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Increasing the supply of housing requires federal government action

The HIA Affordability Index has fallen across Australia, prompting calls for urgent action.

HIA's Affordability Index is calculated for each of the eight capital cities and regional areas on a quarterly basis and considers the latest dwelling prices, mortgage interest rates, and wage developments.

"The HIA Affordability Index fell by 1.1% in the March Quarter 2023 compared to the preceding quarter, making housing in Australia 25% less affordable than it was before the pandemic," said HIA's deputy managing director for policy and industry, Jocelyn Martin.

Martin noted it now requires 1.6 average incomes to service the typical new mortgage, compared to 1.2 incomes in 2019.

"Housing affordability poses a major challenge across the country, and the issue is paramount on the policy agenda of all levels of government," said Martin. "It



The lack of new housing and drop in affordable housing supply are interwoven crises.

is crucial to identify policies that would work and those that would not, and it begins with a supply-and-demand balance. Rising interest rates are only a part of the story. Housing affordability simply gets worse when housing supply falls short of demand.

"This makes measures that do not increase the number of homes, such as convoluted planning processes and the heavy burden of taxation, likely to fail."

Martin expressed frustration at the HIA being held up in parliament, saying: "This is delaying changes to policy that will begin to address the failures that are constraining an improvement in the supply of new homes.

"In addition to the passage of this legislation through Parliament, there is also a need to reform state government taxes that have forced foreign investors out of the market. The impact

of these taxes has seen foreign investors withdraw from the Australian market and consequently the number of apartments commencing construction fell to barely more than a third of its peak in 2016. Foreign investors do not force up house prices because they cannot buy existing homes. They can only buy new homes and improve the supply of rental accommodation and ease this shortage."

The HIA Affordability Index across all capital cities saw the largest fall in Perth, declining by 2.2 per cent in the March Quarter 2023. This was followed by Sydney (-1.9 per cent), Melbourne (-1.3 per cent), Adelaide (-1.3 per cent), Darwin (-1.1 per cent), and Canberra (-0.8 per cent). Brisbane registered almost no change, while Hobart was the only capital city that registered an improvement in affordability (+1.3 per cent).



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\$100 million for new forest products innovation hub

The announcement of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation at the University of Tasmania has been met with approval by the industry.

AN agreement has been struck between the Commonwealth and University of Tasmania (UTas) on the \$100 million National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI). The news was eagerly welcomed by industry groups, including the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA).

The Federal Government has announced in addition to the new agreement with UTas – the new institute will be known under the new operational name – Australian Forest and Wood Innovations (AFWI).

Acting CEO of AFPA, Natasa Sikman said, “AFPA and the broader forest products sector welcomes this progress on the new AFWI as a step towards more exciting research and development for our sector at a time when demand for different types of forest-based products is growing massively, especially to help the environment and to mitigate against climate change.

“The NIFPI was a policy advocated for by AFPA ahead of the 2022 Federal Election and one that like the new program announced around plantation expansion this week, was also a bipartisan one. We are proud to see this progress.”

The \$100 million Government commitment



The University of Tasmania in Launceston will serve as a base for the new entity.

will undertake an annual call for research projects into efforts to: increase domestic timber and wood fibre supply, maximise use and value from our exiting resource and learn more about enhancing sustainable forest management as a means to increase understanding and action on how the forest products sector can play a stronger role in being part of the solution to climate change.

“THE NIFPI WAS A POLICY ADVOCATED FOR BY AFPA AHEAD OF THE 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

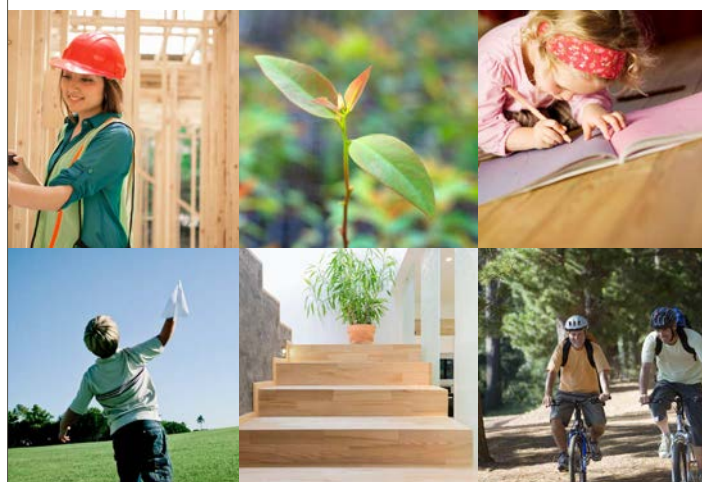
The AFWI will have a central entity based at UTas which will be the administrative centre, that will coordinate research undertaken by three regional research centres and other projects from a national call each year.

One of the regional research centres will be hosted by UTas in Launceston.

The location of the other two regional research centres will be determined via an expression of interest process conducted shortly by the department. The chosen research centres will be contracted through UTas.

“AFPA will continue to engage with the Government and UTAS on the further development of AFWI and help ensure its work is geared towards making Australia a leading forest products nation,” Natasa Sikman concluded.

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New VicForests Timber Release Plan as legal challenge fails

VicForests is committed to supporting regional forestry jobs for as long as possible.

VICFORESTS has released an amended Timber Release Plan (TRP) to support the new transition timeframe out of native harvesting after six years were removed from the original timeframe in the May state budget.

The TRP covers areas where VicForests may conduct operations in state forests, including timber harvesting. The approved TRP changes include 184 new coupes, 12 coupe boundary changes and



Forest regeneration in progress in an area previously logged by VicForests.

2 coupe driveway additions for previously approved coupes.

In light of Court orders, new reserves and species detections, there are currently

significant constraints that limit the ability to plan a coupe to harvest stage. As a result, VicForests has stated it requires flexibility in the coupes available for harvest to provide supply and employment for industry during the Government's managed transition to 1 January 2024.

There had been hopes that some of the Victorian logging bans that have severely limited forestry practices would be lifted during this period, however, those logging bans will likely remain in place until the native timber industry is phased out after an appeal was thrown out.

VicForests had appealed a Supreme Court decision to halt logging in parts of the state after finding the forestry company failed to

adequately survey for protected glider species.

Court of Appeal president Justice Karin Emerton dismissed the appeal alongside Justices Cameron Macaulay and Stephen Kaye, and ordered VicForests to pay court costs.

VicForests said it was disappointed with the appeal outcome and would review the decision in full before making any further comment.

Regardless of the legal decision, VicForests remains committed to maintaining forestry jobs for as long as is feasible. All timber harvesting and regeneration operations are subject to Victoria's strict environmental regulations, including the State's Forest Management Zoning scheme.

VicForests' operations are regulated and monitored by Victoria's Office of the Conservation Regulator. VicForests is committed to complying with or exceeding regulatory controls to ensure the sustainable management of forest areas.

A schedule of the approved timber harvesting areas as well as location maps are available on the VicForests website at: www.vicforests.com.au/timber-release-plan Ongoing feedback on the approved TRP is welcome and can be directed to vfs.engage@vicforests.com.au.

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“ LOGGING BANS WILL LIKELY REMAIN IN PLACE UNTIL THE NATIVE TIMBER INDUSTRY IS PHASED OUT

We are back– reinvigorated Malaysian wood expo a success

The renowned Malaysian Wood Expo has returned and resumed its place as a regional hub for all that's new and important in the timber world.

AFTER a multi-year delay because of the Covid pandemic, the Malaysian Timber Council staged an expanded wood expo in Kuala Lumpur from 18-20 June. In addition to the multiplicity of Malaysian timber and allied products exhibitors, industry suppliers and local and international industry associations Malaysian Wood Expo 2023 was beefed up by adding an array of automated wood processing machinery from various manufacturers.

The expo included an impressive formal opening ceremony attended by a large number of Malaysian and

international VIPs and was officially opened by the Deputy Minister of Plantation and Commodities YB Datuk Hajjah Siti Aminah.

The expo boosted 124 exhibitors from eleven countries with registered

buyers from 24 countries. *Timber & Forestry news* further details will be published in next week's edition. In the meantime, some images from the show.



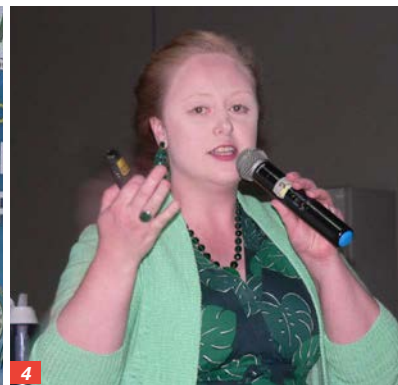
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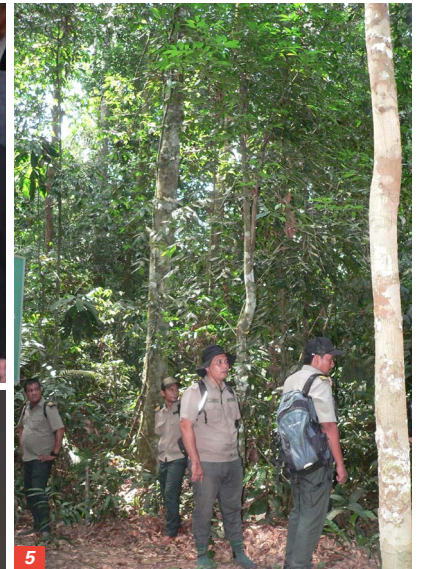
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- 1/ The latest automated wood processing machinery in operation.
- 2/ YB Datuk Hajjah Siti Aminah, Deputy Minister of Plantation and Commodities escorted around the exhibition by Noraihan Abdul Rahman, CEO Malaysian Timber Council.
- 3/ John Halkett, General Manager of the Australian Timber Importers Federation catches up with Annie Ting, Chief Executive Officer, Sarawak Timber Association.
- 4/ Ashley Amidon, recently appointed Executive Director, International Wood Products Association explains the political manoeuvring impacting the United States timber trade.
- 5/ Getting the lowdown on sustainable forest management practices from forestry staff.

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A new biocontrol measure to fight a destructive wasp that attacks pine trees

Sirex wasps have devastated pine plantations but now a new nematode might help us win the fight against these flying pests.

THE Sirex wood wasp drills through the bark of pine trees to deliver a double whammy – injecting its venom as well as a fatal wood-rotting fungus that pre-digests the wood for its larvae. The invasive insect almost destroyed Tasmania’s radiata pine industry when it arrived in Australia in the 1950s, and killed millions of trees in the late 1980s on the South Australia-Victoria border.



Helen Nahrung is excited about the nematode discovery. Photo: UniSC

Biological controls have been crucial to limiting its damage to Australia’s plantation softwood industry,



The Sirex wasp weakens and kills pine plantations. Photo: Angus Carnegie/NSW DPI

shares credit for the discovery with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the University of Pretoria and Scion, the New Zealand Forest Research Institute.

“It has two very distinct forms – one which feeds on the Sirex fungus, and then when it’s in proximity to

Sirex larvae, it converts into a parasitic form and burrows into the larvae, reproduces and invades the reproductive organs of the developing females,” Dr Nahrung said.

“And then when the wasp emerges, instead of laying eggs into the next tree, it lays this packet of nematodes and then they go on to sterilise the next generation of females.”

Dr Nahrung said the new roundworm posed no threat to the environment because it only attacked wood wasps.

“It’s a very safe system; I know with biocontrol, people freak out because of all the mistakes made from the past with the cane toad, but no, this is very safe.”

Dr Nahrung said researchers had been collecting samples of the new nematode from pine plantations for mass-rearing it for release against the Sirex wasp

Source: abc.net.au

“A QUEENSLAND SCIENTIST HAS HELPED IDENTIFY A NEW WEAPON IN THE WAR

valued at \$1.22 billion in 2020–21. Former CSIRO scientist Robin Bedding pioneered mass-rearing a nematode to control the wasp after discovering a roundworm with a double life cycle, capable of both sterilising Sirex females and feeding on the fungus spread by the wasp.

It has kept the wasp and its damage in check, but there have been challenges in breeding it.

Now, a Queensland scientist has helped identify a new weapon in the war against the invasive wasp. Researchers discovered a nematode called *Deladenus siricidicola* (Lineage D) in forests in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and on New Zealand’s North Island.

Helen Nahrung from UniSC’s Forest Research Institute



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ForestWorks is an industry-owned not-for-profit organisation offering services to support the skills development of the forest, wood, paper, timber and furnishing industries.

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To find out more:

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On the cover: Nahrung’s extensive field research has left her confident of her results. (Photo: UniSC)

JULY

4: WoodSolutions Webinar: New Innovative Software Taking the Structural Design of Timber to New Heights.

Adam Jones explains CLT Toolbox's ability to expand entry into taller timber construction for more designers and builders. Free and online, 11am Australian Eastern time, RSVP to <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84525203762>

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>

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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

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.timberoffsiteconstruction.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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THANK YOU to our sponsors and supporting partners of the Australian Timber Supply Summit to be held in Melbourne on 29-30 August 2023.

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Feed tree donation to help koalas

NSW's Forestry Corporation has donated 25,000 koala food trees to help provide habitat and food for koala conservation efforts on the North Coast.

BANGALOW Koalas have set the goal of planting 90,000 trees to establish a new wildlife habitat on private land over the next 12 months. The supply of 25,000 seedlings from the Forestry Corporation's Grafton nursery will assist greatly.

The seedlings were delivered to the Friends of the Koala's Lismore nursery and consist of seven of the preferred koala feed tree species including tallowwood, forest red gum, grey gum, Dunn's white gum, blue gum, blackbutt and flooded gum.

Forestry Corporation Partnerships Leader Ryan Ellis said more than 200,000 seedlings have been donated to conservation groups over the last four years to support

community koala habitat planting programs.

"We're proud to work with Bangalow Koalas, Friends of the Koala and the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital to help local communities improve existing habitat connectivity and create future food sources across the landscape," Ellis said.

"These projects are primarily on private or public lands outside of the State Forest estate.

"The ongoing work by Bangalow Koalas shows the resilience of these volunteer groups and they continue to accomplish great outcomes and are best placed to support local projects."



Bangalow Koalas are establishing new habitat for local koalas, with help from donated feed trees.

Friends of the Koala Nursery Manager Mark Wilson said the donation is greatly appreciated "The stock we have received is in great condition and now stored safely at the Friends of the Koala Nursery in Lismore for acclimatisation and hardening.

"Coordinating a delivery of

25,000 in one day was a big effort – many thanks to the volunteers who assisted on the day and to Forestry for arranging transport. Following a period of high rainfall and with the current cool, dry weather the conditions are looking favourable to undertake large plantings. It's been heartening to see many of the plantings undertaken before last year's flooding have bounced back with minimal damage."

The seedlings were grown at Forestry Corporation's Grafton nursery, which last year produced 3 million seedlings for plantation re-establishment.

To find out more about Forestry Corporation visit www.forestrycorporation.com.au

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ForestLearning develops exciting new classroom resource

FOREST-LEARNING is eager to announce a new Virtual Classroom with popular children's television character George the Farmer.



George the farmer helps explain rural industries to kids.

During the 'Forest Science Explorers Forest Protectors' video experience, students and teachers will join George and expert environmental forester Kelsey Johnson in the eucalypt plantation forests of Mount Gambier, South Australia, for an excursion deep into the heart of the forest – without having to leave the classroom!

This highly engaging, 30-minute curriculum-aligned session, designed for Foundation to Year 4 students will cover many fascinating and important topics including:

- What animals live in these forests?
- What homes do these animals need?
- How do foresters protect animals and plants in the forest?
- Where does paper come from?

George and his regular human friends Ben and Rachel help kids to understand



Kelsey Johnson, environmental forester, talks about her job and the forests themselves.

how nature and forestry can co-exist and the management required to achieve that. The video provides viewers with plenty of interaction opportunities, as well as quiz questions and Q&As.

ForestLearning is backed by the Australian Forest Education Alliance, made up of groups including Australian Forest Products Association, Forestry Corporation of NSW, Forest Education Foundation Tasmania, Forest Products Commission WA,

Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited, Primary Industries and Regions South Australia, Sustainable Forestry Program, Southern Cross University and VicForests

The resource can be found at this link.

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Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards open for nominations

TIMBER companies operating in the Green Triangle have from now until 6 August to get their nominations in for the 2023 Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards. Each award category aims to showcase the remarkable achievements of individuals and companies within this vibrant timber community. The winners will be celebrated at a Gala Dinner Event on 27 October at The Barn in Mount Gambier.

This year's categories, sponsored by some of the leading businesses in the sector, are:



The family of the late Pat Lamb, formally known as Glyn Patrick Lamb and informally as Rusty, accepting the 2022 Timber Legend Award on his behalf.

- Sawmilling & Processing Excellence;
- Operations – Harvesting & Infield Chipping Excellence;
- Operations – Silviculture & Timber Support Services Excellence;
- Logistics Excellence – Port Operations, Marshalling & Timber Haulage;

- Trainee/ Apprentice of the Year;
- Timber Legend;
- Safety Excellence – Less than 30 Staff;
- Safety Excellence – More than 30 Staff;
- Safety Excellence – Individual; and
- Environment & Sustainability.

This year, each award category has a mentor from the GTTIA Committee to help with submissions. These mentors can help to guide your submission, assist you to make sure all the criteria requirements are met in your submission and will make

nominating an individual or a business an easier process for you.

The website contains a complete list of categories, with basic descriptions for each, and contact details for the mentors in each category.

Independent judges will shortlist nominations to determine a finalist list and category winner. All finalists and winners will be celebrated at the awards. For transparency, the GTTIA Committee will remain completely separate to the judging process and will have no knowledge of nominees, access to submissions or be able to discuss nominations with the judging panel.

For more information on the awards and the category criteria, or to start a submission, visit www.gttia.com/nomination-2023/



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Forestry Australia runs information sessions on new plantation establishment program

ON Wednesday 21 June the Australian Government announced the \$73.8 million Support Plantation Establishment program to support the establishment of new plantations. The program is designed to help secure Australia's future domestic wood supply and help meet Australia's carbon emission reduction commitments. Grants will be open to private industry, First Nations businesses, farm foresters, and state and territory government forestry enterprises.

The Australian Government will provide \$2000 (GST exclusive) per 1 hectare of new plantation forest established. Applicants are required to provide a co-contribution

equal to the grant amount.

Grant funding can be used for: preparation of the plantation forest site; the purchase and planting of seedlings; or the payment of labour and contract planting fees.

To find out more about the program, click for the Community Grants Hub website.

Forestry Australia is running an information session on the scheme on Thursday 13 July from 12.30–1.10pm (AEST). The session will be run online and is free, but you must register to attend. Everyone who registers will receive a



Farmers and small holders are being encouraged to diversify into plantations.

copy of the recording, if you can't listen live, you can listen later.

This webinar will provide an introduction and overview of the program for farmers and small growers, although anyone who is interested in learning more about the grant is able to participate. Included in the presentation will be:

- About the grant program
- Eligibility criteria
- What the grant money can be used for
- How to apply
- Application resources

The presentations will be followed by a Q&A and provide delegates with details to where they can find more information.

The webinar will be presented by Taylor Duke, acting assistant director and Pat McCarthy, senior policy officer in the Plantations and Strategy section at the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Registrations close: 10:00am (AEST) Wednesday 12 July.

To register, click here.

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Hurford Timber: setting the bar high for sustainable flooring solutions

This family company has been protecting Australian forests for three generations at the same time as creating a thriving timber products business.

IN a notable visit to the Hurford Timber facility in Brisbane, Responsible Wood Sustainability Manager, Matt de Jongh, experienced firsthand the unwavering commitment of Hurford Timber to sustainability.

de Jongh expressed his enthusiasm about the visit, saying, "It was inspiring to witness Hurford Timber's steadfast commitment to sustainability. Their Australian native engineered flooring is a testament to their efforts in promoting responsible sourcing practices. By supporting such initiatives, we can make a positive impact on the environment and ensure the longevity of our forests."

Carmen Forsyth, certification manager at Hurford Timber, expressed the company's pride in being recognised for their sustainable practices, saying, "We are pleased to have Matt de Jongh visit our facility and acknowledge our commitment to sustainability. Our responsibly and sustainably sourced Australian native engineered flooring reflects our



Matt de Jongh (left) with the team from Hurford Timbers.

dedication to preserving the environment and contributing to a greener future."

The commitment of companies like Hurford to responsible sourcing not only reduces environmental impact but also ensures the availability of resources for future generations. Hurford's Australian native engineered flooring is crafted with meticulous attention to detail and quality, using sustainably sourced timber, carefully harvested and processed to meet the highest environmental standards. Through innovative techniques,

Hurford Timber ensures minimal waste and optimal use of resources throughout the manufacturing process.

Forsyth explained: "At Hurford Timber, we believe that sustainable business practices are not just a responsibility but an opportunity to create a positive impact. Our Australian native engineered flooring embodies our commitment to both quality and sustainability."

The visit further strengthens the collaboration between Hurford Timber and Responsible Wood, two entities working hand in hand to

promote responsible forestry practices. By supporting such collaborations, consumers can make informed choices and contribute to a sustainable future.

To explore Hurford Timber's range of sustainable solutions, visit www.hurford.com.au. From exceptional aesthetics to eco-friendly attributes, Hurford's products provide a winning combination.

As de Jongh aptly summarises, "Together, through partnerships and conscious choices, we can build a more sustainable future. Hurford Timber's commitment to responsibly sourced Australian native engineered flooring sets the bar high for the industry, inspiring others to follow suit."

This visit highlights the company's dedication to sustainable practices and their invaluable contribution to environmental conservation. With their exceptional flooring solutions, Hurford Timber paves the way for a greener future, where quality and sustainability go hand in hand.



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NSW Audit Office finds issues with Forestry Corporation monitoring

The corporation has admitted some processes have not been optimal and has committed to improvement, at the same time as welcoming positive findings.

THE Audit Office of NSW tabled a report in parliament last Thursday that was critical of the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW in the report). The key complaints were:

- While FCNSW undertakes monitoring of its contractors, it does not do so consistently and does not target its monitoring activities on a risk basis.
- FCNSW has largely fulfilled mandatory Coastal IFOA training requirements, but has not yet trained other staff who would also benefit from the training.
- Contractor compliance appears to be improving, but there are gaps and inconsistencies in FCNSW's documentation of this.
- FCNSW is not measuring its overall compliance to determine how it is tracking against its target.

Recommendations included better staff training and improved consistency, targeting and measurement



Forestry Corporation personnel overseeing radiata pine harvesting.

of its reviews, activities and performance.

Forestry Corporation agreed there have been issues, releasing a statement that said "Forestry Corporation accepts the recommendations of the NSW Audit Office and is committed to making continued improvements to our operations where necessary.

"Our staff care passionately about the forests they work in and, over

the last three years, we have significantly increased our efforts around compliance. This has included investment in technology solutions, putting more staff on the ground and a regular program of internal audits to supplement the external audits undertaken by our third-party certifier and the EPA as the regulator."

The reply went on to acknowledge that the report had shown an even-handed regard for the corporation,

saying, "It is pleasing that the report has identified a number of positives, including that Forestry Corporation has clearly articulated its compliance obligations in policies and procedures, communicates

these expectations to contractors, has provisions in its contracts and licences to require compliance and has overseen improvements in contractor compliance in recent years.

"There are always further opportunities for improvement and we will work through the recommendations from the Audit Office to action all opportunities available to further improve our processes."

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Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council now established

MINISTER for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt have announced the establishment of Skills Insight as a Jobs and Skills Council (JSC), contributing to an ambitious new program to strengthen Australia's VET system.

The JSC program strives for a holistic approach, with collaboration across all 10 JSCs and all parts of the skills system, broadening and deepening the reach from the previous program.

Skills Insight's role as a JSC is to support strategic industry leadership and undertake research activities looking at skills and workforce challenges, with a specific focus on improving the



VET system and industry participation in it. Together with partner organisations, ForestWorks and MINTRAC, Skills Insight will work with stakeholders to take a wide view of skills issues and potential solutions to improve outcomes for industry, learners, trainers and employers.

Skills Insight's industry coverage includes primary production, plants and animals, forestry and timber, textiles, clothing, footwear



Minister Murray Watt announced the establishment of the new JSC.

and furnishing, and emerging industries around natural resource security and environmental management. Skills Insight said, "We are proud to be able to work with a group of industries that are crucial to Australia's society,

ecosystems and prosperity and actively recognise the diversity of all stakeholders, including small and niche industries and those based in rural, regional and remote communities, First Nations people, people with a disability, migrants, and women in non-traditional trades."

Organisations can be involved in finding potential solutions to national skills and training challenges by becoming a Skills Insight Member. Membership is free and provides an opportunity to be an active part of industry networks, contributing to the direction of projects and activities that will impact industry.

More information about Skills Insight can be found at www.skillsinsight.com.au.



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Fast-growing hemp is being positioned as an alternative to timber in Gippsland

With the sudden halt of native timber forestry in Victoria, a surprising industry is looking to fill employment and supply gaps, but there are issues.

HEMP advocates hail the 'stigmatised' crop as the billion-dollar saviour of Victoria's ailing timber industry, but politicians are concerned the industry could pave the way to legalising cannabis.

Just six farmers are growing fewer than 200 hectares of hemp in Victoria, while Tasmania's \$4.5 million industry grows around six times that amount. That's a drop in the ocean when compared with the global industry, which is expected to grow from about \$7 billion a year to more than \$27 billion by 2027.

Victoria and Canada both passed legislation to allow industrial hemp cultivation and processing in 1998. While Canada has become a world leader in production, Australia remains far behind.

Now, Darren Christie, president of the non-profit industry organisation iHemp Victoria, has proposed that processors in Gippsland could replace timber with hemp. This would maintain employment and financial stability for logging communities while offering a solution to building supply shortages, he says.

"Industrial hemp is another chip and pulp industry, exactly the same as our timber industry," said Christie, who also chairs the Australian Hemp Building Institute.

Industrial hemp requires fewer agricultural inputs – fertiliser, pesticides and water – than many other crops, according to AgriFutures Australia, and has a wide variety of applications. But



1/ **Matthew Box is a hemp grower and processor.** Photo: Pro Hemp



2/ **Hemp pulp can be used to make a range of building materials.** Photo: Pro Hemp

the research body also says fibre transportation is costly due to hemp's light weight and large volume. This means the industry needs local growing and processing. And with home building companies going to the wall as building costs rise, locally produced construction materials could fill that gap.

Gippsland is perfectly placed to become an industrial hemp hub, say industry leaders.

"We can grow industrial hemp on a biomass scale in 100 days. Five thousand hectares – there's \$100 million into the Gippsland communities and farming," said Christie

The Victorian parliament last month agreed to an inquiry into opportunities to expand the hemp industry in Victoria. While supporting the motion, brought by Legalise Cannabis MP Rachel Payne, Liberal member Georgie Crozier said she had questions around the viability of the industry, as well as its potential outcomes. "I'm strongly supportive of medicinal cannabis, I don't

support legalising cannabis," she said.

Ms Payne says the fact that hemp and cannabis come from the same species can cause sticking points when it comes to state and federal regulation. "Hemp could be a real opportunity for the timber industry to pivot into," she says. "It can be used for a whole range of [things] from production of textiles through to bioplastics, construction and biofuel.

"We know that there's a lot of interest in not only the opportunities for what hemp can create, but also ... the fact that hemp is an incredible carbon sink."

Matthew Box runs Pro Hemp on the eastern outskirts of Melbourne, where he grows, processes and supplies hemp, and develops and builds hemp processing machinery. He says

“HEMP COULD BE A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR THE TIMBER INDUSTRY TO PIVOT INTO

the industry is on the verge of taking off in Victoria, but it needs support to scale up.

"There's so much demand for hemp, but it's always companies that want it in large volumes," Box said.

Innovative producers are coming out of the woodwork from all over the state, he said. Prefabricated building panels are being produced in central Victoria, bricks are being made in the west of the state, while hemp powder is being transformed into 3D printed houses in Victoria's south. But just six growers are managing about 200 hectares of hemp plantation in Victoria – about one sixth of Tasmania's production.

Industry leaders say draconian regulations and costly monitoring requirements must be overhauled.

Christie is calling on the state government to support and invest in the industry: "They've got to open their eyes and have a really deep, hard look – now – because otherwise we're 10 years behind."

Source: abc.net.au

Stockholm will be home to ‘Wood City’

Developer Atrium Ljungberg has started work on what it plans to be the world’s largest mass timber neighbourood.

SCANDINAVIAN studios Henning Larsen and White Arkitekter are designing Stockholm Wood City, which will become the world’s largest mass-timber development and have the “serenity of a forest”.

Set to be built in the Stockholm neighbourhood of Sickla, the project was dubbed the “world’s largest wooden city” by developer Atrium Ljungberg as it will use more mass timber than any other project in development.

Stockholm Wood City, which will have 7000 office spaces, shops and amenities plus 2000 homes and cover 250,000m², is being designed by Danish studio Henning Larsen and Swedish firm White Arkitekter.

According to the developer, the district will feature nature-informed elements and was designed to have the feel of a forest.

“We sought to create an urban environment infused with the serenity of a forest, resulting in a dense, open space that bears the distinctively minimalistic and functional aesthetic of Scandinavian design,” Atrium Ljungberg said.

“The architects innovatively



‘Wood City’ is designed to show off the best of mass timber construction as well as deliver a welcoming place for people to live and work. Images courtesy of Henning Larsen and White Arkitekter.

incorporated natural elements into the structures – for instance, green roofs for better insulation and large windows to let in natural light, embodying our vision of a city that thrives in harmony with nature.”

The buildings will be constructed from fire-proofed mass timber.

As well as being made

from wood, a material that both sequesters carbon and emits fewer emissions than concrete, there are other benefits in building cities from wood, said the developer.

“Wooden construction means significantly reduced climate impact both during the construction phase and through the whole life cycle,” Atrium Ljungberg said.

“Research has also proven other strong benefits, such as improved well-being for people and a faster, quieter construction process.”

The development will break ground in 2025, with the first buildings set to be completed in 2027.

“We are building the project in phases to learn new things during each phase which we

can then apply in the following phases,” the developer said.

“Our core strategy is to develop large, interconnected areas. In this way, we can create places full of variety that people enjoy and where they want to be, as opposed to just setting up a single building.”

Source: Dezeen

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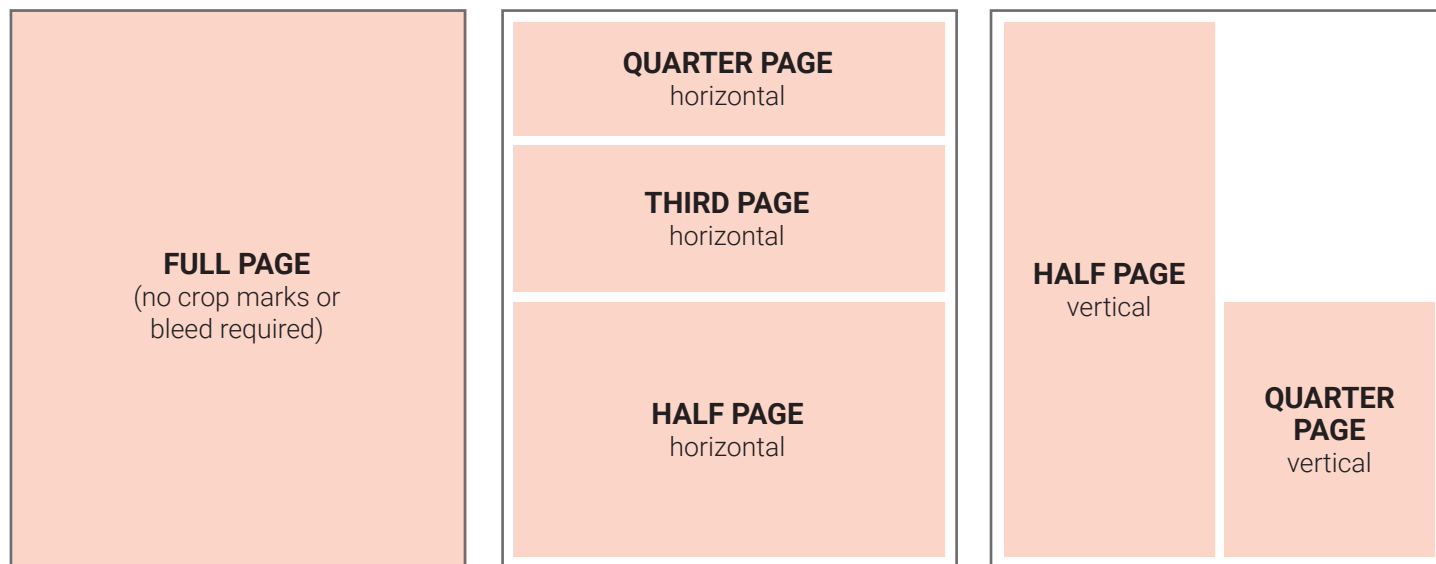
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