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ISSUE 788 // February 1, 2024

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news



## Calls for government support in housing and timber supply

COVER STORY P 3

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# Making more from what we have

## Achievable production efficiencies could provide a part-solution for timber needs.

UNIVERSITY of Queensland researchers have found improving timber production efficiencies by just 5% could unlock supply for an extra 8000 homes to be built in Australia each year.

The industry-supported modelling was carried out at the \$16.5 million Australian Research Council to Advance Timber for Australia's Future Built Environment (ARC Advance Timber Hub) at UQ which officially opened yesterday.

Associate Professor Joe Gattas, who co-leads two research areas at the Hub, said supply chain efficiencies could result in more affordable and sustainable housing options for Australians.

"Early consultation with our industry partners has

shown us where efficiencies can be made across all stages of the forest to building supply chain," Dr Gattas said.

"Our research will investigate how to deliver these improvements using new technologies such as computer vision and artificial intelligence to get more usable material out of each tree and augmented reality and robotics to enhance productivity for time-consuming and repetitive tasks.

"We hope this will increase the use of Australian-grown timber as a more sustainable choice for construction."

Hub Director, Professor Keith Crews, said the research would encourage growth in the timber industry and identify new ways the



Associate Professor Joe Gattas holds Queensland-hybrid southern pine, which will eventually be used for housing and construction.

"While timber is commonly used in smaller dwellings such as [detached] housing, we are working with the State Government and industry to look at ways it can be incorporated into larger projects such as athlete accommodation for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"Making more timber available will also help support the

material could be used in construction.

"We all benefit from more timber in construction – by delivering a boost for industry and supporting sustainability targets because timber removes carbon from the environment and stores it," Crews said.

"Timber has a key role in helping Australia transition to a circular and net-zero economy.

Australian Government's National Housing Accord to deliver 10,000 affordable homes over the next five years."

The work was carried out with researchers from 12 Australian and five international universities and research institutes working in collaboration with 28 industry partners. Click here for the full list of partners and more on the Hub.

**“WE HOPE THIS WILL INCREASE THE USE OF AUSTRALIAN-GROWN TIMBER**



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# Housing commencements still down

Economists and timber sector experts are both sounding a warning about low demand.

LAST year, the Federal Government and State Premiers set an ambitious housing target – that we are nowhere near meeting. The recently released September Quarter 2023 ABS data shows Australia commenced construction of just 23,058 new houses.

“It’s the weakest quarter in over a decade and down by 21.6% on the same quarter last year,” said Tom Devitt, HIA senior economist.

“This data reveals there were 103,707 detached houses that commenced construction in the twelve months to September 2023, down by 17.0% on the 124,940 commenced in the previous twelve-month period. This points to a slow start to National Cabinet’s ambition to build 1.2 million homes over the next five years starting mid-2024.

Devitt suggests there is a clear connection between this drop and the rise in interest rates, saying, “Since the RBA’s first cash rate increase in May 2022, sales of new homes have tumbled. A number of earlier projects are also being cancelled, with banks withdrawing finance in the face of soaring building costs and shrinking homebuyer borrowing power.

“This lack of new work entering the construction pipeline is expected to produce a trough in new house commencements in 2024, when Australia will start construction on just 95,400 new houses, the weakest year



in over a decade.”

Multires commencements are similarly weak, which is bad news, because the national housing targets depend on thriving private construction.

It’s not just economists waving flags. AKD’s Shane Vicary warned *The Australian* this week that the country is currently in a difficult position with both supply and demand at low levels thanks to flow-on issues from Black Summer and the direct impact of interest rate hikes.

Vicary used the interview with Noah Yim (for paywalled full story [click here](#)) to deliver background on the situation AKD is in at its Tumut mills. The region was the nation’s second-most productive softwood region – 18% of national production – before the Black Summer fires, according to the federal agriculture department.

**1/ AKD is a major employer in Tumut and downturns for its business have significant regional effects.**

**2/ Shane Vicary warns that the flow-on effects of Black Summer and interest rate hikes have led to both low timber supply and demand.**

Photo: The Age

“This facility was processing 500,000 cubic metres of logs, today we process 250,000,” AKD Softwoods chief executive Shane Vicary said.

AKD is the largest sawmill company in the country, producing about a quarter of the nation’s timber consumption, according to Vicary.

“This mill is doing half the volume that it used to do, and it’ll do half for the next 20-plus years, based on the fact that those logs got burnt,” he told *The Australian*.

Despite this dramatic reduction in production, timber continued to sit on the shelf without being sold, he said.

“We can’t get enough people to buy the timber,” said Vicary. “At the moment, most of our employees are earning less because there’s less activity: we’ve got overtime bans, we’ve got employment freezes.”

Vicary said reduced supply and demand has had an impact on the company. “You become

more fragile,” he said. “You become a smaller operation. You become more susceptible to cold winds.

“The irony of our situation at a time when we need to be building more houses... we need the state governments to be investing in more infrastructure to enable more suburbs.”

Australian Forest Products Association NSW chief executive James Jooste called for government support in expanding softwood plantations. “There is no other solution to meeting our housing needs other than making sure we have a stable supply of timber and the demand needs to be stabilised,” he said.

“It’s so important that we make sure that when we have these ambitious targets, we also have a plan and a road map to get there, but underpinning that all is making sure over the next 20, 30, 40 years we have a consistent supply of domestic Australian timber to meet those needs because timber goes into 90% of the new detached houses built every year.

“Targets are just targets without action so we need to make sure that we’re not seeing this boom-and-bust cycle continue in our housing construction industry,” Jooste added. “We need an even pathway and we need investment in our most important material in that housing construction cycle, which is timber.”

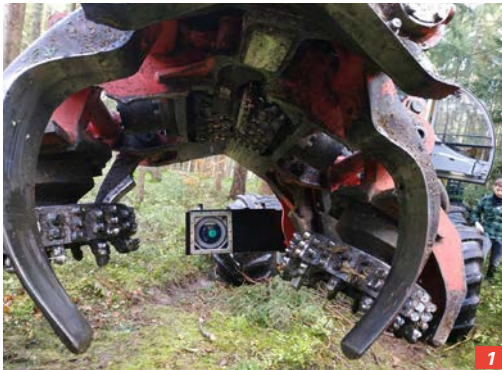
**On the cover: Timber building, such as these Henley townhouses by Timber Building Systems Australia, is vital for meeting housing needs.**

# Marker-free log tracing for proof of origin

German scientists develop a 'fingerprint' scan that can work anywhere.

FALSIFYING timber origins is a significant problem with undesirable effects from deforestation to avoiding trade embargoes. But current techniques for labelling logs involve markings that can be tampered with.

Researchers at Germany's Fraunhofer Institute for Physical Measurement Techniques IPM have developed a quick, highly effective and forgery-proof optical method that allows up to 100% recognition –



1/ A high-resolution camera mounted on the harvesting machine takes an image of each cut log surface and the context, which are stored together with a unique code.

2/ The unique 'fingerprint code' of each log is forgery-proof.



The combination of the specific structure of the cut surface with knots, growth rings and rough surfaces, and the complex forest environment makes falsification impossible.

even in the rough conditions of the timber industry.

The Track & Trace Fingerprint method uses high-resolution cameras to photograph the unique structures on cut log surfaces. An additional photograph of the log in its

context is taken and given a unique ID code together with the 'fingerprint', then stored in a Cloud database. If doubts arise in future, the context photo can be compared with new images of the area the log is supposed to come from for digital checking.

Three different camera systems have been developed for wood processing applications, each to suit specific lighting conditions: one integrated in a forest harvester, one for use in a

Cont P 7

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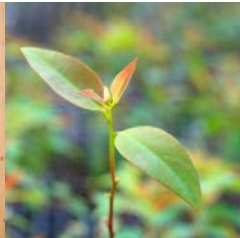
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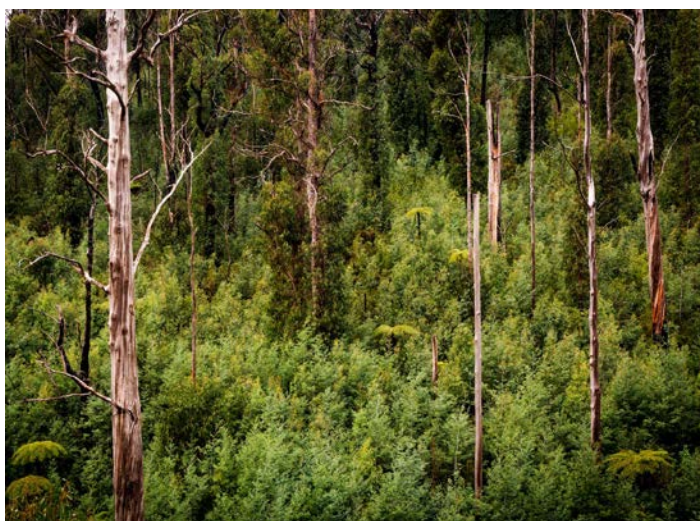
# FWPA announces investment in new forestry research worth \$10 million

Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) has announced its first tranche of successful forestry research proposals from its July 2023 open call for proposals.

The open call for forestry research proposals attracted 29 responses which were reviewed by a scientific advisory panel of experts and a committee of grower members, and were subjected to a benefit/cost analysis by an independent economist.

Twelve proposals totalling \$10 million have been approved by FWPA for an investment of \$5.5 million through FWPA. The projects will be funded through industry levies, voluntary cash contributions and matching funding from the Australian government, with significant in-kind contributions by industry and research partners.

The successful proposals were submitted by nine research providers and involve growers from all major commercial forest growing regions of Australia. The research will address a



**FWPA's funding will help the future health and productivity of Australia's forests.**

range of challenges across forest health and biosecurity, plantation silviculture, detection of threatened fauna, impacts of fire, phytosanitary options for log exports, and alternate species from current tree crops – many of them will work by harnessing various remote sensing and molecular technologies.

There are several proposals still under evaluation and it is expected that further announcements will be made in coming

weeks, following completion of the approval process.

"FWPA is proud to continue our support of world class research that will have real and positive impact on the businesses of Australia's commercial forest managers – research that our members value," said Jodie Mason, FWPA forest research manager.

"We thank the many research leaders and industry partners for their considerable efforts in developing high-quality

proposals and look forward to working with them to implement the projects, commencing in the coming months."

The FWPA Forest Research Program supports collaborative activities that advance research, development, and extension (RD&E) of benefit to Australia's commercial forest growing sector.

"FWPA's investment in these projects receiving funding demonstrates how researchers can work with industry to solve problems identified by forest growers" said Sharon Occhipinti, general manager forest services, HVP Plantations, and an executive member of FWPA's Grower Research Advisory Committee.

The Forest Research Program is aligned with the Forestry RD&E Investment Plans (available by clicking here) which were developed in consultation with Australia's commercial forest growers to inform collaborative investment and identify priority topics.

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# Scion report shortlists alternatives to pine

## Diversifying species will improve forest resilience.

Part one of two. By MICHAEL SMITH.

ON the back of its tolerance for a variety of soils and climatic conditions, historical advances in breeding development and improved silvicultural practices, *Pinus radiata* has come to dominate New Zealand's exotic plantation estate.

Some 30 years ago the move from visual grading to machine stress grading transformed its reputation as a structural timber – and the forest industry's current confidence in the species is well placed given that its predictable characteristics make it suitable for the manufacture of engineered wood products.

It's a long way from pine's humble beginnings as a packaging and transporting material for New Zealand's primary produce. But lingering doubts remain over the industry's reliance on a single species – especially in light of increasing risks that could



Loading pine logs, Hell's Gate, Rotorua: *P. radiata* accounts for 89% of NZ's exotic plantation estate. Image: Scion

arise from disease and pest outbreaks due to a changing climate and increased global interconnectivity.

Those risks prompted Alan Jones and Toby Stovold – of NZ Crown research institute Scion – to research potential alternative species, as discussed in their report: 'Stock Take of the Commercially Viable Alternatives to *Pinus radiata*'.

Information on 45 candidates was used to develop a shortlist of 12

higher performing species – which included their potential for propagation and seeding stock availability. The report also highlighted "where knowledge gaps exist for each shortlisted species that might hinder their effective deployment in a commercial setting".

Spatial assessment of site suitability suggested that redwoods and various cypresses would grow more favourably throughout the North Island compared

with the South. Meantime, some eucalypts appear to have the greatest potential growing range nationally – while analysis of Douglas fir showed it was better adapted to South Island conditions.

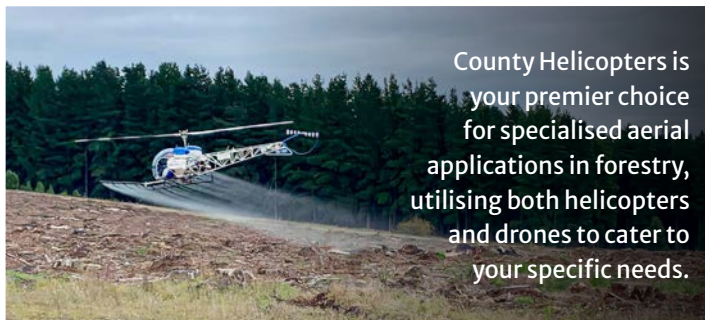
The study noted that diversification into alternative commercial species would "allow the utilisation of niche sites with conditions

currently unsuitable for growing *P. radiata*; enable the development of new timber markets and specialty timber use; and provide a level of contingency to adverse environmental or market-driven events."

Diversification would also "provide a greater public benefit by increasing the overall species diversity of commercial forestry, which

Cont P 9

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**FEBRUARY****15: Private Native Forestry: Case studies – Webinar.**

Forestry Australia highlights Local Land Services work with owners of private native forests in NSW on approvals, extension and project activities. This webinar will highlight LLS's training and extension work including its Forest Stewardship Pilot Project, which aims to assist native forest owners to improve the health and productivity of their forests. Features private native forestry case studies including project outcomes, their learnings and insights for forestry. Forestry Australia member fee is \$10; non-member: \$60; student members free. Registrations close 10am, Wednesday 14 February. Visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/events-2/>

**28: Modern Tree Breeding – A quiet achiever with huge upside – Webinar.** In this webinar Dr Josquin Tibbits will highlight major innovations adopted by tree breeders over the past 25 years and discuss impacts on plantation productivity and quality, as well as look forward to the current innovation space and its potential future impact in the sector. Visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/events-2/>

**MARCH****5-6: ABARES Outlook 2024 – Hyatt Hotel Canberra and online.**

The theme of this hybrid conference is 'Shaping the Future: Opportunities, risks, and resilience' and topics include debt, biosecurity and climate change impacts. The opening session focuses on the national and global economic outlook, including expert speakers from Westpac and the OECD. To register visit [https://www.agriculture.gov.au/event/abares-outlook?trk=organization\\_guest\\_main-feed-card-text](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/event/abares-outlook?trk=organization_guest_main-feed-card-text)

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

The conference is designed to expand members' perspectives by thinking beyond the conventional. Topics covered: understanding future housing scenarios, highlight potential threats to our market position, provide strategies for navigating the industrial environment, offer advice on defending your business from work cover claims, and shed light on future framing possibilities. 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.**

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**22-23: Wood Transport & Logistics 2024 – Rotorua, NZ and online.**

With an international focus and a rich understanding based in the forestry expertise of New Zealand, this regular conference delivers insights into wood handling and transport innovations, automation, log scheduling and logistics being employed by leading forestry, wood harvesting and log transport companies. Topics include transitions to new electric, hydrogen and diesel-hybrid powered heavy vehicles, including the integration of truck automation and platooning, as well as new innovations in log measurement, scheduling and logistics. For more and to register, visit <https://innovatek.co.nz/event/wood-transport-logistics-2024/>

**JUNE****14: NTHA Vic/Tas State**

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**SEPTEMBER****13: NTHA NSW State Awards.**

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**23: Latin America Forest Investment Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.****24-25: International Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference – Porto Alegre, Brazil.****25-27: Field Trip – Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil.****OCTOBER****11: NTHA WA State Awards.**

More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available.

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From P 4

sawmill and a hand-held system. This allows the tamper-proof identification of individual logs and trunk

sections, even if the timber is mixed up during harvest and processing. Taking another image of the same surface section allows the trunk to be identified.

As part of the project, researchers were able to show that the process worked effectively under the harsh conditions in forests and sawmills.

For more details on the project, click here.

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# Last chance for Forestry Australia mentoring

## Applications close soon for the highly regarded program.

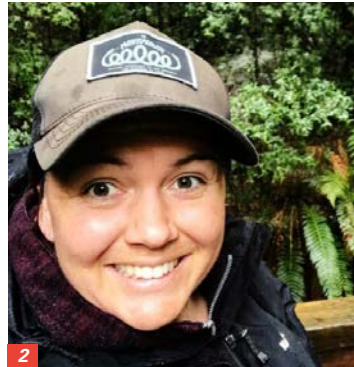
SCIENTISTS and forestry professionals have only a few days left to apply to Forestry Australia's highly sought after Mentoring Program.

Forestry Australia CEO Jacquie Martin said the program was a great opportunity to super-charge forestry careers: "The relationship between a mentor and mentee is a powerful thing. It has the ability to change, shape and motivate both individuals and entire sectors, and that's exactly what Forestry Australia's Mentoring Program is all about.

"The program is carefully designed to pair experienced forestry professionals with those who are seeking to evolve their career in our exciting sector. Over nine months, mentees will expand



1/ **Dr Kevin Harding, a farm forestry specialist, scientist and long-time forestry sector advocate, was a 2023 mentor.**



2/ **Kate Battishall of the Forest Education Foundation benefited from the 2023 Mentorship program..**

their forestry and professional skill sets, grow their networks and enhance their careers."

Mentors and mentees are supported by the program with tools and resources and foundational skills are taught, including time management, ethics, skills gaps analysis and

career planning.

Last year's participants testify to the program's benefits.

"As a mentor I learnt as much as my mentee partners – it's good to challenge my historical thoughts, experiences and learnings with the modern

approaches and learnings that the mentees are experiencing in today's workplaces and changing environments (both physical and social)," said Dr Kevin Harding, a 2023 Mentor.

Kate Battishall, a 2023 Mentee, said "I learnt to trust in my skills and abilities and lead with confidence. I learnt lots of practical skills to deal with day-to-day parts of my job, as well as the ability to set long term goals and remain accountable."

Applications for the Mentoring Program are open now and close on 4 February. For more information, access to the Mentoring Program Handbook and applications forms, click this link. It is free for Forestry Australia members, and if you're not a member it's easy to join, click here for the membership form.

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From P 6

would improve both the biological and social value of our commercial forests.”

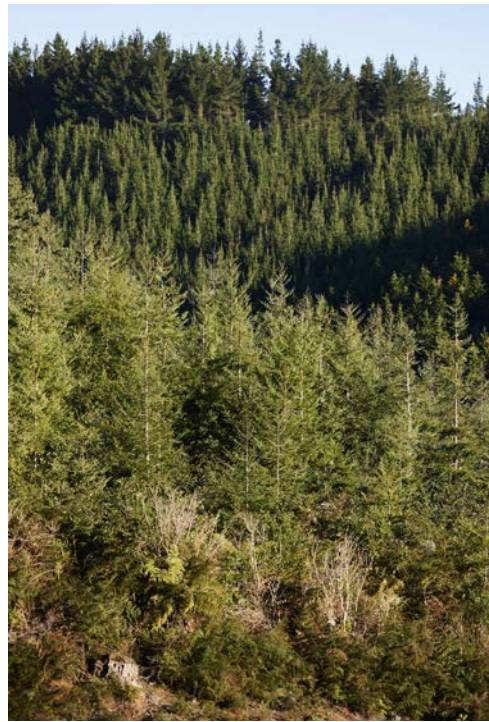
It should be noted that the success of radiata pine in New Zealand has been due in part to the species’ separation from its natural pests.

But that separation hasn’t resulted in complete immunity from incursions – most notably in the immediate post World War II period when a wood-boring wasp (*Sirex noctillo*) destroyed some 30% of central North Island forests; and in the early 1960s when pine needle blight emerged; mainly in stands subject to high rainfall and humidity.

The report points out that health threats to *P. radiata* exist “from a range of fungal pathogens that currently attack the tree” – while the continued expansion of global trade brings increasing biosecurity risks.

Although not present in New Zealand, pine pitch canker is seen as a major concern, given that it can kill seedlings and cause adult trees to lose their entire canopy. It has already invaded at least eight countries, and some of those invasions could have been prevented through better awareness and regulation of plant movements.

Further, the report says risks to the forestry industry are compounded by investment largely focused on pine; selective breeding and clonal



**Redwoods can thrive in many North Island environments, and are a low disease/pest risk.**

Image: Scion

commercial plantations that risk the emergence and rapid spread of health threats.

“The overwhelmingly favourable perception of *P. radiata* as the only viable source of commercial revenue is maintained by the forest industry in the absence of extensive knowledge or data on suitable alternative exotic species.”

Given that milling, harvesting, marketing and management training have created an efficient radiata pine system, there is “a reluctance to develop new systems and operating technologies (at scale).”

The report’s stocktake of alternative species is a useful consolidation of existing knowledge and sets the stage for integrating this with research results as they emerge.

*To be continued in next week’s edition.*

propagation of the species, which considerably reduces genetic diversity; and high stocking densities in extensive

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# Tasmanian timber's past and future

Former Private Forests Tasmania Chair Evan Rolley reflects on his 50-year career working in the Tasmanian and national forestry industry.

LOOKING out to the south across our farm to the towering 30-metre blue gums we planted 30 years ago, time and landscape change is captured in their growth.

A woodland habitat established with understorey blackwoods and musk that beat the rabbits, wallaby, possums, drought and strong southerly winds.

These plantings on our farm frame part of a practical response to climate change and a move to more sustainable agricultural landscapes that I now see regularly being rolled out by farming families around Tasmania.

Five decades ago, there

was very little of this whole-farm planning in practice.

Thirty years ago, as a Commissioner for Private Forests the challenges were implementing the frameworks for the first comprehensive forest practices code and encouraging farmers to adopt a commitment to sustainable forestry through Private Timber Reserves.

The opportunity to Chair Private Forests over the past six years has seen more positives for private forestry in the rapidly evolving agricultural landscape. New state-wide irrigation schemes, stronger markets for many farm products and rapidly rising land values are strongly



influencing the landscape and patterns of commercial farming enterprises.

Thinking of trees as fundamental farm infrastructure and not as opportunity to roll out tree farms to the exclusion of other farming enterprises is leading to a more integrated approach on farms and is helping drive higher farm value.

Launching the Tree Alliance and seeing at first hand the commitment and energy of farmers from the Sisters Hills, Midlands, Derwent Valley and Tasman Peninsula to more integrated tree planting endeavours shows a way forward. The value of these different patterns of tree plantings to benefit farm and stock shelter, moisture and soil conservation, habitat and timber is clear to see. Seeing is believing and will influence



1/ The Tree Alliance program has helped farmers to understand the value of trees as part of an integrated farm management system.

2/ Evan Rolley has shared his vision for Tasmanian private forestry after stepping down as Chair of Private Forests Tasmania.

neighbours' behaviour in the progressive way that ideas work in rural communities.

Along the way we have also seen an improved understanding of the value proposition of Private Forests Tasmania as a leader in supporting more sustainable land management practices. The policy work in rolling out more positive approaches in water rules for plantations, carbon farming rules, industry safety codes and fire management initiatives

Cont P 11



## Develop our future workforce

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.

ForestWorks works with industry, government and the education and training sectors to improve skills standards and qualifications and support the development of forestry-related industries, their people, and enterprises.

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From P 10

improve the whole economy.

Infrastructure at the Parattah railhead with repurposed repaid private forestry softwood loans gets logs onto rail in the south east of Tasmania more efficiently and halves the transport costs compared to road. This offers up new commercial opportunities for private landowners in the south to commit to longer term forestry investments.

Getting the peer reviewed science on managing private regrowth native forests under selective harvesting and regeneration approaches communicated widely opens up new potential volumes of locally grown wood products.

**“ THINK OF TREES AS FUNDAMENTAL FARM INFRASTRUCTURE ”**



**Tasmanian Private Forestry looks to increase the productivity of farms through tree planting as well as ensure a plantation resource for forestry.**

This is a carbon positive initiative and will help meet the need for building materials for more local housing.

At the centre of all these new approaches is a small committed, professional team of Private Forests Tasmania workers and a creative, talented Board focused on finding new strategies for growing private forestry.

Well done to all the farmers,

foresters, planting and harvesting contractors, wood processors and believers in the private forests sector who are managing the landscape with good science and belief in the future.

Remember that carbon is being stored in the most natural and cost-effective way via photosynthesis, the use of wood products from harvested trees and

the replanting for ongoing sustainability.

Let there be much more of all of this in private forestry to benefit the whole community.

*Evan Rolley has had a storied career as an experienced private tree grower and farmer in the Huon Valley with five decades of experience in the broader forestry sector. He helped in shaping the establishment of Private Forests Tasmania and was Commissioner for Private Forests in its formative years. His career has encompassed roles in the private and public sectors, as a Director and strategic advisor to a range of State, National and International bodies. He has a strong focus on research, innovation and markets for products. Rolley is also a former Secretary of the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet and a former Tasports Board member. This piece was first published on the Private Forests Tasmania website.*

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# COP 28 or copout?

## The recent Dubai gabfest showed some great work on trees storing carbon internationally, but little in Australia.

I HOPE everyone enjoyed as delightful a Christmas and joyful New Year celebration as the Forrest family. May 2024 bring even greater joys for each of us.

During the holiday break, I found myself gathered around a cosy firepit on a tranquil evening, sipping on a fine glass of wine. The atmosphere was filled with the laughter of children engaged in delightful play. It was during this serene moment that my slightly older sister, Cheryl Forrest (known by her maiden name), expressed her desire to dedicate more time to her growing family. She asked if I would be willing to take over her column.

I agreed in less than 40 seconds and now, here I am. In the subsequent days, Cheryl reached out multiple times, offering to be my mentor. This gesture, although well-intentioned, subtly hinted at the emotional challenge of letting go, but I think she can rest easy that I will be continuing the forest advocacy our family is famous for.

Let's start by talking about the recent COP 28, held in Dubai. It was the 28th session for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and ran from the end of November to 12 December. Now that the speeches are out of the way we need to ask ourselves: did it achieve anything substantial for our industry or was it a travelling junket for lots of politicians and their supportive staff?

I began this column with a lot of scepticism and



Portugal's FUTORO tree planting program sees women restoring native forest in the area around Porto.

rather than review political statements, intentions, and updated frameworks with targets, I wanted to concentrate on actual projects and real outcomes. My research took me to some interesting places.

### INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

In Nairobi, capital of Kenya in East Africa, a unique pilot project has commenced with 200 previously unemployed youths from a slum area and eager to work, planting trees and recycling. The team has already planted 1645 native trees with their aim to increase the total forest cover by 5% in the Nairobi district. On the recycling side, revenue is generated through separating biodegradable waste, which is used to create compost for future tree plantings and for sale, and solid materials that are sold to companies linked with the program.

Another initiative has just been added that provides for the distribution of

of both boys and girls and is one to watch.

Over to Portugal now and a more-advanced program has 3350 volunteers planting trees. This program is all women and they have recently passed the '25,000 trees planted so far' mark, with a target of 100,000. The aim is to replant areas which have been

previously destroyed in the Porto Metro area, covering 100 hectares, and while some replanting had previously occurred, it was largely with inappropriate exotic trees like *Pinus pinaster* – far more susceptible to wildfire burning than native forest species. The project is helping to shore up local resistance to flooding and erosion and is empowering women while strengthening their networks.

Due to this success, the project has already been granted approval to scale up to 21 planting areas and is expected to be replicated in other parts of the country.

### CLOSER TO HOME

The COP report 'Into the woods' clearly states forests and soil absorb about 30% of atmospheric carbon dioxide, largely from tree growth. It goes on to say "Forests play a vital role in stabilising the climate; they regulate ecosystems, protect

### TRUNK LINES



With SHIRLEY FORREST

educational materials on waste management and environmental conservation. The aim is to educate the residents on separating the waste the team collects. Where we have red, yellow and green bins, their initial system is simple; separated piles ready for collection. Some 40% of all waste is currently dumped into large pits and set on fire, damaging both the local environment and adding to global pollution. If this pilot program continues to be successful it will be rolled out on a large scale across the entire country. The youth team is made up

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# New Michael Kirby Law School wows

Macquarie University's new CLT and glulam building has been welcomed by staff.



JUST in time for the new academic year, the Michael Kirby Law School has been completed in the heart of Sydney's Macquarie University.

Named for the Hon Michael Kirby, AC, CMG, a former High Court Justice and Chancellor Emeritus at the university, the building is a light, bright symphony of mass timber that brings students and academics together in a welcoming space surrounded by trees.

The building opened its doors in mid-January and as staff move in before students arrive back from holidays, it has already been declared a success.

Designed by Hassell to a 5 star Green Star certification standard, engineering for the 8600m<sup>2</sup> building came from TTW Structures, who was responsible for the overall structural design and documentation. The CLT structure was delivered by Xcel Carpentry and Construction and FDC Construction & Fitout – and was designed to lower the building's carbon footprint while also “creating an environment that is warm, tactile and welcoming”, according to the architects.



**1/ The newly completed building is full of light and open spaces for collaborative work.** Photos: courtesy Xcel Carpentry and Construction  
**2/ Juliette Churchill, executive director, property services at Macquarie University (far left), takes distinguished guests including the Hon. Michael Kirby (far right) through the plans for the Michael Kirby Law School Building last July.** Photo: Macquarie University

Carbon considerations began a step earlier: a pre-existing concrete building was only partially demolished, then the new build continued on top with glulam beams and columns supporting cross-laminated timber (CLT) floor panels. The atrium of the building boasts longspan glulam beams, which are a feature of the design. Lateral stability was provided through the use of concrete cores, which were a key component of the project and are integrated carefully into the timber-rich design.

Throughout the project, TTW Structures utilised advanced digital engineering techniques to ensure the structural integrity of the building while maintaining a

focus on efficiency, cost effectiveness and minimising impact on the existing structural elements. The team conducted detailed analysis and design work to ensure that the glulam and CLT components of the structure were optimised for their intended use and that the steel roof was designed to withstand the required loading while minimising materials and construction time.

The university describes the design as created with engagement in mind, saying the open-plan building design embodies the welcoming ethos of Macquarie Law School, while clever internal connections encourage collaboration and the free exchange of ideas between educators, students, researchers, industry and the greater community. From meeting and event spaces to welcome legal professionals into the school to a centrally placed Moot Court room allowing easy access to watch the traditional competitive rivalries between law schools, it's a welcome change from the idea of the law as exclusive or inaccessible.

Having opportunities to engage with the community is a particularly important feature of legal education at Macquarie, as the Hon Michael Kirby – a prominent advocate for social justice – noted in his walk-through of the site last year, saying: “Reminding law students, whilst they undertake their studies at Macquarie Law School, of the realities of injustice and inequality in Australia is not only helpful

“THE OPEN-PLAN BUILDING DESIGN EMBODIES THE WELCOMING ETHOS OF MACQUARIE LAW SCHOOL

# FEA-DANA INTERNATIONAL FOREST INVESTMENT CONFERENCE **NEW YORK CITY** **MAY 1-2, 2024**



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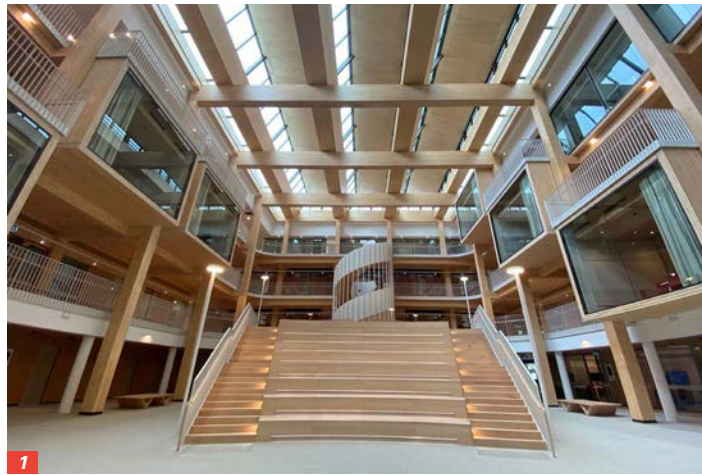
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for those in need – it is also a big motivator for what originally inspires most law students to get involved with the law.”

The building is already a hit with staff – multiple MU Law academics have been sharing photos of their new workplace and offices on social media. Professor Lise Barry, Dean of Macquarie Law School, wrote on LinkedIn: “I feel absolutely privileged to be leading the School at such an exciting moment in our history and I can’t wait to see the building full of staff and students.

“Hassell have delivered us an outstanding workplace. Full of timber and light, it opens on to the tree-lined central walkway of the University, creating a calm and green environment.”

While another academic snapped a shot of her new office and the view of mature plane trees outside the window, excitedly saying, “It’s among the treetops!”



1

- 1/ **Structural concrete cores in the building have been concealed, with glulam and CLT allowed to shine as the hero materials.** Photo: LinkedIn, Professor Cathy Sherry
- 2/ **Both architecture and furnishings encourage collaboration between students, whether in small or large groups.** Photo: LinkedIn, Professor Lise Barry
- 3/ **The building is arranged around an open centre, with accessible transport between floors at one end and active transport at the other.** Photo: LinkedIn, Professor Lise Barry
- 4/ **Glulam beams and columns support CLT floor panels.** Photo: Xcel Carpentry and Construction



2



3



4

## New PFT Chair and board members

TASMANIA’S thriving private forest sector is set for further growth with the appointment of a new Chair and Directors to the Board of Private Forests Tasmania (PFT).

Minister for Resources, Felix Ellis, said that after

a widespread search, Jim Wilson has been appointed as the new Chair of PFT.

“Jim Wilson has extensive leadership experience in the private forest sector and will step strongly into this leadership role having

previously been a Director on the PFT Board.

“Alongside this appointment, I am also delighted to announce that Bob Rutherford has been appointed as a new Director for three years, coming onto

the Board with extensive expertise in forestry and related natural resources sciences.

“Additionally, Alice Herbon has been reappointed as

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biodiversity, and support livelihoods. Forests also play a vital role in preventing soil erosion and flooding, and they provide habitat for a huge array of often endangered species.”

It makes absolute sense then to have a clear usage and regrowth strategy to keep the cycle regenerating, particularly in places like Australia where we can regulate, legislate and protect our renewable forests and go on further to ensure the wood used to build our homes, commercial and industrial buildings provides for additional carbon storage while the new tree grows to maturity and the life cycle begins again.

The report goes on further to say wholesale land clearing (deforestation) must cease as we are still suffering forest loss about the size of South Korea every year. It is therefore essential the world regulates and regenerates.

It proved very difficult to

**“MAKES ABSOLUTE SENSE TO HAVE A CLEAR USAGE AND REGROWTH STRATEGY”**



**TOP IMAGE: Joel Fitzgibbon from AFPA put real initiatives on the table at COP 28, unlike the government. Here on the AFPA-sponsored panel that included Brazil's Fernando L. Garcia Bertolucci (centre) and Gunsham Seeborun from Mauritius (far right).**

**BOTTOM IMAGE: Joel, Sara Bray and Natasa Sikman from AFPA.**

locate anything substantial submitted from Australia. I found some useless information contained within a communication document released in 2022 which refers to a change to estimates for emissions relating to harvested wood products – and this was a copy and paste from a 2021 document.

It would seem we were embarrassed to communicate our poor state-based decisions to cease renewable tree harvesting and regrowth in public forests in the states of WA and Victoria, which are

devastating the livelihood of entire communities.

Let's hope the rest of Australia continues to ensure growth and regrowth, carbon capture and storage through sustainable wood harvesting practices as wood truly is the ultimate renewable. In the meantime, WA and Victoria will need to wait on a change of government.

Until next time, thank you for joining me, and many thanks to Cheryl for all her insights!

*Shirley*

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a member representing non-industrial private forest growers for a further term of one year.”

More than 70% of Tasmania's wood harvest by volume now comes from the private estate.

PFT's CEO Dr Elizabeth Pietrzykowski thanked outgoing Chair, Evan Rolley for his contributions to the forestry industry throughout his career and his five-year



**Jim Wilson is the new Chair of Private Forests Tasmania.**

term as PFT Chair. “We extend our gratitude to Evan

for an impactful tenure not only as PFT Chair, but also throughout his career. He truly is a state treasure,” she said.

“Evan's commitment to the private forest industry has left a permanent positive mark on PFT and his leadership has placed an important focus on innovative whole-farm planning as well as continuing to meet the demands of the emerging wood markets.”



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