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COVER STORY P 6



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Reactions to Victoria's early native forestry closure start being felt

AS the announcement of the Victorian State Government's decision to end native forestry operations in Victoria as of 1 January 2024 ripples through the sector, responses have ranged from determination to anger.

Representatives of the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) were at the media announcement in Morwell. Chris Stafford, a third-generation business owner and AFCA board director, said, "It is tough to sit across the table and be told that the decision has been made. However, commitments were made in the meeting assuring us that forest contracting businesses will be provided the same options to determine whether to opt out or transition their businesses."

Carlie Porteous, general manager of AFCA, said, "AFCA has been advocating tirelessly for the industry since the 2019 policy decision was announced. Unfortunately, this is an



Ang Savage (left) at Australian Sustainable Hardwoods. She learned of the forestry closure on Facebook. Photo: Joe Armao

outcome that has far reaching impacts for businesses, families and communities, so after today's announcement we are now focusing on supporting them through the transition."

Wellington Shire Mayor Ian Bye was scathing in his response, telling the *Gippsland Times*: "Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has devastated the futures of over 650 timber workers throughout Wellington Shire... The Premier's budget announcement mark[s] the final nail in the coffin for the

state's native timber industry, one that feeds the families of hundreds of local timber workers."

Federal Member for Gippsland, Darren Chester, called it "a Dan-made disaster which will devastate Gippsland communities and take us a generation to recover from."

"IF THE JOBS AREN'T THERE, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH TRAINING WE GET"

The Age sent a journalist to Orbost to talk with workers directly affected by the announcement. "I found out on Facebook," said single mother of two Ang Savage, who works with beams and columns at Australian Sustainable Hardwood in Heyfield. "It's like we don't even exist."

She pointed out the central flaw in the current plan to retrain workers, saying: "If the jobs aren't there, it doesn't matter how much training we get."

A subcontractor hauler told the paper he had received zero government support since logging was paused and has no idea if there would be any coming for his business - [click here](#) for these interviews.

The Age also spoke with three federal Labor MPs on the condition of anonymity, who said they disagreed with the decision to bring forward the ban and were furious with the way the news had been delivered to communities.

"This is not the way you do things," one said.



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Successful Victorian field trip showcasing forest management

The Responsible Wood-run event made clear the sustainability and responsibility of forestry supply chains.

RESPONSIBLE Wood recently held a tremendously successful Victorian field trip, visiting forests in Gippsland and the Australian Sustainable Hardwoods facilities at Heyfield. Matt de Jongh, Sustainability Manager at Responsible Wood, expressed his satisfaction with the event, stating, "The field trip was incredibly successful in demonstrating the value of sustainable forest management and responsible supply chains. It was eye-opening for architects, builders, designers, manufacturers, and wholesalers to see how these products are sourced in a sustainable and responsible manner throughout the entire supply chain."

Responsible Wood-certified forests, such as those managed by VicForests, are underpinned by standards that ensure forests remain forests for generations to come and biodiversity values are protected and, in many cases, enhanced.

Participants had the privilege of tracing the journey

"SURPRISE END OF NATIVE FORESTRY IN VICTORIA MEANS RELYING ON MORE IMPORTING OF PRODUCTS"



A broad range of industry specialists, from architects to wholesalers, joined the field trip.

of timber from the forest to the end consumer, gaining insights into the responsible supply chain of forest and wood products. They witnessed the transparency and accountability maintained at each stage, ensuring the integrity of sustainably sourced wood products. Matt de Jongh stated, "The field trip highlighted the significance of responsible sourcing and empowered participants to make informed choices as consumers. They now have a better understanding of the responsible practices that should be supported throughout the supply chain."

Feedback from the attendees regarding the field trips was overwhelmingly positive. They recognised the importance of such experiences, particularly in light of the recent Victorian Government decision to end native forestry.

Participants were made aware of the Victorian Government decision to end native forestry in 2024 during the trip, and their feedback

highlighted the need for more field trips like this to showcase sustainable and responsible sourcing. One

attendee expressed: "Field trips like these are incredibly

Cont P 13

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WA grants open for new industries in forestry areas

AFTER being caught short by the unexpected speed of withdrawal by timber sector companies facing the 2024 end of commercial native timber logging, the WA government has announced \$10 million in New Industry Development Grants forming part of its \$80 million Native Forest Transition Plan.

The New Industry Development Grants program is designed to attract new industries and support existing businesses to diversify, innovate and expand in WA's native forest regions. The grants feature up to \$2 million in matched funding available for eligible businesses, innovators and organisations.

Forestry Minister Jackie Jarvis announced the scheme on Monday, saying that businesses, innovators and

organisations with planned, investment-ready projects are encouraged to apply for matched funding grants.

"The New Industry Development Grants will attract new and sustainable industries to the regions and allow existing businesses to expand and create jobs to future-proof WA's economy," Jarvis said, speaking hours before the surprise resignation of Premier Mark McGowan.

"I encourage any business looking to develop in the State's south to consider applying for matched funding through the New Industry Development Grants.

"Since September 2021, the McGowan Government has committed \$80 million to support the transition out of native timber logging and



The cessation of native timber logging is designed to protect Jarrah forests. Photo: Amanda Slater, via Wikimedia Commons

forestry area, welcomed the news. "This is an exciting opportunity for new industries to establish or existing businesses to expand their activities in the Native Forest Timber regions," she said.

"The New Industries

Development Grants will add value to our local economies and will contribute to the development of a range of exciting new job opportunities."

For more information on how to apply for the New Industry Development Grants visit www.wa.gov.au/nft.

protect the State's forests for future generations."

The WA Government has also invested a record \$350 million in new softwood plantations across the South-West, which is planned to create and support WA forestry jobs.

Jane Kelsbie, MLA for Warren-Blackwood, a major

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Combilift launches its new electric truck at LIGNA

The leading forklift manufacturer has delivered a pocket-sized powerful model that can deal with heavy and long loads in small spaces.

CELEBRATING 25 years in business, Combilift gave its customers a present with the recent launch of another new model truck at LIGNA.

The new Combi-CB70E is a further addition to Combilift's ever growing range of electric models which offers powerful performance, extensive battery life and unrivalled ergonomics. This model, in the vibrant Combi-green livery first seen on the recently launched Combi-CUBE, boasts the distinction of being the shortest 7-tonne capacity counterbalance truck on the market. Its multidirectional ability gives it versatile space-saving handling of both long and bulky loads.

Design features incorporated into the high-capacity Combi-CB70E such as its large super-elastic tyres and compact wheelbase make it ideally suited for the operational demands of the timber industry.

Drivers of industrial vehicles are often required to spend extensive periods in their



1/ **Combilift CEO Martin McVicar launching the new Combi-CB70E at LIGNA.**



2/ **The new electric Combi-CB70E has a small footprint but powerful lift and traction, making it ideal for the timber industry.**

workstations. Combilift's designers ensure the latest generation of models are kitted out with top-quality sophisticated ergonomics for a stress-free in-cab environment. Features in the spacious cab include generous glazing for excellent all-round visibility, a tilting steering column, hydraulic steering and the Grammer MSG65 seat as well as a gas strut suspension cab, which guarantees the smoothest of rides over less than perfect ground conditions.

Combilift's new Auto Swivel Seat was also premiered at LIGNA. This optional feature automatically engages and swivels the seat and armrest 15° to the right or left to accord with the direction of travel selected by the operator, reducing driver strain, particularly when travelling in reverse.

Combilift CEO and co-founder Martin McVicar said: "The increased capacities that we are offering in our electric range will answer the

demand for ever more powerful products which at the same time help companies to achieve their aims for more sustainable operations. We chose LIGNA as the platform for launching the Combi-CB70E due to its innate suitability for customers in the timber sector, but we are confident that this model will be a popular addition to our portfolio for many other industry applications."

For full details, visit <https://combilift.com/combi-cb70e/> or watch the launch video here.

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National Timber & Hardware Association holds inaugural conference and awards

The newly merged NTHA had a highly successful weekend of networking, inspiring and recognising the greats of the industry members.

THE inaugural National Timber & Hardware Association conference and awards evening was held in the Hunter Valley, NSW last week. The event provided members and industry participants an opportunity to connect as industry leaders and come away with information and tools to take back to their businesses to help them today and succeed into the future.

The conference theme was *Connect, Lead, Succeed*, with the aim of providing attendees with the opportunity to gain new skills and share ways to attract and retain employees, as well as keep them safe. The conference program included discussion on:

- Current trade industry issues
- Case studies and real experiences
- Vocational Education and Training
- Workplace Health and Safety

Held as part of the conference, the inaugural national awards program recognised outstanding



Ken Robertson of FIX-A-TAP was named Industry Icon for his 51-year-plus contribution to hardware in Australia, with his company growing from a Wahroonga shed to a global concern.

achievements of individuals and organisations who are delivering or producing high-quality products and services.

The 2023 NTHA National Award winners are:

- **Timber Supplier of the Year** – ITI Australia (Australia Wide)
- **Hardware Retail Supplier of the Year** – Dulux (Australia Wide)
- **Best Hardware Retail Store under 2500sqm** – Pink's Mitre 10 (Clare, South Australia)
- **Best Hardware Retail Store over 2500sqm** – Porters Mitre 10 (Mackay, Queensland)
- **Best Hardware Garden Department** – Acheson's Mitre 10 (Forbes, New South Wales)
- **Timber and Building Materials Store of the Year** – Hardware & General (Sydney, New South Wales)
- **Best Timber Manufacturer** – Ultraflex Architectural Linings (Condell Park, New South Wales)

- **Best Frame and Truss** – Big River Group's MB Pre-Fab (Breakwater, Victoria)

- **Industry Icon** – Ken Robertson, Fix-A-Tap Australia

NTHA CEO David Little said the national awards provided a significant opportunity for timber and hardware professionals to be acknowledged on a larger scale.

"This event was the first time since the merger earlier this year that our industries have come together and the atmosphere in the room was electric – with plenty of opportunities to network with a wider stakeholder group," said Little.

"Congratulations to all of our finalists and winners who have all shown dedication to their work and achieved above and beyond results for their businesses."

For more on the awards and NTHA, visit: www.ntha.com.au

See Page 16 for event pictures.

Cont P 16



\$400,000 research funding investment to boost sustainability, jobs and economic benefits in partnership with industry

With the support of the Australian and Victorian governments, the Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation has up to \$400,000 available for research grants to grow the future of forestry.

Research projects could include: developing new and improved products in relation to composites, extractives and bioenergy; improving workplace and supply chain innovation, safety and efficiency; enhancing tree growing including forest health and genetic gain; maximising precision management and applying new technologies; development of new non-timber forest products and services; improving forest industry social licence; and identifying opportunities with robotics, automation and artificial intelligence. Priority will be given to projects that are Gippsland-based and supported and have emphasis on building research and educational capacity in the Gippsland region.

Individual research grants will range from \$50,000 – \$400,000 and will be for a period of up to one year in duration. Funding proposals close on **Tuesday 18 July 2023** and should be lodged via email to funding.vic@nifpi.org.au. For further information, including a proposal template and briefing document, see www.nifpi.org.au

About us The Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation is a joint venture between the Australian Government, the Victorian Government and the forest and wood products industry with the goal of growing forestry into the future.



JUNE**11-17: WoodSolutions 2023 six-day Study Tour – Falkenberg, Sweden, to Oslo, Norway (by luxury coach).**

WoodSolutions will be hosting a select group of architects, engineers, developers and building professionals on Timber Construction Study Tour to Sweden and Norway. The tour is scheduled to take place ahead of the World Conference of Timber. Get ready for six days and six nights of outstanding inspiration, information and fun as you travel from Falkenberg, Sweden to Oslo, Norway. Your tour leaders are Andrew Dunn, timber engineer and CEO of the Timber Development Association and

Eileen Newbury, Head of the WoodSolutions Program. For more information visit <https://www.woodsolutions.com.au/events/woodsolutions-2023-study-tour-sweden-and-norway>

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

JULY

16-21: Understanding Forest Course, Gottstein Trust – Pacific Bay Resort, Coffs Harbour, NSW. A week-long forest science course that provides an understanding of

sustainable Australian forest management, the economics of growing trees for wood production and other forest services. The course covers both planted and natural forests and provides an appreciation of environmental issues and international strategic trends in the forestry industry. For further information see: <https://gottsteintrust.org/grants-courses/understanding-forest-science-course>

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

corp-comm.com.au Phone: +61 3 5977 0244

SEPTEMBER

11-12: Timber Off-Site Construction Conference – Crown Promenade Melbourne. The theme for 2023 is “Timber & Technology – The Zero Carbon Future”. For more information visit www.timberoffsitconstruction.com

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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Ligna 2023 – the leading wood trade fair returns

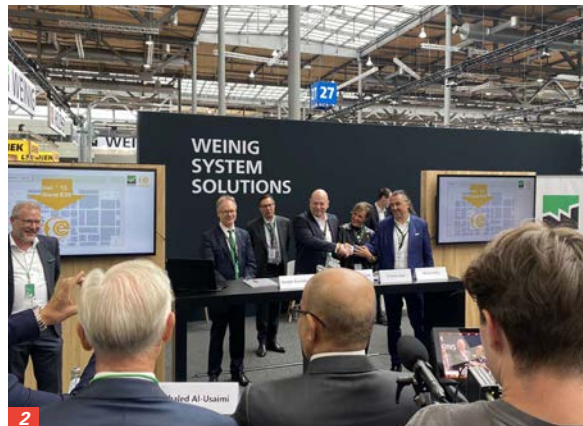
BY CAMPBELL MCINNES

FROM 15 to 19 May, the global woodworking community met again in Hannover, Germany for Ligna 2023, the world's leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing. After the Covid cancellation of the 2021 event, anticipation was high, resulting in 80,000 visitors to the 140,000m² of exhibition space and some 1300 exhibitors from 50 countries

The seven exhibition areas were: 1) Tools and Machinery for Custom and Mass Production, 2) Wood Based Panel Products, 3) Machinery for Forestry, 4) Roundwood and Sawn Timber Production, 5) Surface Technology, Sawmill Technology, 6) Energy from Wood, Machine Components and 7) Automation Technology. Ligna's stated goal for the show is: "This is where trends are set and discussed that shape the industry and point the way to the future."



1/ Highly automated production systems such as this model from HOMAG were one of the key topics of the event.



2/ In addition to announcing new machinery, Weinig showed off its newest innovations in digital systems solutions.

Innovations from industry, trade and forestry technology were presented and products and solutions demonstrated live and in action.

Some key topics that were covered on the Ligna stage included:

Prefab Building Processes:

looking at the time, cost and carbon savings of offsite timber construction in both solid timber buildings and hybrid timber structures.

Woodworking

Transformation: a focus on digitalisation both present and future with the potential outcomes for the industry.

Green Material Processing:

considering the wood-based bioeconomy as an innovative driver of technologies. This fibre-, energy- and carbon-economical model is therefore extremely relevant for process technologies and wood processing products from the forestry through to finished timber products.

Bernd Oswald, co-founder

“THIS IS WHERE TRENDS ARE SET THAT SHAPE THE INDUSTRY AND POINT THE WAY TO THE FUTURE”

of Gropypus AG, an Austrian-based sustainable building company that relies on scalable building processes, was one of the speakers on Prefab Building Processes. He emphasised that this was not a risky, novel process, in fact it's a mature practice in much of manufacturing. Oswald said of his own company's work, "If you look at automotive, if you look at aerospace, if you look at other industries that have developed principles in a serial manufacturing process that is highly automated, highly industrialised, [we are]

Cont P 9



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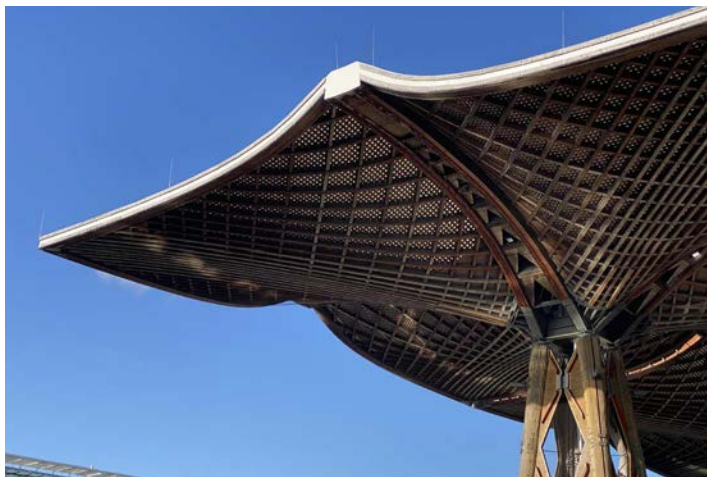


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Built from LVL, glulam and solid timber logs in 2000, the Expo Roof at LIGNA celebrates the durable beauty of timber.

From P 8

taking the same principles and applying them to timber construction as well."

Robotics and advanced technologies continue to evolve and grow and there were many examples on display. An example of the need for the ongoing development is Weinig's Hydromat, which has long been the go-to machine for high quality and reliability for timber machining. At Ligna, Weinig had on display their new Hydromat 4400 which has the capability of running at over 400 metres per minute. The 4400 needs in feed and out feed machinery like robotics as humans are not physically capable of keeping up with these production speeds.

The Weinig team was also showing its App Suite and other digitalisation solutions, which are designed to deliver the

most efficient and economic production organisation possible. As Oliver Kunzweiler, director of central marketing at the Weinig Group put it: "The services of digitalisation... are the real game changers for the industry."

The dates for the next Ligna have been set and the sector will be back in Hannover on 26–30 May, 2025. Find details at www.ligna.de/en



Holtec's sophisticated log handling systems were on display at LIGNA.

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AFPA congratulates NFF Chair, Fiona Simson's appointment as Director to WFO

THE Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has congratulated National Farmers' Federation (NFF) President Fiona Simson on her election as a Director to the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO). Acting Chief Executive Officer of AFPA Natasa Sikman said Simson is a tremendous advocate for Australia's forest products sector and especially on the benefits of integrating agroforestry on farms as part of climate smart farming principles.

"On behalf of Australia's forest products sector, I congratulate Fiona Simson on her election as a Director to the WFO representing the Oceania Constituency," said Sikman. "Fiona has been a trailblazer in agricultural advocacy in Australia as President of the NFF and she will no doubt carry that enthusiasm and work through



Fiona Simson speaking beside Mark Wootton at a WFO event at COP27 in 2022 focusing on the benefits of farm or agroforestry. To the left of Simson are Hsin Huang (International Meat Secretariat), Romano De Vivo (Croplife International), Dr Betty Chinyamunye (National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi) and Arnold Puech D'Alissac (President, World Farmers Organisation).

to the WFO. Fiona is someone who understands the need and value of farm and agroforestry for farmers, for the national interest of securing timber and wood fibre supply and for helping Australia fight climate change.

"In 2022, Fiona was a key member of the AFPA-NFF delegation to COP27

in Egypt where she helped promote the global need to better understand climate-smart farming and the multiple benefits growing and processing more sustainable timber and wood fibre adds to reducing carbon emission to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement in keeping 1.5 Alive. A key part of the collaboration at COP27 was

partnering with the WFO at key events, promoting the importance of production trees on farms in the frame of climate smart farming. APFA and the NFF showcased the real-life example of farm forestry through the work Mark Wootton has undertaken on Jigsaw Farms and the positive outcomes his production trees have delivered, from increased biodiversity, lifting grazing production and increased shelter for stock welfare.

"AFPA will continue its strong relationship with Fiona and the NFF, while our ties with the WFO and FAO will only strengthen through Fiona's new role and off the back of AFPA's Counsellor – International Affairs Ross Hampton's work from London. We look forward to further promoting the importance of climate smart forestry on farms in the months ahead."



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Fears industrial relations changes will lead to more builder collapses

ASIC figures show that 742 construction companies have fallen over since the start of 2023 and insolvencies in the sector are up by almost a third.

Australian industry performance data 2021-22 released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows the impact of fixed-price contracts, high inflation, supply chain disruptions and labour market shortages on the building and construction sector viability.

Net profits dropped by 9.3% for the sector, despite a 10% increase in the industry's total income during the year. This was eclipsed by a 14.1% jump in the industry's total expense bill, with goods and materials increasing by 20.4%.

Master Builders Australia Acting CEO Shaun Schmitke



Builders have borne the brunt of soaring material and wage costs and are asking government not to add to the load.

said governments must help to bring down the cost of doing business. "We have forecast the 2022-23 financial year will be particularly difficult for builders who have found themselves in a profitless boom off the back of unprecedented cost pressures," Schmitke said.

"There needs to be a conversation around fixed-price contracts and appropriate risk-sharing between banks, developers and builders.

Governments need to look at what impact their regulations and policies have; that includes industrial relations laws, the cost of planning and the need for more titled land."

The industry's total wage bill rose by 9.8% during 2021-22 as a result of higher hourly labour costs and the expansion in activity across the industry during the period. It's feared that new Federal Government industrial relations legislation

will drive that up more.

"The proposed 'employee-like' policy goes beyond the Government's purported original scope of supporting gig workers and leaves the door open to swallow industries across the economy," said Schmitke.

Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke told 2GB earlier this week that the proposals were not aimed at tradies, however, Schmitke would like that undertaking in writing, saying: "If the Government intends to limit this proposal to gig-workers only, then it should make it explicitly clear and give an undertaking to exclude industries outside the gig economy before the legislation is introduced."

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History is being remade with the rebuilding of Notre Dame Cathedral

THE carpenters who built much of Notre Dame Cathedral were masters of Gothic woodworking techniques. Now those medieval skills are being reborn as today's carpenters work to rebuild its fire-ravaged roof. Working with hand axes to fashion hundreds of tonnes of oak beams for the framework of Notre Dame's new roof has been like rewinding time.

"It's a little mind-bending sometimes," said 61-year-old carpenter Peter Henrikson, who has found himself thinking about his medieval counterparts who were cutting "basically the same joint 900 years ago".

The use of hand tools is a deliberate choice. However, facing a tight deadline to

reopen the cathedral by December 2024, carpenters and architects are also using detailed computer-drawn plans to help ensure their hand-chiselled beams fit together perfectly.

"Traditional carpenters had a lot of that in their head," Henrikson said.

In May, large parts of the new timber frame were assembled and erected at a workshop in the Loire Valley, in western France, to check they fit together properly.

The next time it is put together will be atop the



The wooden beams are hand cut by axe. Photo: AP, Jeffrey Schaeffer

cathedral. Unlike in medieval times, it will be trucked into Paris and lifted by a mechanical crane. Some 1200 trees have been felled for the work.

"The objective we had was to restore to its original condition the wooden frame structure that disappeared

during the fire of April 15, 2019," said Rémi Fromont, co-chief project architect who had previously done detailed drawings of the original frame in 2012.

"The structure that we have restored is the same wooden frame structure of the 13th century.

We have exactly the same material: oak. We have the same tools, with the same axes that were used, exactly the same tools. We have the same know-how. And soon, it will return to its same place. It is a real resurrection."

Source: abc.net.au

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From P 3

important for us as users of these beautiful forest and wood products. We need to see firsthand how they are sourced sustainably and responsibly along the entire supply chain. It's crucial for us to understand the ramifications of decisions like the one made by the Victorian Government, including the need to now import these products from overseas."

Daniel Wright, Director of Australian Sustainable Hardwoods, emphasised the significance of sustainable forest management and responsible supply chains in light of the Victorian Government's decision. He said, "This decision is unexpected and incomprehensible. Our engineered wood products, manufactured through sustainable practices, play a vital role in the construction



1/ The team saw the responsibly managed forests of Gippsland, which have sustained local timber industries for over a century.

2/ Australian Sustainable Hardwoods showed off some of its manufacturing process at its Heyfield facility.

3/ Daniel Wright, director of Australian Sustainable Hardwoods, expressed his concern the early closure of Victorian native forestry would replace these local products with more imports.




industry. With the surprise end of native forestry in Victoria, we will now rely on importing products, including from overseas forests. We should be producing timber and managing forest-values locally, where we can control them to generate positive environmental and community benefits."

Simon Dorries, CEO of

Responsible Wood, expressed his disappointment in the Victorian Government decision, saying, "The field trip provided a clear demonstration to the attendees of just how wrong the Victorian Government decision is. Responsible Wood-certified sustainable native forest

management brings numerous benefits to communities, including employment, economic development, and environmental protection. It is disheartening to see such a backward decision that fails to comprehend the significance of responsible forest management."



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Tapping into 60,000 years to mitigate bushfire risk

Cultural and cool-burning fire practices have a long history of effective land management.

DURING the most recent episode of FWPA's WoodChat podcast series, which focused on various work happening across Australia with the goal of mitigating the impacts of future bushfire events under a changing climate, listeners heard from four interviewees, including Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

During the discussion, Carter discussed the corporation's focus on, and promotion of, traditional cultural and cool-burning practices as an effective means of mitigating bushfire risk – a proven approach



Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

dating back tens of thousands of years.

The corporation is a representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung People, Traditional Owners of large areas of land in central Victoria.

In 2013, the Dja Dja Wurrung people achieved Registered Aboriginal Party status, and signed a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the Victorian State Government – a unique, first-of-its-kind formal agreement.

"This agreement is so important because it frees our people from various restrictions described in Victorian acts, legislations and regulations, allowing us to be able to enjoy being at country as descendants of our ancestors who created and managed the landscape," Carter said.

"Our objective is to ensure our presence at country is purposeful, by working with other stakeholders in taking the necessary steps to help

protect the landscape and keep it healthy."

In terms of land management, particularly helping to mitigate the escalating risk of bushfires, the corporation advocates for the use of traditional land management practices, such as cool burning.

"We describe our fire as Djandak Wi. Bringing these types of cooler fires back to country on a regular basis can provide a highly effective land management tool to protect the landscape from larger fires that run the risk of burning out of control," he said.

"WE CAN GRADUALLY REMODIFY THE LANDSCAPE SO IT'S HEALTHIER AND MORE CONDUCTIVE TO DJANDAK WI."

"The challenges we have faced have included the recent absence of our people and inability to help create and manage a healthy landscape. For the past 200 years, we've been displaced and unable to perform our traditional roles as practitioners when it comes to making the land well enough to effectively give fire."

According to the corporation, there are two key elements driving the large-scale bushfires we have seen in recent years.

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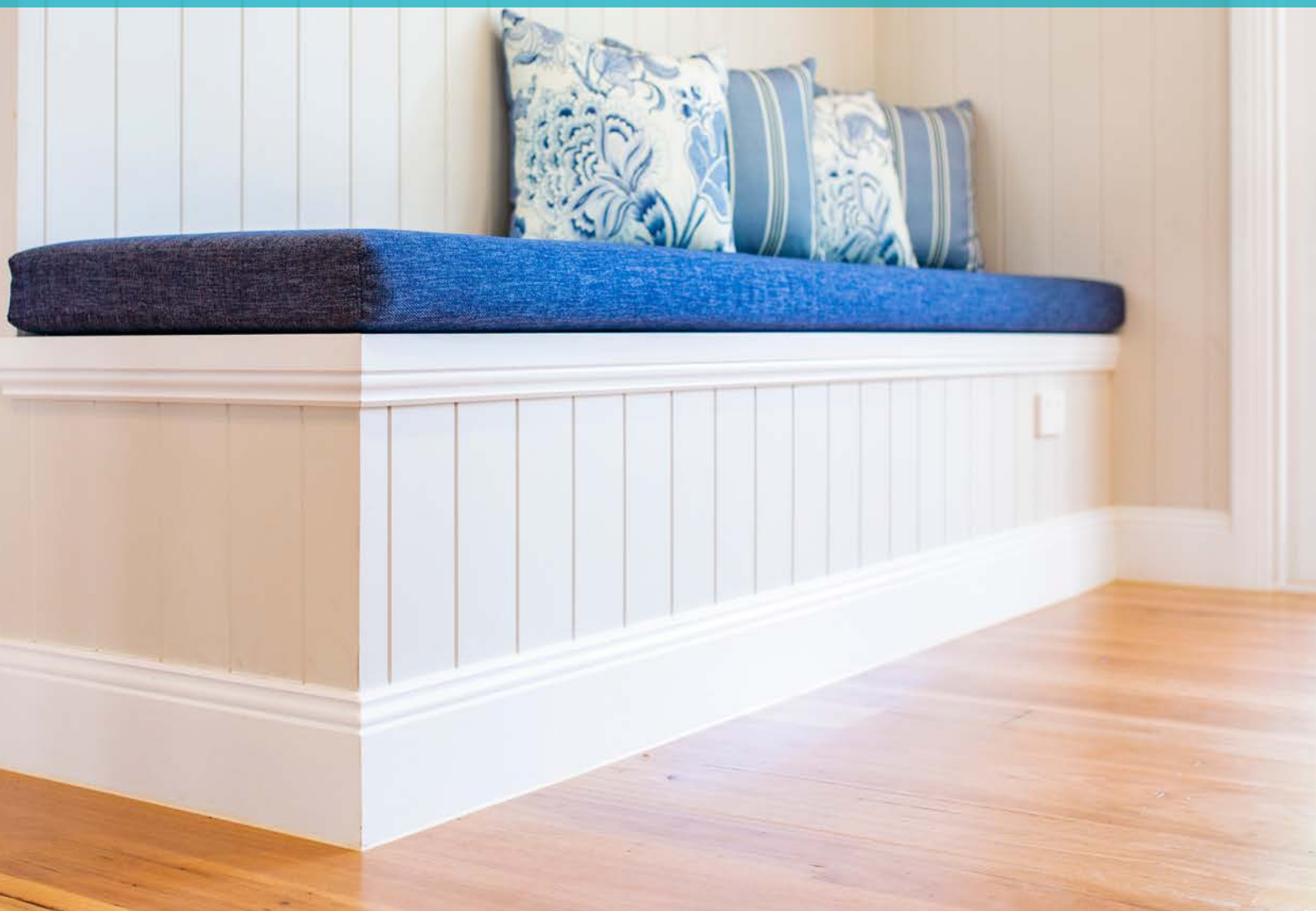
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From P 6



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From P 14

The modified landscape and vegetation structures, and the general decline in the health of the land, make it harder for traditional owners to 'bring fire'. As a result, when we enter seasonally drier periods with high temperatures and strong winds, fire can have hugely damaging impacts, as witnessed during the catastrophic bushfire season of 2019-20.

"Our challenge going forward is to think about how we can progressively remodify the landscape to make it suitable for consistently starting to purposefully and regularly bring cooler fires back to country, for bushfire mitigation," Carter said.

Taking forests as an example, cool burning breaks up the connectivity between flammable fuel loads by burning patches of land. Where the fuel loads are connected, fire can travel more easily and can soon burn out of control. The presence of burned patches prevents this happening.

If this practice is undertaken consistently over time, fires can no longer travel as easily and are less likely to



Cool burns break up the connectivity of fire load material, slowing or stopping the spread of bushfires.

spread across large areas.

"Before European settlement, my ancestors saw cooler fires as a positive, helpful and welcome tool, essential for effective land management. However, changes to the landscape during the past 200 years have meant those fires are not able to complete the same sorts of cycles they would have been able to in the past, due to the decrease in the health of the land," Carter said.

"Basically, it's all about pre-emptively giving fire to country as a land management tool, so that in the face of an uncertain future, fires are likely to be smaller and more

contained, helping to protect forests, land, people and properties.

"It will likely take decades, if not centuries, to create some greater effect on country using cool burning techniques, but it's important that we start taking the steps now, because we understand that fire is and always has been an important part of Australian landscape."

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation recently launched its Forest Gardening Strategy, which focuses on caring for its trees and forests. Having more trees and bigger forest canopies that provide shelter for animals and plants is one

effective means of helping to heal country and make it more conducive to successful cool burning practices in the future.

"The forestry industry and other modern landscape stakeholders have all been very receptive to our suggestions about what could and should happen," Carter said.

"There seems to be widespread agreement that if we do some really sensible preparatory work founded on the ancient knowledge of my ancestors, we can gradually remodify the landscape so that it's healthier and more conducive to Djandak Wi.

"A healthy landscape will bring us all sorts of gifts, including good quality timber for a variety of uses. And if we have a recipe that was successful for achieving this for 60,000 years, it must be good!

"Our ancestors' knowledge of cool burning and other traditional land management practices are highly applicable to the unique Australian landscape. By taking an active role in helping to manage the landscape of modern Australia, we can use ancient knowledge, and reactivate it, fit for now."



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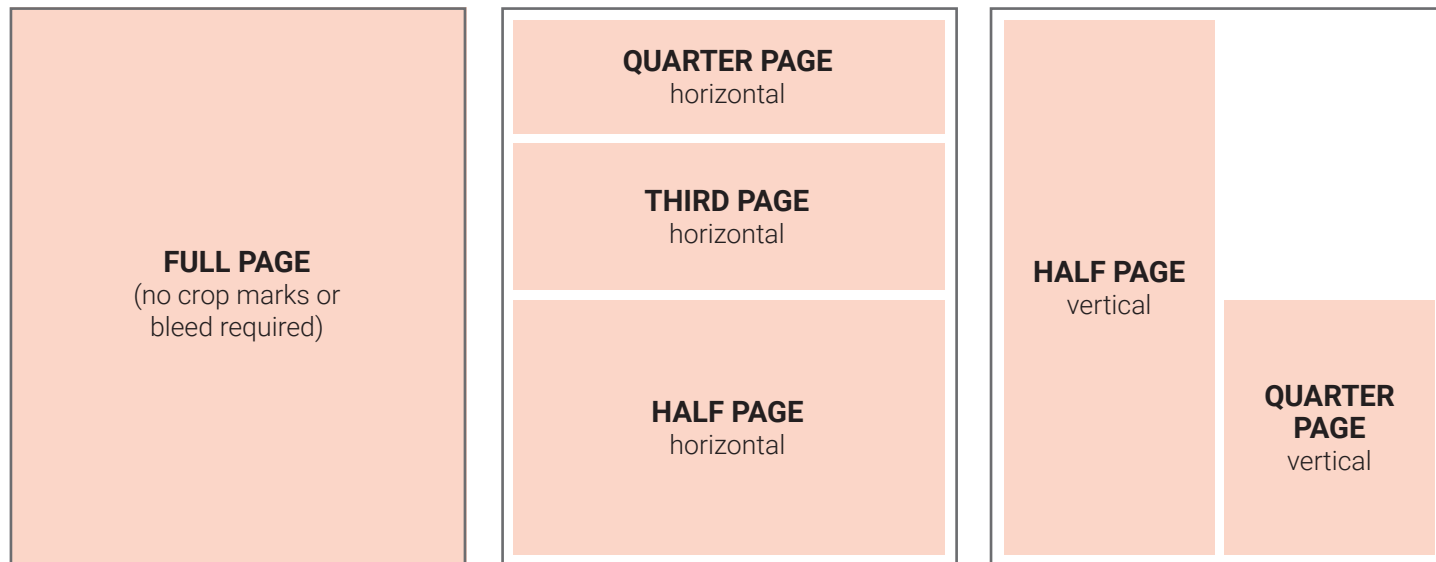
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