter Valley. Offering members and industry representatives an opportunity to connect as industry leaders and come away with information and tools to take back to your business to help you today and succeed in the future. As part of the National Conference, TABMA Australia and Hardware Australia will be hosting the National Awards program for the industry to participate in. The awards recognise the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations in delivering or producing high quality products and services. For any queries contact events@tamba.com.au. For bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/993638>

28-2 June: International Research Group (IRG) on Wood Protection – Cairns, QLD. The IRG is the world's peak world body on timber durability research and will be hosting more than 250 researchers from 30-40 countries to discuss new developments in the

field. Information about the conference and registration is available at: www.irg-wp.com/IRG54/index.html

JUNE

18-20: Malaysian Wood Expo – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Malaysian Timber Council, International Wood & Woodworking Expo. For further information see: www.malaysianwoodexpo.com.my or email: info@malaysianwoodexpo.com.my

AUGUST

29-30: Timber & Forestry enews Australian Timber Supply 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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An end to Australian white paper

The Opal Maryvale Mill has formally stopped production of white paper products after wood fibre supply issues

MONTHS of work on solutions from unions, industry and workers have come to naught as Nippon Paper Industries has announced the end of white paper production at the Opal Maryvale Mill. The closure had been threatened since late 2022 after wood fibre supply from VicForests was limited due to court injunctions.

Carlie Porteous, general manager of the Australian Forest Contractors Association, said, "This is a disastrous outcome for the communities of Gippsland that provide services to the mill, including multi-generational forest contracting businesses.

"It's devastating that the decision has been made to close yet another manufacturing business in Victoria. Not only will this add further cost of living pressures, it is another example of the Victorian government failing regional workers, especially in Gippsland."

Last financial year the mill produced 116,000 tonnes



Vale Australian-made Reflex paper – a casualty of changed Victorian forestry regulations.

of Reflex copy paper – the Australian market leader for many years – for the domestic market, plus 88,000 tonnes for export.

The company has announced it will reset the mill, saying: "Although the Maryvale Mill will no longer produce white paper, it will continue to manufacture brown paper and board to supply Opal's Packaging Division."

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union blamed

the early end of white paper production in Australia on the Victorian government's mismanagement of the sector and Opal's "bumbling" approach.

"Both the government and the company failed to take the actions we implored them to take in order to prevent

“ THIS IS A DISASTROUS OUTCOME FOR GIPPSLAND ”

this disastrous outcome," CFMMEU national secretary Michael O'Connor said.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union's Gippsland organiser Steve Dodd said Opal wanted to make 32 of its workers redundant. "It's been an absolute farce," he told AAP.

"We've asked for a range of information. They just come back bulls***ing to us. They haven't genuinely tried to mitigate the impact."

In addition to job losses, the gap in white paper will need to be filled with imports as there is no other local manufacturer.

"The job losses at the mill, as well as the flow on effects to Australian manufacturing and national sovereignty cannot be dismissed," said Porteous. "We have a federal government trying to rebuild better after covid and state governments failing these businesses, workers and regions through lack of action."



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Indonesia targets Eastern Europe for further timber market growth



Indonesian wood products continued to grow globally in 2022.

DESPITE uncertain global economic conditions, exports of Indonesian wood products continued to grow in 2022.

Data from Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) analysed by the Association of Indonesia Forest Concession Holders (APHI) show Indonesia's exports of wood products in 2022 reached US\$14.51bn.

This was a significant increase in export values compared to 2021, which were recorded at US\$13.56bn. The export value for wood products in 2022 was a record, surpassing the previous record set in 2021.

In 2022, paper products contributed the most to export earnings at US\$4.37bn, up 18% year-on-year, followed by wood pulp at US\$3.73bn, up 15% year-on-year. The other wood products that made a large contribution were wood panels at US\$2.86bn, and furniture worth US\$2.26bn.

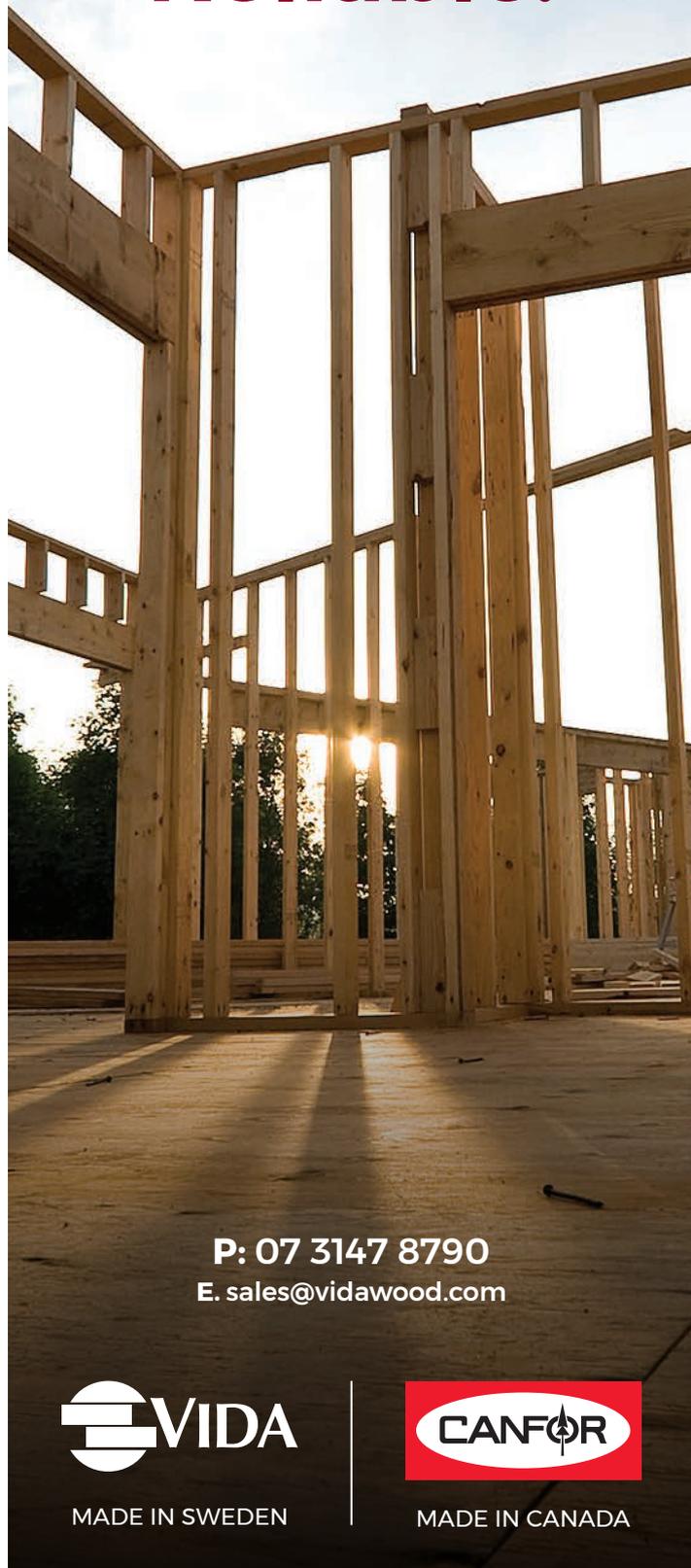
In addition to the current products exported, such as paper, panels and furniture, efforts will be made to export wood pellets, according to the chairman of the APHI, Indroyono Soesilo.

He added there is a skyrocketing demand for Indonesian wood products in Eastern European member states.

Markets such as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovenia and other Eastern European countries are to be the target for expanded wood product exports from Indonesia to the EU. For instance, in Bulgaria there was a 100% increase in Indonesian wood product exports over the above period, a 400% increase in Croatia, 125% in Lithuania and a massive jump in exports to Slovakia.

Growth in non-traditional market countries will be an opportunity to increase exports amid the economic challenges of 2023.

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\$4 million WA timber transition fund

HAVING previously been surprised by the speed at which forestry and related businesses were closing after the decision to ban native logging from 2024, the McGowan Government last week launched the \$4 million Community Small Grants Fund to support businesses and community groups based in Western Australia's native forest regions.

The Community Small Grants Fund offers funding of up to \$100,000 for sustainable projects that aim to create jobs, expand and diversify the local economy, and create liveable communities through services, infrastructure, tourism and events. It's part of a wider \$80 million program to aid transition away from native logging.

It will be delivered through

two competitive grant rounds. The first funding round for the Community Small Grants Fund opens on Monday, 20 February and closes on Sunday, 21 April 2023.

Workshops to support potential applicants will take place in early March in Manjimup, Nannup and Bridgetown. Details are available on the website.

Forestry Minister Jackie Jarvis said, "Small businesses and community groups are crucial to our regional communities, and now more than ever it's important we



Native timber logging in WA was scheduled to end in 2024, but many businesses are already closing.

fighting hard to make sure communities in my electorate are supported through this transition away from native forest logging.

"This funding is great news for businesses and community groups in WA's

provide targeted support to those communities impacted by the transition from native forest logging.

"I encourage businesses and community groups to apply for funding through the Community Small Grants Fund program."

Warren-Blackwood MLA Jane Kelsbie added, "I've been

native forest regions. It will provide exciting opportunities for communities to create new projects around services, infrastructure, tourism and events."

For more information on the Community Small Grants Fund and how to apply, please visit: www.wa.gov.au/nft



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Tasmanian Premier inspects new and upcoming developments at Bell Bay

THE Premier of Tasmania, Jeremy Rockliff MP, visited Timberlink's Bell Bay manufacturing facility last week to inspect the growing development.

A \$63 million upgrade is in the final stages of planning and is expected to be commissioned at the Bell Bay facility by the end of 2026. This will result in an increase of more than 50% in on-island sovereign timber manufactured from sustainably managed pine plantations.

As part of the Premier's tour, he looked at the construction site of Australia's only finger-jointed and primed outdoor timber products line, which has been partially supported by a \$1,063,304 grant from the Tasmanian Government's

Department of State Growth On-Island Processing Program. The program aims to obtain greater value from Tasmania's forest resources (including forest residues), reduce the risk from exposure to volatility in international commodity markets for woodchips and logs, reduce the need for imported forest-based products and create jobs in regional areas. The finger-jointing line is expected to be completed in late 2023.

Timberlink's EGM sales marketing & corporate affairs, David Oliver, said "Timberlink



The inspection group at Timberlink's Bell Bay plant: (from left to right) David Oliver, Premier Jeremy Rockliff MP, Nick Duigan MP and Scott Freeman.

is excited to be able to offer a locally produced product for the Australian market and reduce the need for imported timber."

The Premier was impressed by the level of technology, innovation and safety throughout the Bell Bay facility. He praised Timberlink's commitment to Tasmania's people and the growth of the

state's economy.

The Premier's visit also included a tour of Timberlink's wood-plastic composites plant, which is expected to be in full production in late 2023. The energy to power the plant will be sourced from

Tasmanian hydro and a solar farm on its roof. Rainwater tanks will harvest water used for cooling in the manufacturing process.

"This project significantly enhances Australia's sovereign capability to manufacture decking and screening products from upcycled materials," said Oliver.

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FWPA's recent fire research is the focus of a new podcast

Modelling the future to help minimise the impacts of bushfire events on forestry

THE horrific memories of Black Summer and its impact on forestry communities, as well as mills, timber supply and regional manufacturing, are still fresh. After three years of La Niña rains and abundant growth, the prospect of an approaching hot, dry El Niño period is adding urgency to research designed to lower risk.

The latest episode of FWPA's WoodChat podcast series focuses on a recently completed FWPA-supported research project aimed at increasing the timber industry's capacity to minimise the impacts of future bushfire events. This work is focused on updating fuel accumulation and fire spread models for Australian forestry plantations. The project was co-funded by most of Australia's large plantation managers, with matching funding from the Australian Government.

"A better understanding of how fuel accumulates over time in plantations means improved performance of fire behaviour simulators and, in turn, more accurate predictions

of fire risk for plantation owners," said Dr Kate Parkins of the University of Melbourne's School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences FLARE (FLAmes to REGimes) Wildfire Research Group, who led the research and is interviewed during the episode.

"Our results indicate that fuel loads have previously been under-predicted at key times during a rotation. This suggests that some landscape-scale fire risk in areas with plantations may also have been underestimated. As part of our research, we explored future fire risk across different growing regions and under different climate projections. This enabled us to quantify where in the landscape and under what conditions fire risk will be highest.

"This information can be used by plantation owners to guide strategic fuel management and minimise future fire risk," Parkins added.

The research also highlighted that, for plantations overall, rapid suppression response times represent the best area for investment to



Woodchat's latest podcast looks at new methods of fire management ahead of a forecast El Niño period.

minimise plantation losses under a changing climate. Other important approaches identified to help reduce future fire impact on plantations included continued fuel management strategies outside of plantations, and a focus on increased early detection.

Other discussions covered during the podcast include David Bowman, Professor of

Pyrogeography and Fire Science at the University of Tasmania, talking about a sophisticated fire detection camera known as FireHawk.

Also included is Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group, on the organisation's focus on and promotion of traditional, cultural and cool burning practices as a means of mitigating bushfire risk and Dr Kevin Tolhurst AM, Principal Fellow

of the School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences at the University of Melbourne, who speaks on the development of an Australian bushfire management framework.

You can listen to WoodChat on Soundcloud, iTunes and Spotify or find out more about FLARE's research and the above project at www.flarewildfire.com.



Termite Professional Conference 2023

The first Australian conference focused on improving termite management techniques is scheduled for July

AS the planet warms, termite species are expanding their range. Which is bad news for Australia. The world's most aggressive termite, *Mastotermes darwiniensis*, lives in our tropical north and has been chewing its way through timber since the time of the dinosaurs. In the modern age, it's added lead, plastic, leather and asphalt to its diet. They'll happily climb through water pipes, so not even concrete buildings are safe. Now it's headed south.

Accordingly, there's no better time for the inaugural Termite Professional Conference, scheduled to take place in July 2023 on the Sunshine Coast.

The conference will include talks from leading researchers from Australia and the US and will provide delegates with a deeper understanding of termite biology and behaviour, as well as the latest information on termite management techniques. Whilst primarily targeting those involved in termite management, the program will be of interest to those in the timber and building industries who are keen to increase their understanding of termites.

The conference program features leading termite



Mastotermes darwiniensis, like most termites, is expanding its range.

researchers from Australia, including Professor Nathan Lo and Associate Professor Theo Evans, along with Associate Professor Thomas Chouvenec from the University of Florida in the US.

Although generally focused on subterranean termites, the team from the Department of Fisheries and Agriculture will also be present to talk about drywood termites and their management. Supported by other researchers such as Scott Kleinschmidt from ATP Research, who will be talking about timber susceptibility to termites, the two days of educational talks will ensure delegates boost their knowledge of termites and termite management.

Day 1 is focused on termite biology and behaviour and day 2 is focused on termite management. Case studies and Q&A sessions are an important part of the line-up, as are a series of

market-leading options.

The conference will take place on the Sunshine Coast at Maroochy RSL Events Centre, a state-of-the-art, purpose-built conference venue. Dates are 5–7 July (NB, during a school holiday period), with an early bird discount if booked before the end of February. Other discounts available for companies looking to send three or more delegates. Day tickets are also available for one or both days.

For more information and booking details, visit professionalpestmanager.com/termite-professional-conference.

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“THERE'S NO BETTER TIME FOR THE INAUGURAL TERMITE PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

Large Opepe rimu stands testament to Te Kooti and his warriors

Standout large rimu is a highlight of the specular forested area

TALKING Trees has a diligent big tree hunter across the Tasman in New Zealand in the shape of leading consulting engineer Brett Halkett – who also happens to be my nephew. Brett is regularly on the trail of interesting Kiwi trees and recently travelled to the Opepe Scenic and Historic Reserve near Taupo in the central North Island to track down a fabled large rimu.

Interestingly, much of the ancient forest in the region was destroyed by the Taupo volcanic eruption of 186AD. The locality was also a battlefield during the 1869 New Zealand Land Wars when the armed stockade of Bay of Plenty Cavalry soldiers was attacked by a Māori warrior resistance force led by the renowned Te Kooti. An adjoining cemetery is where nine soldiers were buried. Later, residents of Opepe township and the armed constabulary were also buried there.

Today, local historic relics include tōtara fencing, a bullock watering site and a well surrounded by a remnant patch of native forest with impressive mature trees including totara, kahikatea, rimu and matai. One standout large rimu is a memorable highlight of the spectacular forested area of the northern

1/ Large Opepe rimu near Taupo, central North Island, New Zealand
2/ Mature cones comprise just a swollen red fleshy scale bearing an apical seed. The seeds are dispersed by birds who eat the fleshy scale and pass the seed on in their droppings.



bush loop walk.

Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) is a member of the southern conifer group, the podocarps, and is a large evergreen endemic to New Zealand. It grows throughout New Zealand and is common in lowland and hilly forests. Although the largest concentration of trees is now found on the West Coast of the South Island, the biggest trees tend to be in mixed podocarp forest around the central North Island.

Rimu is a slow-growing tree,

broadleaf temperate forest, although there are almost pure stands, particularly on the West Coast of the South Island.

Rimu trees have an extended lifespan of 800 to 900 years. The straight trunk is generally 1.5m in diameter but may be larger in old or very tall specimens. The Opepe rimu, thought to be amongst the largest in the country, has a height of 29.5m and a diameter of a bit over 2m.

Rimu can trace its ancestry back to the forests of Gondwanaland with typical 'primitive' biology, including leaves that are spirally arranged, awl-shaped and up to 7mm long on juvenile plants and more compressed at 2–3mm long on mature trees. The trees are dioecious (male and female cones on separate trees) and seeds take 15 months to mature after pollination.

The mature cones comprise just a swollen red fleshy scale 6–10mm long bearing one (rarely two) apical seed, 4mm long. The seeds are dispersed by birds who eat the fleshy scale and pass the seed on in their droppings. The cones are an important food resource for some species, particularly the native kakapo, whose breeding cycle has been linked to the fruiting cycle of the rimu.

TALKING TREES

With JOHN HALKETT

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eventually attaining a height of up to 50m, although most surviving large trees are 20–35m tall. It typically appears as an emergent from mixed



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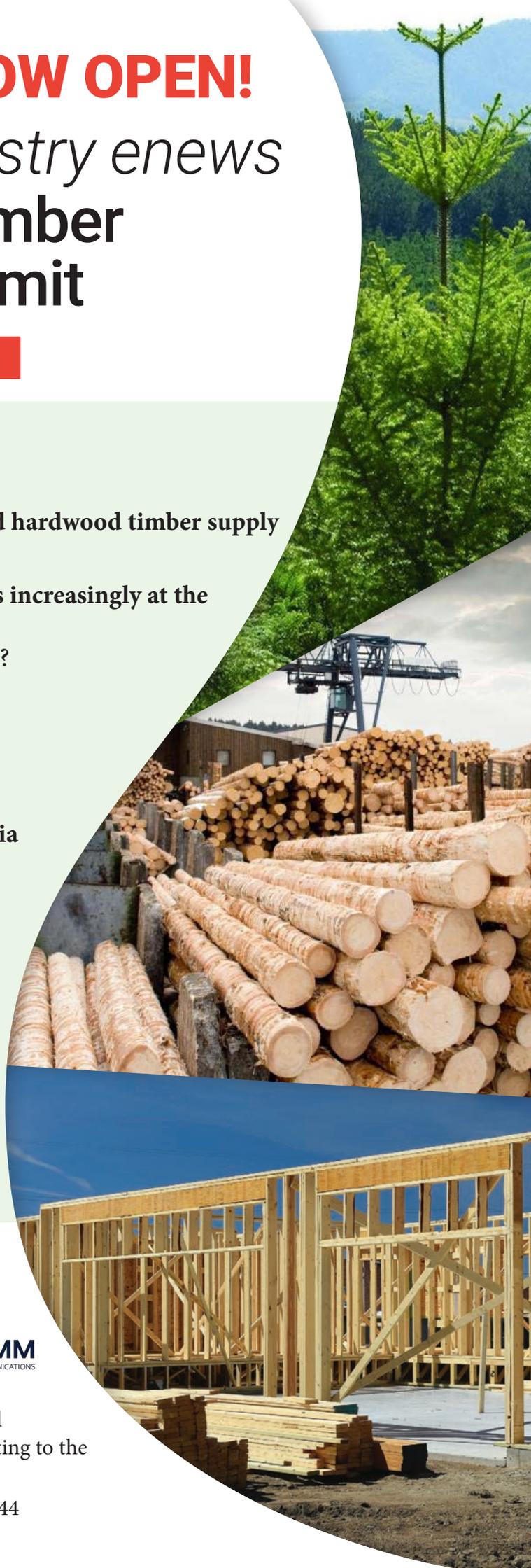
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PONSSE celebrates its 19,000th machine in style

A Scottish firm and pipe band made the trip to Finland for the event

ON 17 February, the 19,000th PONSSE forest machine was handed over at the company's headquarters in Finland to long-term Scottish customer Elliot Henderson Ltd, with the Royal Burgh of Annan Pipe Band playing in the background.

For Gary Glendinning, managing director Ponsse UK (usually based in Annan), it was a remarkable moment. "Thank you to the Elliot Henderson Group and the Royal Burgh of Annan Pipe Band for coming to Vieremä to celebrate the 19,000th machine milestone with us," he said. "I understand this is the first time a pipe band has played at Vieremä village, which makes this day even more special for all of us, as this is Ponsse UK's first milestone machine. This is a day that we will remember for years to come."

The PONSSE Scorpion Giant harvester with H8 harvester head will work at logging sites in the Scottish Borders and Lowlands. This machine is a harvester designed for demanding

“FIRST TIME A PIPE BAND HAS PLAYED AT VIEREMÄ VILLAGE



The PONSSE team, members of the Elliot Henderson group and the Royal Burgh of Annan Pipe Band in front of the Scorpion Giant harvester.

conditions such as those in parts of Scotland (including a cabin that remains comfortable in the worst of Scottish or Finnish weather). Eliot Henderson has been operating out of Selkirk in Scotland for more than 35 years. Over the years, the business has grown and diversified into forestry, construction and scaffolding. Today, its fleet comprises more than 40 forest machines which can undertake clear

fell, thinning, steep ground harvesting operations, ground preparation or the construction of forest roads. It's been a PONSSE customer for well over 20 years, so it was a fitting tribute to the relationship between customer and manufacturer that the landmark 19,000th machine is joining that fleet.

"Elliot Henderson Ltd has always been at the forefront of new machine releases over the years, which in turn keeps

the harvesting fleet productive and at the vanguard of innovation," says Neil Purves, Director of Harvesting for Elliot Henderson Group. "We are currently running PONSSE Scorpion, Ergo, three Elephants and one Buffalo and are excited to be adding this Scorpion Giant to the fleet. This machine will go straight to work in the windblow resulting from Storm Arwen and we feel the extra power and H8 head will benefit us in this application. We look forward to seeing what it can do!"



The PONSSE Scorpion Giant harvester is designed for difficult conditions.

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WA hardwood mulch shortage hits

An unexpected side effect of WA's ban on native logging is hitting gardeners and landscapers.

USUALLY a well-priced and readily available product in garden stores, hardwood mulch is now scarce across much of WA in the leadup to the WA government's ban on native logging.

The mulch is valued by gardeners because as well as doing the traditional jobs of holding moisture in the soil and reducing weed growth, it breaks down slowly and is solid enough to allow air movement through the mulch layer, lowering the risk of fungal disease. When it does finally break down, it adds carbon to the soil and, because it composts so slowly, there is no 'nitrogen draw down', where nitrogen necessary for plant growth can be used up by some other mulches as they compost.

As reported in past editions of *T&F enews*, multiple forestry operations in WA have already closed ahead of the ban, which is due to commence next year. Many closures have been sudden and left customers scrambling for supply.

The ABC spoke with several landscape professionals and they



Hardwood mulches are prized by gardeners and landscapers, but increasingly hard to get in WA.

described the difficulty the change in availability has been causing their businesses.

Daniel Battersby composts and bags mulch for businesses across Perth and the South West and said hardwood timber chips had become scarce over the last two years, impacting his business. "We now no longer have access to marri chip, jarrah chip [and] sawdust is very hard to get hold of," he said

"Hardwoods, since they've put in the ban on native logging, have virtually disappeared.

"We're talking hundreds and thousands [in dollars]

of impact. We have the capability of doing double what we're doing now."

Battersby said the shortage had impacted his capacity to supply to vineyards, orchards and landscapers around southern WA.

"We have seen at least a 50% drop off on what we can get and people like me are all scrambling to get a piece of what we need to supply the people we do the work for," he said.

“HARDWOODS, SINCE THE BAN, HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED

"[And] we're having problems providing it down to landscape yards. I go to their yards on a weekly basis and at least half their bays are empty."

South West mulch supplier Mark Tilbrook has also struggled with supply for months.

"We rely heavily on the by-products of the mills – the sawdusts, the mulches, the offcuts and things like that," he said.

"A lot of the mills have been closing down or they've had limited access to wood, so we haven't been getting that by-product back."

It's a further blow to Mr Tilbrook's business, which was impacted by recent fires near Donnybrook. Now, he said he was looking at what he could use to replace hardwood timber in mulch.

"We've tried paper, we've tried all sorts of different green waste stuff off the side of the road, but nothing seems to be the same as what we were using," he said. "I think we'll be all right, we just need to adapt."

Source: ABC

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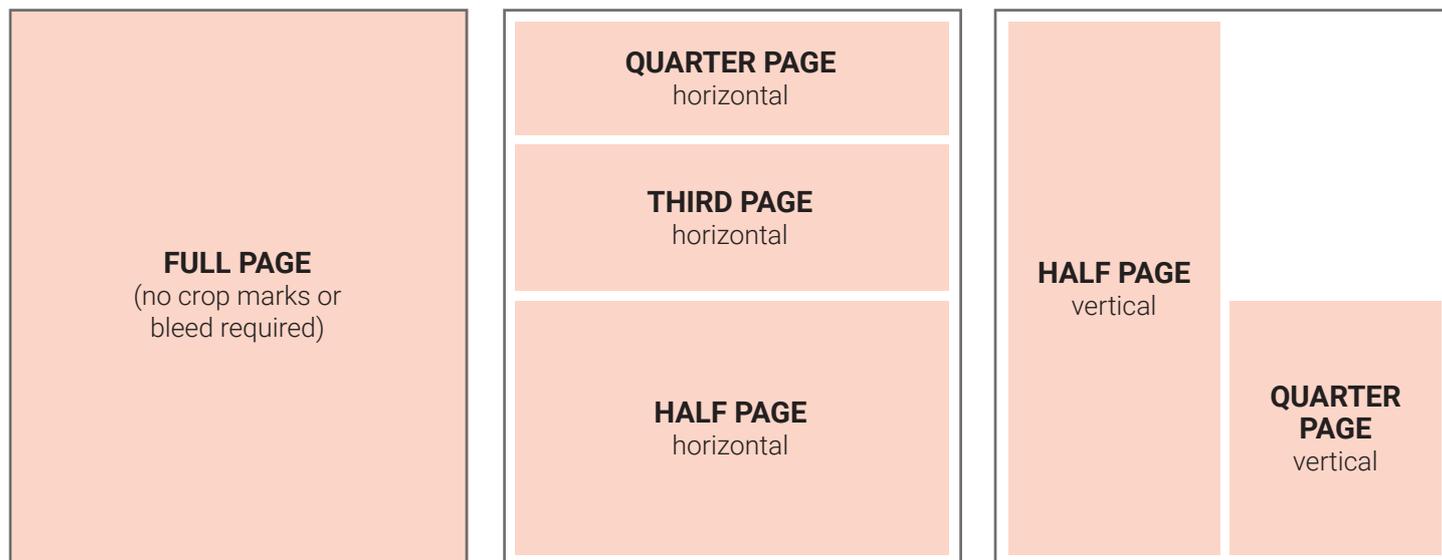
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