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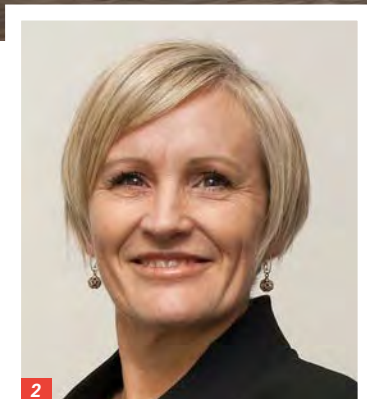
New era for hardwood timbers and Victoria's forests

SEVERAL Gippsland hardwood timber processors have vowed to continue operating despite being barred from access to the region's native forest the Gippsland Times has reported.

The chief executive of the Victorian Forest Products Association, Deb Kerr, said the start of 2024 marked the end of harvesting wood fibre from Victoria's public forests, but not the end of Victoria's sustainable native hardwood industry.

"The Victorian government's decision last May created chaos with some businesses across the native hardwood supply chain being forced to either close permanently or diversify their business," she said.

"However, a small number of processors will continue processing the native



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timbers that consumers love, sourcing this wood from private sources in Victoria, from other states and from overseas. Hardwood timbers are highly valued by consumers where appearance or durability are important purchase

1/ **A small number of processors will continue processing the native timbers.**

2/ **Ms Kerr believes the Victorian Government should use the start of this new era to radically change the way Victoria's forests are managed for the next century.**

considerations, be it stairs, decks, windows, furniture, or external applications."

In Gippsland, Australian Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH) at Heyfield began importing hardwood timber from the US some time ago as the state government began restricting hardwood supplies from Gippsland forests. ASH, which employs more than 200 people, is

going to import more US hardwoods to make up some of the shortfall.

Radial Timber in Yarram will go into 'survival mode', sourcing what local plantation timber it can get until its own plantations grow. The company, which has been growing its own plantation estate for 18 years, had been relying on timber from VicForests for another six years. The Radial mill will run at 25 per cent capacity in the intervening six-year period.

The white paper line at Opal's Maryvale Mill in the Latrobe Valley, which relied on native hardwood residues and woodchips, ceased production last year, throwing 150-200 people out of work, but the company will still require timber for its packaging production.

Ms Kerr said she did not have full confirmation of how many mills had closed, but 11 mills in Victoria took compensation payments from the first round of

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Federal Court ruling a 'vindication' of strong native forestry governance

LAST week's Federal Court decision dismissing a challenge on the validity of the NSW North-East Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) has been hailed a vindication that sustainable native forestry operations in NSW are well governed by the federal-state regulatory framework, Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) NSW CEO James Jooste said in a statement.

"The Federal Court decision is a vindication for the sector and the contribution it makes to the economy, environment, communities and society in NSW, Australia and internationally," Mr Jooste said.

"It's also a message to activists that the RFA framework stands, and the native forestry sector has a right to operate without their irresponsible legal meddling in the daily lives of timber workers and their families.

"The decision is also a major win for the climate, easing the cost of living pressures and sovereign capability with so many renewable, sustainable and essential products created by the NSW native forestry sector."

On January 10th, Justice Perry dismissed an application to find the North East Regional Forest Agreement in NSW was invalid.

NSW's native hardwood forestry industry is worth



1 AFPA NSW Chief Executive Officer and Policy Manager James Jooste believes the decision is a win for the climate, easing cost of living pressures and sovereign capability with so many renewable, sustainable and essential products created by the NSW native forestry sector.

2 AFCA General Manager Tim Lester also welcomed the result.



\$1.8 billion to the economy and employs 9,000 people, more than half of them in the state's north-east in communities built on the sector. For generations, they have provided a sustainable industry which selectively harvests forests for timber and fibre and manufactures the resource into high-grade construction timber, decking, furniture and other products.

"I call on the Minns Government to continue recognising the importance of native forestry to the state and to work with us as plans progress for a Great Koala National Park on North Coast," Jooste continued.

"Without the sector, we face a future of more timber and wood fibre imports from countries without Australia's high regulatory standards, fewer quality job opportunities in our regions, increased cost of living and a stalled progression on emissions reduction.

"The industry will now continue to get on with the job it's there to do. Providing sustainably sourced products that are essential for our way

of living, while making sure our regions continue to be vibrant places to live," James Jooste concluded.

AFCA General Manager Tim Lester welcomed the result saying the Court's findings confirmed that Regional Forest Agreements between the Commonwealth and States support the protection of environmental assets while allowing for this sustainable industry to operate.

"The Federal Court has confirmed that RFAs provide an alternative pathway for delivering environmental protection of forests and biodiversity rather than creating a regulatory void," Lester said.

"Specifically Justice Perry found that: an RFA provides an alternative mechanism by which the objects of the EPBC Act can be achieved by way of an intergovernmental agreement allocating responsibility to a State for regulation of environmental matters of national environmental significance within an agreed framework".

"The Regional Forest Agreements are based on

striking a balance between environmental responsibilities and the needs of our society and community. RFAs improve management of the forest and therefore biodiversity and forest health by creating the space for a well-regulated, efficient and effective industry that optimises forest functioning, the protection of high-value environmental assets and productivity now and for future generations.

"Native hardwood timber is critical as a source of power poles, wharf timbers, high-quality architectural features and is increasingly being used in mass timber construction to us lower the carbon footprint of the built environment.

"As an industry, we provide a win-win solution that manages and maintains forest landscapes, enables biodiversity to flourish and provides the best-integrated climate and emissions solution available today. This industry is also incredible for creating sustainable and high-quality jobs in rural and regional areas, supports local economies and is quite literally helping to build the nation.

"We welcome today's judgement that confirms the regulatory environment is robust. Questions should now be asked about the role of the Commonwealth in funding for both sides of this case and whether that is the best use of taxpayer dollars" Tim Lester concluded.

“ WE PROVIDE A WIN-WIN SOLUTION ”

On the cover: In a judgement handed down last week, Justice Perry dismissed an application to find the North East Regional Forest Agreement in NSW was invalid.

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exits before the May 2023 announcement that timber harvesting in native forests would close at the end of 2023.

“Some of those closing have drying stocks of timber that will last between one-to-three years. The full effects won’t be realised until probably 2026,” she said.

Ms Kerr said while the government had closed native forestry, Victoria’s forests still needed to be managed for the health and resilience of the forest.

“The continued decline of Victoria’s native plants and animals is commensurate with the increase in the



Hardwood timbers are highly valued

National Park estate – clearly this speaks volumes that the current management approaches do not work,” she said.

“The Victorian government should use the start of this new era to radically change the way Victoria’s forests are managed for the next century – after all native forestry can no longer be blamed for the

state of Victoria’s forest flora and fauna.”

Ms Kerr said a recent CSIRO report showed that feral animals and invasive species were by far the biggest threat to forest fauna and flora.

The report, conducted with the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, found that at least 100 unique native

species had become extinct since European settlement, with three quarters due wholly or partly to invasive species. These included mammals, frogs, birds, and lizards.

“Dozens more species are at high risk of extinction in the next 20 years, including mammals, birds and reptiles threatened by cats and foxes ... and plants by pathogens and feral herbivores,” the CSIRO report said.

From 1960 to 2017, invasive species cost Australia at least \$390 billion, with the current annual cost conservatively estimated to be about \$25 billion.

“It has increased up to six-fold every decade. Weeds cost agriculture at least \$5 billion a year,” the report said.

The ban on Victorian native timber has forced ASH Heyfield to import more hardwood from the USA.

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Porta announces new CEO

PORTA has announced Mark Bejatovic as their newly appointed CEO.

Mark will step into the position following the passing of John Pizzey, a visionary who has left a legacy in the industry.

Porta is an Australian-owned and locally operated company, that has a rich history spanning over 70+ years proudly manufacturing and distributing a broad range of timber products using various local and imported certified timber species.

"We take pride in being one of Australia's leading suppliers of decorative timber products to the home improvement, building, trade and commercial sectors," a spokesperson for Porta said.

Porta's milling and importing operations provide quality timber, moulding and design solutions to the construction industry

"Mark embodies John's visionary values and



1/ John Pizzey guided Porta's growth since 1979.

2/ Mark Bejatovic, newly appointed CEO of Porta.

leadership philosophy, aligning closely with Porta's core principles," they said in a statement.

"His unique strengths, coupled with the strong foundation laid by John, position him perfectly to lead Porta into a future of innovation, growth, and progress."

The appointment marks a pivotal step in ensuring Porta's continued success and dynamic evolution in the timber industry.

In this new chapter with Mark, Porta says they are



thrilled to introduce a range of cutting-edge products. At the forefront is their Porta Contours Tasmanian Oak in Featured Grade, a product that truly exemplifies our dedication to quality and sustainability.

This variety of timber grade is crafted from sustainably sourced and PEFC-certified Tasmanian

Oak, reflecting their dedication to responsible and eco-friendly practices.

Porta is also proud to announce the launch of Portaline, our latest addition to the Porta Lining Board products. The company say these 12mm thick boards are not just a testament to their innovative spirit but are also designed for simple installation and an impressive finish.

Portaline is specifically crafted to cater to the modern DIY enthusiast, ensuring that the individual's spaces are not just styled but personalised.

At Porta, they believe in more than just producing timber products; we aim to transform timber into elegant, environmentally responsible design solutions. The unique profiles and adaptability of their products invite one to reimagine spaces, 'infusing them with the natural beauty and warmth of timber'.

"We have more exciting products lined up to unveil in the coming months," they said.

"These launches are not

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Building materials price growth plummets in 2023

ACCORDING to the latest Producer Price Index report, growth in the average price level of inputs to residential construction less energy (i.e., building materials) fell from 15.0% in 2022 to 1.3% in 2023 (not seasonally adjusted). On a monthly basis, building materials prices rose 0.1% in December after increasing 0.1% in November (revised). Monthly price increases averaged 0.2% in 2023, down from 1.5% in 2021 and 0.7% in 2022.

The Producer Price Index for all final demand goods fell 0.4% in December, the third consecutive decline (seasonally adjusted). Most of the decline can be attributed to a 1.2% decrease in the index for final demand energy (SA). For the 12 months ended in December, the PPI for final demand goods less foods and energy increased 1.8% (NSA). The annual average increased 2.8% in 2023, the smallest increase since 2020.

Price growth of goods inputs to residential construction, including energy, declined 0.6% in December



Although softwood prices dropped dramatically they still remain above the 2019 level.

and gained 1.0% over the past 12 months. The annual average decreased 0.3% in 2023 after surging 17.7% and 17.3% in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

The PPI for softwood lumber (seasonally adjusted) declined 2.3% in December, the third consecutive decrease and the fourth over the past five months. The index has fallen 14.5% since reaching its 2023 high in July.

On an annual basis, prices declined 31.3% in 2023 after falling 3.2% in 2022. Although the 33.5% two-year decrease

is massive in historical terms, prices remain 22.7% above the 2019 level as the index skyrocketed 84.6% between 2019 and 2021.

GYPSUM BUILDING MATERIALS

The PPI for gypsum building materials declined 0.3% in December and have not increased since March 2023. The index decreased 2.0% over the past 12 months, a welcome change after the 44.6% increase seen over the two years ending December 2022.

READY-MIX CONCRETE

Ready-mix concrete (RMC) prices decreased 0.2% in November (SA), just the fourth decline over the last 36 months. Year-over-year price growth decelerated for the second consecutive month, falling from 9.3% in November to 7.8% in December. The average price of RMC increased 11.2% in 2023 and 10.3% in

2022 (NSA), combining for the second-largest two-year increase since 2000.

STEEL MILL PRODUCTS

Steel mill products prices climbed 3.3% in December, the first increase since May. Steel mill products annual average prices declined 16.1% in 2023 after increasing 8.7% in 2022 and the historic 90.3% increase of 2021. Prices are 31.2% lower than their 2021 peak but remain 65.1% higher than they were in January 2020.

Source: National Association of Housing

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MARCH 18-19: FTMA National Conference – Geelong, VIC.

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Registrations now open at <https://conference.ftmanews.com/register-now/>

APRIL 23-24: Planned International Forest Investment Conference – New York City. TBC

MAY 1-2: Sydney Build Expo – Sydney. Sydney Build is the only event in Australia to offer 300+ accredited presentations, 500+ exhibitors and incredible networking opportunities for all of Australia's construction, architecture, engineering and infrastructure industries.

SEPTEMBER 23: Latin America Forest Investment Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.

SEPTEMBER 24-25: International Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.

SEPTEMBER 25-27: Field Trip – Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil.

OCTOBER 22-23: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.

SAVE THE DATES 2025

JUNE 22-26: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Brisbane.

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OCTOBER 20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.

OCTOBER 23-24: Field Trip – Vietnam.

From P 5

just additions to our product range; they are a continuation of the forward-thinking and environmentally responsible legacy that John Pizzey so passionately built."

"Our growth and the positive reception of our products in the market are testaments to our enduring commitment to excellence.

"The trust our customers placed in us, nurtured over generations, transcends mere acknowledgement of our past successes; it lays the groundwork for our future endeavours. "These subtle yet impactful signs highlight Porta's esteemed position as a market leader in the Australian timber industry, showcasing a legacy steeped in excellence and a horizon



The family and team at Porta describe how the late John Pizzey's visionary legacy will shape the decorative timber specialist's future.

rich with possibilities.

"As we forge ahead, the indomitable spirit and visionary values that John Pizzey instilled in Porta continue to inspire us. We are steadfast in our commitment to uphold the high standards and pioneering values he championed.

"Together, we pledge to honour and build upon the legacy and future of Porta, a company that is not only a significant part of Australia's timber industry but also a symbol of a sustainable and innovative future," they concluded.

John Pizzey passed away on the 26th October 2023 after a remarkable 40-year tenure at Porta.

For more, visit www.porta.com.au

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Discover the New Zealand Christmas Tree (Pohutukawa)

By **CAMPBELL MCINNES**. Part one of two.

AS part of a recent trip, I was fortunate enough to visit Aotearoa, the land of the Long White Cloud, New Zealand or as we Aussie say, just across the ditch, earlier this month to start the 2024 year.

After flying into Auckland, I drove up to Russell in the Bay of Islands, which is towards the top of the North Island and roughly a 4-hour drive from Auckland. Russell was also the first capital of New Zealand from 1840- 1841 the second capital was Auckland from 1841 until 1865 before Parliament was permanently moved to Wellington. Across the bay from Russell is another important landmark and a significant historic site being Waitangi. The Treaty of



1/ Branches from the Pohutukawa Tree sprawling across the beachfront. This creates great shade for beach goers.



2/ Pohutukawa tree along the foreshore of Russell, creating a picture frame to the beautiful surroundings.

Waitangi was an agreement towards British sovereignty by representatives of the Crown and the local Maori chiefs (of which there were more than 500). This Treaty was signed in 1840 in New Zealand. Waitangi Day was first

celebrated in 1934 and it was made a national public holiday in 1974. So needless to say, this area is steeped in history and interesting things to see and do.

Much of the coastline in the Northern parts of the North

Island of New Zealand you will find the *Metrosideros excelsa* tree, the Pohutukawa or commonly known as the New Zealand Christmas Tree. As the common name suggests,

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you will find the New Zealand Christmas Tree in full bloom generally from November to January depending upon the season. This year, (the end of 2023) the Pohutukawa bloomed in November, so by the time I landed in New Zealand many of the red flowers had already shown their display for the year. Fortunately, there were still some scattered trees with some flowers left. The flowers, each consist of a mass of stamens which look like

thin bristles. While there are a few variations of flower colours, including yellow, pale pink, orange and even a darker brown, bright red is by far the most common and generally creates a beautiful red display around the coastline for Christmas. Unfortunately, the flowers do not last long. When the thousands of bristle flowers fall, they create what appears to be a red mat underneath the trees and surrounding area. In Russell, you will find the Pohutukawa in a row along the waterfront. These Pohutukawa were planted in the 1930's by the Russell Progress League, a public-spirited group of adults and children under the leadership of Victor Lindauer, headmaster of Russell School, in an effort to beautify Russell. They replaced an earlier row of pine trees and initially had triangular protective fences to keep away roaming cows which grazed freely in the township until the 1950s. I walked along the waterfront and the Pohutukawa created shade and also a picture frame



1/ The red blooming flower of the Pohutukawa Tree, with the evergreen leaves.
2/ The Pohutukawa Tree which is multi-trunked, spreads its branches in all directions.

to the surrounding landscape of the sea, ships and sailing boats as well as Islands and the other side of the bay. The wood itself is very hard and durable and often referred to as red iron. In the early years, it was used for boat building, curved branches and sometimes roots proved ideal for constructing a boat keel from a single piece of timber.

The Pohutukawa are predominately a coastal tree and grow up to 25m (82 ft) high and can be up to 40m (131 ft) wide with the branches spreading wide and, in a dome-like form. Branches often sprawl out over beaches. This tree commonly grows multi-trunked from the base, and trunks can be up to 2m in diameter. The trunks and branches are often found with matted fibrous aerial roots which give them a Jurassic feeling. The bark is firm, difficult to detach, grey to grey-brown in colour and somewhat corky. The oblong, leather-type leaves often have dense white hairs underneath. Its deep roots enable it to cling to steep banks and cliff edges.

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Penola Reserve named after dedicated forestry duo

A FATHER and son who dedicated 70 years of their working lives to local forestry have been honoured in the naming of a historic Penola reserve by OneFortyOne.

Moving to Nangwarry in the 1970s as part of the '10-pound Pom' initiative, Ray Mills brought his young family out from the UK and devoted 25 years of work to the Woods and Forests Department, inspiring his middle son Geoff to follow in his footsteps for 44-years.

Standing amongst the reserve's towering oaks and cedar trees, Geoff Mills points out the road he walked up as a strapping teenager to face



1/ The historic Penola Reserve has been named after father and son duo who dedicated 70 years of their working lives for local forestry.

2/ Geoff Mills said he quickly learned a day's work could involve anything and everything .

his first and only interview, in 1978.

First copping a grilling by the department head about whether he was the son of the legendary Ray Mills and eyed up and down, he was told, 'you

look like a big strong lad – you can start Monday'.

Gaining the nickname of 'Millsy', the teenager was assigned to general gang duties and he quickly learned a day's work could involve anything and everything.

"In the forest, I did hundreds of different jobs like pruning, brake maintenance, planting trees, and learning about the machinery – tractors, plows and spray units.

"I even mowed the boss's lawn," he said, with a grin.

Geoff went on to work at the research department, supervising plots, growth rates and fertilizer trials

and spent many days working alongside his father, completing fencing, planting and general firefighting duties.

An essential part of life in the forests involves fire crew duties and Geoff was to face several serious fire scenes in his first decade.

The Caroline fire of 1979, which burned through 7,668 hectares of softwood plantation and native forest was to pale in comparison with 1983's Ash Wednesday, which swept across South Australia and Victoria, claiming 75 lives and destroying 3,000 structures.

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From P 10

In 2008, Geoff was also part of a forestry crew sent by ForestrySA across to assist Victorian fire crews in covering the Black Saturday fires.

Geoff was to spend weeks on site, witnessing the aftermath of one of Australia's deadliest fire scenes and recalled it as a 'sobering experience'.

"It's such a beautiful place to live, but when you see all the burnt-out cars and houses and the police tape around them, I would never want to see that again."

During his decades in the industry, Geoff recalled many major advances in technology, however, there are areas where mechanisation simply cannot replace a human, he said.

"When it comes to planting pine trees, you just can't beat

a person," he said. "They still manually plant because they haven't got a machine that can plant trees as well as a person can."

Many a friendship was forged over a learning experience and the passing on of skills from the older generation of forest workers, Geoff said.

"When I was a young bloke and all the old guys are here, that's where you learn how to sharpen an axe, how to prove a tree problem and how to do everything, which is getting to be a dying art now."

Geoff retired at the end of October, 2023, just missing the milestone of 45 years by six weeks.

However, at 62, the time felt right he said, just as it was for

“A COMBINED 70 YEARS OF WORK IN FORESTRY”

his father Ray when he retired at the same age in 1993.

Geoff recalls taking his dad for a drive around the reserve where they'd both spent so many years.

Over the years, workers had planted trees from across the world there – towering oaks, cedars, Norfolk Island pines, maple trees and it was a favourite spot for the pair.

After announcing his retirement, Geoff said he 'knew something was up' because his boss picked him up and drove him to the reserve, where a surprise awaited him.

More than 60 of Geoff and Ray's friends, family and work colleagues had gathered there, and it was announced the reserve would be named in honour of the father and son who dedicated most of their working lives to the Penola forests.

Only one person was

missing at the ceremony – his father Ray, who died in 2022 at 90 years old.

Standing under an oak tree which once cast a shadow over the old Woods and Forests Department depot in the reserve, Geoff said the next generation of Mills have already made their mark on the reserve.

On a sunny day, Geoff likes to bring his two-year-old grandson down to the reserve for a stroll and occasionally, to plant a new tree.

Retirement will bring more time to spend on his favourite things, including spending more time with his grandchildren, kayaking and fishing at Beachport, live music and perhaps, driving around in his dream vehicle.

"I've got my eye on a 1971 XY Falcon," he says, with a smile. "I'll just go cruising around here in that."

Words & Images: Kate Hill

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Major milestone reached for historic Notre Dame Cathedral

THE reopening of the historic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris is on track in part thanks to the successful 'on time' delivery of the restored timber frame roof.

The spire of Notre-Dame de Paris, which went up in flames and dramatically collapsed during the massive fire of 2019, and the delivery of the roof is a symbolic milestone in the nearly \$900 million refurbishment of the Gothic cathedral that's finally nearing the home stretch.

Medieval techniques that were originally used more than 800 years ago are being used again today to rebuild the world-famous monument's fire-ravaged roof.

Carpenters have been using hand axes to fashion hundreds of tons of oak beams for the framework of the classic building's new roof and it's given them a new appreciation of their predecessors' handiwork that pushed the architectural envelope back in the 13th century.

“MAJOR MILESTONE OF MASSIVE TIMBER FRAME ROOF DELIVERED 'ON TIME.'”



1/ Medieval techniques have been used by carpenters working on the roof restoration.

2/ The delivery of the roof, celebrated by being 'on time', is a critical stage in the restoration of the famous cathedral.

The completion of the solid oak beam framework of the soaring steeple is one of the most critical stages of the resurrection.

It's a finely tuned feat combining modern and medieval building methods, vital for restoring one of France's most important centres of Catholicism.

"It's a little mind-bending sometimes," carpenter Peter Henrikson told the Press Democrat.

He says there are times when he's whacking mallet on chisel that he finds himself thinking about medieval counterparts who were cutting "basically the same joint 900 years ago."

"It's fascinating," he says. "We probably are in some ways thinking the same things."

"Traditional carpenters had a lot of that in their head," Henrikson notes. It's "pretty amazing to think about how they did this with what they had, the tools and technology that they had at the time."

The 61-year-old American is from Grand Marais, Minnesota. The bulk of the other artisans who worked on the timber frame are French.

The new timber frame was assembled and erected at a workshop in the Loire Valley, in Western France, prior to being moved to Paris where the critical milestone was reached.

The fire that destroyed part of Notre-Dame de Paris on the evening of April 15, 2019, shocked France and transfixed viewers around the world. Prior to the devastation, it saw some 12 million visitors.

The resurrection remains on track for a December 8, 2024, reopening just missing President Emmanuel Macron's five-year goal to open in time for the 2024 Summer Olympics in and around Paris.



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Boost to social and affordable housing

THE HIA has welcomed the opening of applications for funding to support more social and affordable homes being built under the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) and National Housing Accord.

“The investment in 40,000 social and affordable homes is recognition that Australia’s shortfall in housing supply is contributing to increased rental costs and reduced options for those most in need within our community,” HIA Managing Director, Jocelyn Martin said in a statement.

“The investment mandate should particularly support more housing in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

“For homes to be delivered in regional areas, it is also important to ensure that the



The \$10 billion project will see an investment into 40,000 social and affordable housing projects.

system of funding works to enable smaller community providers and the regional construction industry to be eligible to receive it, rather than just larger institutional investors.

“The provision of social housing is often most needed in areas where the financial returns are not always realistic. The application process needs to ensure that ‘special purpose vehicles’

set up to apply for funding in remote and regional areas are not disadvantaged by bureaucratic processes that increase costs and extend time frames,” said Ms Martin.

“Whilst this investment should see a boost in social and community housing, it is critical to recognise the Australian Government’s target to build 1.2 million homes over five years from 1 July this year will largely be

dependent on the delivery of private housing.



“It is the adequate supply of all homes across the housing continuum which will have the biggest impact on the cost of housing and rental availability. Holding all levels of government to account for improving planning regimes, supporting the development of appropriate infrastructure and a skilled construction workforce must be a priority this year.

“In 2024 Australia’s residential construction industry is hoping to be able to operate in an environment with a positive approach to reducing red tape, a willingness to understand the risks and timeframes our builders work with and a recognition of the contribution a vibrant and strong residential construction industry can make towards the much-needed supply of new homes,” concluded Ms Martin.

“MUCH-NEEDED SUPPLY OF NEW HOMES

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An olive branch for car technology

EVERY year, pruning olive trees creates 7 million tons of waste. Ford engineers in Cologne, Germany, launched an innovative research project to explore how that food waste could be re-purposed to create auto part prototypes.

They found the parts to be durable, and believe research like this could enable lighter-weight parts that reduce the amount of plastic used in vehicle parts, reduce the carbon footprint of auto parts and bring the company closer to its goal of using more recycled and renewable content in its vehicles.

The trial was conducted as part of the COMPOlive project designed to demonstrate the impact of using materials made from recycled and renewable materials in auto parts.

For the trial, the waste materials were sourced from



Ford believes that the durability of the olive tree is enough that it can be built into car parts.

olive groves in Andalusia, Spain, the region with the highest production of olive oil in the world. The prototype parts consisted of 40% olive tree fibres and 60% recycled polypropylene plastic, the substance was heated and injection moulded into the shape of the selected part.

Ford has a long legacy of research and innovation

in sustainable materials, some of which eventually make it into Ford vehicles, like industry-first soybean-

“ FORD SEEKS AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TARGETS ”

based foam seats and headrests, post-consumer recycled materials - including yogurt cups - in the Ford Mustang Mach-E frunk insert and recycled ocean plastic in wiring harness clips in Ford Bronco Sport.

Alongside their partners across the globe, Ford is making

measurable progress toward ambitious environmental sustainability targets. The Road to Better is Ford’s commitment to building a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable transportation future, where every person is free to move and pursue their dreams.

Source: Ford

US greenhouse gas emissions down near 2%

CLIMATE-ALTERING pollution from greenhouse gases declined by nearly 2% in the United States in 2023, even as the economy expanded at a faster clip, a new report finds.

The decline, while “a step

in the right direction,” is far below the rate needed to meet President Joe Biden’s pledge to cut U.S. emissions in half by 2030, compared to 2005 levels, said a report Wednesday from the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

“Absent other changes,” the U.S. is on track to cut greenhouse gas emissions by about 40% below 2005 levels by the end of the decade, said Ben King, associate director at Rhodium and lead author of the study.

The report said U.S. carbon emissions declined by 1.9% last year. Emissions are down 17.2% from 2005.

Last year’s relatively mild winter and continued declines in power generation from

Cont P 15

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UK timber imports grow

THE latest statistics from Timber Development UK (TDUK) show 2023 import volumes catching up on the previous year.

The gap between the cumulative annual volume of timber and panel imports into the UK during the first 10 months of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 has narrowed further, according to TDUK's report.

TDUK Timber Statistics Industry Facts & Figures, January 2024, shows the deficit at around 123,000m³, down from 184,000m³ at the time of the previous report. This represents a reduction of 1.5% over the first 10 months of 2022.

The statistics also reveal a 9.1% growth in October – the fifth consecutive month growth has taken place in the volume of the main timber, panels and engineered wood products imported by the UK.

Softwood import volumes were up 1.7% in the January-October year-on-year comparison, with cumulative volume at 4,991,000m³ (2022:4,909,000m³).

The countries most

“ FIFTH CONSECUTIVE MONTH OF GROWTH



1/ The gap between the cumulative annual volume of timber and panel imports into the UK from 22-23 has narrowed.

2/ The average price of hardwood has risen and stayed high.

responsible for the increase are Sweden, which upped its volumes by 17% over the 10-month period, and Finland, which boosted its volumes to the UK by 8%

However, the value of softwood imports in January-October 2023 was 25% lower

year-on-year.

Hardwood imports were down by 22.7%, with cumulative volume for January-October 2023 at 390,000m³ (2022: 504,000m³). Within that total, tropical hardwood imports were down 10.5% at 73,000m³ (2022:

82,000m³) and temperate hardwoods were down 12.9% at 225,000m³ (2022: 258,000m³).

The average prices of hardwood have risen and stayed high, unlike other timber and panel products, notes the TDUK.

Total plywood imports were down 11.9% in the 10-month comparison periods, with cumulative volume from January-October 2023 at 1,031,000m³ (2022: 1,171,000m³).

Within this, hardwood plywood imports were down 14.1%, with cumulative volume from January-October 2023 at 731,000m³ (2022: 851,000m³).

Softwood plywood imports were down 6.2%, with cumulative volume from January-October at 300,000m³ (2022: 320,000m³).

Chipboard imports were down 7.4% in January-October 2023 year-on-year, with cumulative volume at 514,000m³ (2022: 555,000m³).

OSB imports were up 24.1%, with cumulative volumes from January-October 2023 at 371,000m³ (2022: 299,000m³).

MDF imports were up 4.5%, with cumulative volumes for the 10-month period at 653,000m³ (2022: 624,000m³).

Source: TTJonline

From P 14

coal-fired plants drove down emissions in the U.S. power and buildings sectors, the report said.

At the same time, transportation sector emissions rose, led by a continued rebound in airplane travel and increased gasoline consumption as road traffic

returns to pre-pandemic levels, the report said. Higher domestic oil and gas production also led to a small increase in industrial emissions.

While carbon emissions declined



Renewables are vital in continuing the downward trend of greenhouse gas emissions.

overall, "some ominous signs also began to appear in 2023," the report said. Natural gas generation grew more than twice as fast as renewables in 2023, compared to 2022. And while solar installations were on track for another record year, installations of wind turbines were down compared to 2022 and 2021, the report said.

Timber to feature in first indoor snow resort

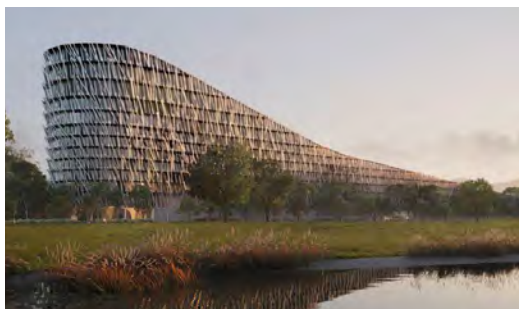
EIGHT-METRE-TALL wooden message sticks will be one of the striking features of Australia's proposed first indoor snow resort.

Set to be constructed in Penrith, Western Sydney, the proposal, which will see the establishment of a year-round snow resort has now been granted State Significant Development Application approval.

On 11 January 2024, the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment granted the protracted project State Significant Development Application approval. Enviroana developed the original scheme over six years, receiving planning approval from the NSW government in December 2021. A subsequent competition to design the building's facade resulted in the selection of a proposal by Collins and Turner.

The indoor snow resort will comprise a 300-metre advanced open run for skiers and snowboarders, as well as learn-to-ski runs and a dedicated winter wonder snow play area. The tourist attraction will also feature a dedicated competition venue for snow sports, spaces for ice climbing and crevasse outdoor rock climbing, dining options, and a 170-room hotel with conference and function rooms.

Kinetic lighting will illuminate the Jamison Road facade at night, creating the impression of a blizzard. Meanwhile, the public area



The proposal to establish Australia's first year-round indoor snow resort – the \$400 million Winter Sports World in Penrith, Western Sydney – has been given the tick of approval after an eight-year process.

and curved lower-level facade will be designed to look like melting ice, adding to the overall frosty aesthetic.

Currently the site of a 2.35-hectare horse paddock, the landscape will be transformed to include features such as water streams, pathway networks, landscaped plantings and eight-metre-tall wooden message sticks (one First Nations medium). Visually imitating mountains and melting ice, the message sticks will tell stories about First Nations people and their connections to Country.

Winter Sports World has been designed to generate net-zero carbon. To achieve this, the design team has incorporated rooftop and north-facing wall photovoltaic panels, which will be used to generate 50 percent of the resort's energy. The remaining power will be drawn from solar, wind, and

hydroelectric sources offsite, with any further emissions to be offset.

The project's wider design team comprises First Nations artist Jamie Eastwood, JLA Landscape Architects, engineer Atelier Ten, and an environmental design consultant. Facade engineer Eckersley O'Callaghan

and lighting designer Electrolight collaborated on the exterior design.

In early 2024, the project will enter a phase of detailed design and engineering development to prepare for construction. The first stage of construction will involve excavation works for the basement, which will house a large underground water tank for snowmaking as well as mechanical plant rooms, loading docks and a car park.

Peter Magnisalis, the property developer behind Winter Sports World, said the project will be technically challenging and highly complex: the first of its kind in Australia.

"We need to take the time in this crucial preparation stage to ensure we get the project right before it can start to rise above the ground," Magnisalis said.



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HEAD OFFICE

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd
PO Box 3001
Maraylya NSW 2765

PUBLISHER

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd

EDITORS

Nicky Ainley
news@timberandforestryenews.com

Donyale Harrison
edit@timberandforestryenews.com

Jess Hockridge
jessicah@ttnews.com.au

ADVERTISING

Campbell McInnes // +61 (0) 406 223 007
campbellm@timberandforestryenews.com

ACCOUNTS

Chris Parker // +61 (0) 413 710 203
cparker@ttnews.com.au

SUBSCRIBE

www.timberandforestryenews.com

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WHO TO CONTACT

Media releases and editorial:

Nicky Ainley e: news@timberandforestrynews.com and

Donyale Harrison e: edit@timberandforestrynews.com

Display ad bookings:

Campbell McInnes e: campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com

Accounts:

Chris Parker e: cparker@ttnews.com.au



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