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Timber and forestry businesses face peril

COVER STORY P 3

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Senate stands up for plantation forestry

THE Coalition, the Australian Greens and key Senate crossbenchers have stood up for Australian plantation forestry, fixing laws that would have hampered investment in much needed new forestry plantings, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Diana Hallam said.

The Treasury Laws Amendment Bill was amended in the Senate last week to remove completely unintended negative consequences on plantation forestry in Australia.

"In a united front for common sense and good policy, the Coalition, Greens, Jacqui Lambie Network, and United Australia supported a Pauline Hanson's One Nation Amendment to fix the unintended consequences of the Treasury Laws Amendment Bill on the plantation forestry sector," Diana Hallam said.

"I thank Pauline Hanson's One Nation for moving the amendment and standing up for the Australian forestry sector. I thank the



The Treasury Laws Amendment Bill was amended last week in the Australian Senate which removed completely unintended negative consequences on plantation forestry in Australia.
Image: DPS AUSPIC – Parliamentary Education Office

Coalition, the Greens and key crossbenchers for their support and recognition that new forestry plantations are vitally important for Australian jobs and investment.

"Despite the Department of Treasury revealing that plantation forestry sector companies were not intended to be captured by the Bill and being aware of the unintended negative consequences on the plantation forestry sector, the

issues remained unresolved prior to the Bill's introduction to Parliament, or after two Senate inquiries into the Bill.

"If the Bill had passed as drafted, it would have undermined prospects for jobs and investment, and the

“ UNITED FRONT FOR COMMON SENSE AND GOOD POLICY ”

Government's own plantation forestry expansion goals and international commitments to increase the use of timber in the built environment.

"Globally, there is not enough timber being grown to meet demand. Australia is facing a long-term shortage of home-grown timber for house-frames, flooring and paper and packaging products. We need more investment

in new forestry plantations to ensure in the decades ahead, we have enough resource to create these essential and everyday items that Aussies need.

"[Last week's] vote in the Senate was a win for Australia's sovereign capability in timber and wood supply, a win for jobs in rural and regional areas, and a win for common sense," Diana Hallam concluded.

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Timber and logging businesses in danger

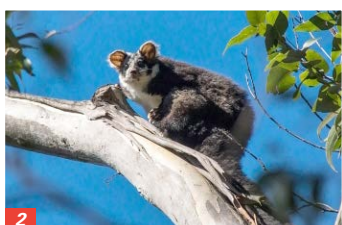
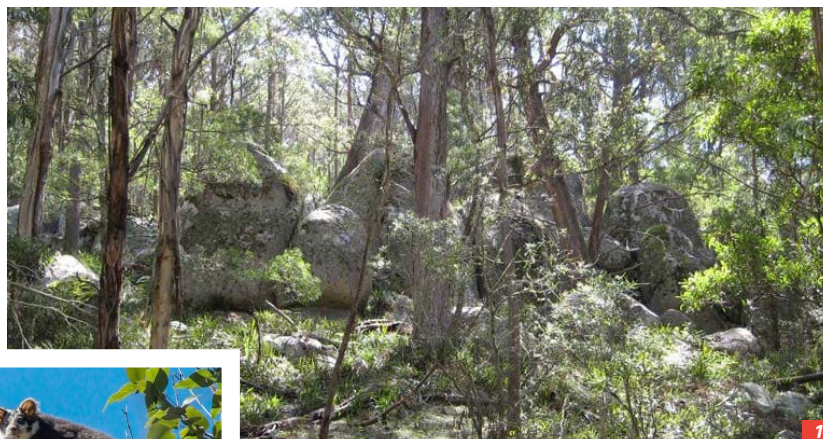
A sudden cancellation of native logging in NSW would be disastrous for the timber industry.

AFTER the swift changes to native logging rules in Victoria and Western Australia, the pressure is on for New South Wales to be next. In August last year a stop work order was issued for the Tallaganda State Forest where endangered greater gliders live. One of the greater gliders was found dead and this prompted the stop work order and an investigation to begin.

The NSW Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the ones who issue the stop work orders for NSW forests. According to the EPA they can be issued: "When any action is being, or is about to be carried out, that is likely to result in a contravention of forestry legislation, the EPA can issue a Stop Work Order. A Stop Work Order can prevent work from being carried out for up to 40 days."

The EPA then extended the Stop Work order three times bringing the total number of days to 160. This saw over 5 months of no work for several businesses such as Ian Slater's family logging business. The Slater family has been in the timber industry for three generations but are now uncertain about their future in the industry. Ian Slater shared that the stop work orders have cost him tens of thousands of

“ JOBS ARE BEING LOST OVER THE DESIRE TO PROTECT GREATER GLIDERS



1/ **Tallaganda State Forest.** Image: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
2/ **The greater glider... whilst we want to protect them we also need to protect the timber industry.** Photo: David Cook - NSW Local Land Services

dollars and he is now almost bankrupt.

"I have to put the boys off. My son will probably lose his house ... as will the other young bloke," Ian Slater said.

"I feel for my employees. They've been so loyal to me, especially my son."

"It's very sad working all your life to end up like this through government bureaucracy," he said.

"I don't know what the future holds for my wife and I."

Australia Forests Products Association (AFPA) NSW chief executive James Jooste shared that, "It's important that species like greater gliders are protected, but the NSW EPA's current processes for dispute resolution are far too long and drawn out."

"We need a better resolution-dispute mechanism so we're not spending six months out of our forests where we have no environmental outcomes and no productive outcomes," he said.

"These rolling stop-work orders put pressure across the entire supply chain,

"As a result, it's killing businesses that rely on access to the forests, like harvest contractors." Jooste explained.

The environmental conservationists are pushing NSW premier to follow the lead of Victoria and Western Australia and end native logging all together. Dr Stuart Blanch, the World Wide Fund for Nature's forest policy manager, said,

"I'm sorry people are losing their jobs over the need to protect greater gliders, but it's really the state government's responsibility to fund the complete transition out of native forest logging,"

"We want the state government to commit \$450 million to transition the 1,000 jobs from native forest logging into plantations."

Dr Blanch claims, "There's about 5,000 hectares of land on the South Coast that could be used [for] plantations ... and

there are about 1,000 jobs across the state that need to be transitioned into plantations."

However, it is not as simple as just stopping native logging for plantations as new trees take 25-30 years to mature and hardwood trees take even longer to mature. James Jooste commented on the sustainable nature and care taken with

native logging,

"We harvest 14 out of every 10,000 trees across the public estate and every tree is regrown."

To simply cut and change now as Dr Blanch and other activists would like to see would be destructive to the timber industry.

"An immediate transition would take 50 to 60 years to achieve in which time Australia would lose its hardwood timber processing capacity," James Jooste said.

The NSW government's only comment provided aimed to strike a balance, we are "committed to delivering the right balance between protecting the environment and sustaining our state forests" the spokesperson for Tara Moriarty the NSW Minister for Agriculture said.

Source: ABC

On the cover: Tallaganda State Forest, one of the areas under threat of closure to native forest logging. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services

Construction industry leaders call for removal of roadblocks

“THIS week the Housing Industry Association (HIA) brought together Australia’s construction industry leaders. The overwhelming consensus of the group was that the Government’s Housing targets cannot continue to be just another ‘aspirational target or housing statement’ but must result in the actual delivery of these much-needed homes,” HIA Managing Director, Jocelyne Martin, said.

“Builders across the country highlighted that the impact of a never-ending cascade of further regulations, complex building codes and WHS changes, taxation rules and business compliance obligations are all acting as significant barriers to the delivery of more homes.

“Not only are these new and continually changing rules making it difficult for businesses they are adding significant upfront costs which impact homeowners particularly first homebuyers who are already struggling to get into the housing market.

“HIA is calling on all levels of Government to reset and place a pause on any substantial new regulations and let industry get on with building the 1.2 million much-needed homes in conjunction with the National Housing



The building industry is ready to deliver homes desperately needed but roadblocks continually stall significant progress.
Image: Shutterstock

that Australia urgently needs.

“Consultation with industry is needed across planning, skills, immigration, safety and compliance to ensure barriers are removed, transitions are well planned, and solutions are fit for purpose.

“The building industry is ready and willing to deliver the 1.2 million homes over the next 5 years, but we need the right policy settings across all sectors of Government to enable the industry to deliver on these much-needed homes,” concluded Ms Martin.

Accord over the next 5 years.

“The industry wants to see a ‘whole of Government commitment’ across Federal, State and Territory and Local Government to come together and recognise their critical role in the supply of more homes

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The housing crisis in Australia

By MASTER BUILDERS AUSTRALIA

RESPONDING to monthly inflation data and civil and engineering December quarter activity data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn said the annual inflation rate rose to 3.4 per cent, up for the third consecutive month and still above the Reserve Bank's target.

"Housing costs remain one of the central sources of inflationary pressure across the economy.

"Rental inflation accelerated to 7.6 per cent during February due to a lack of rental housing supply.

"For owner occupiers, the price of new dwellings is 4.9 per cent up on a year ago. This is partly the result of cost pressures in the new home building market.

"It's further evidence that if we are to win the battle against inflation, we need to pull out all stops to build new homes.

"Building approvals are too low, meaning more needs to be done to encourage new housing supply.

"Whether it's detached



Housing and infrastructure can help combat rising inflation costs.

housing or higher density, the same constraints apply, including planning restrictions, lack of capacity to undertake critical infrastructure so land is home-building ready, high taxes and charges, slow approval processes, and workforce shortages," Ms Wawn said.

Master Builders Chief Economist Shane Garrett said civil and engineering construction is one of the strongest performing areas of the Australian economy.

"During the December 2023 quarter, the volume of work done here expanded by another 4.1 per cent.

"This means that the civil

and engineering construction market is 17.1 per cent bigger than a year ago.

"During 2023, a total of \$133.3 billion worth of civil and engineering construction work was done across Australia.

"Not surprisingly, projects done for the public sector are seeing the fastest growth with a 21.2 per cent uplift over the

“ BUILDING APPROVALS ARE TOO LOW, SLOWING DOWN NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

past year. However, private sector-driven project work is also performing well.

"During the December 2023 quarter, the volume of work done here was 13.8 per cent larger than a year earlier.

"Economic growth in Australia is weak right now. Were it not for the strong performance of civil and engineering construction, the economy would be fairing even worse.

"Construction in this area is providing vital support to demand in the economy at a time when it really needs it.

"Infrastructure investment will also provide significant long-term benefits to the economy.

"More infrastructure expands the range of activities that our economy can perform over time.

"A larger collection of infrastructure will also help defray inflationary pressures over the long term because better infrastructure helps reduce the cost of doing business and makes it less expensive to transport the products we need," Mr Garrett said.

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Finding Australia's missing tradies

By MASTER BUILDERS AUSTRALIA

RELEASING its supplementary Budget submission, Finding Australia's missing tradies: Harnessing our skilled migrant workforce, Master Builders Australia has made recommendations to help migrants navigate complex and unnecessary barriers to work in the industry.

The building and construction industry needs more workers if we are going to build 1.2 million homes over the next five years, says Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn.

"We heard from BuildSkills Australia this week that the industry needs to attract 90,000 tradies in the next 90 days.

"The domestic workforce cannot keep up with demand in the short term. Skilled migration represents a vital piece of the workforce puzzle," Ms Wawn said.

The building and construction industry has a proud history of a migrant-strong workforce. Today, workers who were born overseas make up about 24 per cent of the total workforce.

1.2 million new homes between 1 July 2024-30 June 2029

Half a million workers needed by 2029 just for business as usual*

Cost of building a home increased by 40% since COVID-19**

60,000 new homes per quarter until 2029

124,600 apprentices currently in training*

\$10,000 and up to an 18 month wait for migrant skills recognition

90,000 new workers needed to build 60,000 new homes nation-wide in September quarter 2024*

24% of building and construction workforce were born overseas, 2.8% arrived in the last five years¹⁰

All trade roles in building and construction are on the National Skills Shortage list

Key points from Master Builders Australia 2024-2025 pre-budget submission. Image: Master Builders Australia

However, those who arrived within the last five years only represent 2.8 per cent.

Ms Wawn added: "Australia is not alone when it comes to skilled workforce shortages which will prove a challenge in itself.

"When seeking to attract more skilled trades into Australia, it is important to look to migrants who are already in the country.

"This is an underutilised cohort of potential workers who could fill workforce gaps in the short term.

"There are a number of skilled migrants already in Australia who are working in roles below or unrelated to their qualifications or work experience in their

home country.

"Some are waiting on skills assessments or qualifications recognition, which, according to the Parkinson Migration Review, could cost nearly \$10,000 and take up to 18 months.

"For many, it is simply too hard to have their professional capacity

recognised to work in a trade in Australia, and they are instead in roles that present fewer hurdles to obtain.

"Master Builders believes more support is needed and the Federal Budget provides an opportunity to get the ball rolling."

Recommendations include:

- Provide access to English language education to help migrants upskill, noting that this will also assist them if seeking permanent residency.
- Provide simpler and more accessible coaching for migrants on how to find a job in the industry – the higher education space is an example of success in providing support to

international students.

- Subsidise the cost of upskilling or training to fill any skills or qualification gap that might exist between the migrant's home qualification and the Australian requirements.
- Allow migrant workers to access financial subsidies to complete trade apprenticeships.
- Work with state and territory governments to streamline occupational licensing requirements and ensure internationally comparable qualifications or requirements are quickly recognised without the need for long skills recognition processes.
- Ensure pathways to permanent residency are clear and enticing for skilled migrants already in the country who have building and construction qualifications and experience. Fast-track these people to permanent residency if they are working in building and construction.
- Expand eligibility for the graduate visa and graduate visa extension to all Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate III and above qualifications.

For more information, click here.



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1-2: International Forest Investment Conference – New York City. For more information, visit www.getfea.com

20-21: IV International Forest Business Conference – Sheraton Sopot Hotel, Poland. A two-day conference on megatrends that shape responsible forest and wood industry investments. The conference aims to bring together leading timberland investment management organizations, investors interested in forestry asset class and sustainable wood industry representatives in order to exchange and share experiences and ideas about new forest business frontiers. Register at www.fba-events.com or contact rafal@forest-analytics.com

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 Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

25-26: Fire Summit – Melbourne Connect, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC. Theme: Prescribed fire: Exploring science, culture and practice. This Summit will review and discuss cultural fire practices, evidence from recent wildfires, fire science, lived experience and current prescribed fire practices. The Summit will also look to the future and consider more effective use of prescribed fire, health impacts of fire and smoke and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and forest scientists can encourage two-way capacity building to support healthy and resilient forests. For more information, visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2024-fire-summit-prescribed-fire-exploring-the-science-practice-and-culture/>

JULY

27: NTHA Qld State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

AUGUST

9: NTHA SA State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

12-13: Timber Construct Conference – Rydges, Melbourne. The Timber Offsite Construction Conference and Exhibition has been rebranded as the Timber Construct Conference to encompass the full spectrum of timber building. The conference provides an invaluable forum to address pressing challenges and opportunities influencing timber's role across the built landscape. Technical sessions will cover research updates, emerging products, building code enhancements, and best practice case studies. For more information, visit <https://timberoffsiteconstruction.com>

SEPTEMBER

13: NTHA NSW State Awards. More details to follow. Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

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. Contact alicia@ntha.com.au

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

29-31: Forestry Australia's 2024 Symposium – Mercure Ballarat Convention Centre, Golden Point, VIC. Theme: Healthy and resilient forests for our future, will facilitate conversation and collaboration that regardless of land tenure and ownership, healthy and resilient forests should be the objective for all forest and land managers. The Symposium is a focused three-day gathering, consisting of two days of plenary and concurrent sessions, and a day of Field Trips. The two-day program will feature a range of Keynote and Invited Speakers, who are experts and thought leaders in their field. The Symposium will also feature several social functions, facilitating networking and collaboration in an informal and relaxed environment. For more information, visit <https://www.forestryconference.com.au/>

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Farm Forestry Assist Program - Grant applications now open

Supporting WA's farmers and landowners to grow pine trees on their properties.

THE Forest Product Commission's (FPC) Farm Forestry Assist Program, established in 2018, is a one-off grant for farmers and other landowners to plant pine trees on their properties.

It is open to farmers and landowners who are interested in establishing 20 to 50-hectare pine plantations subject to criteria such as location, scale, soil, access, and management of the plantations to ensure that any resulting plantings have the capacity to help support Western Australia's softwood industry.

Successful applicants receive free, high-quality pine (*Pinus radiata*) seedlings from our West Manjimup Nursery and Seed Centre.

The pine seedlings available through this grant have been developed through a long-running tree improvement program, with selections based on drought-resistance, productivity, and timber properties.

Successful applicants can also access technical assistance to ensure the establishment process results in a healthy and productive plantation.

Since the launch of the program, more than 750,000 pine (*Pinus radiata*) seedlings



New pine tree plantations will make an important difference in the future of the softwood timber industry in Western Australia. Image: Shutterstock.

have been planted across 20 properties with total area of over 550 hectares.

Established plantings have the capacity to diversify income, complement farm operations, provide land care benefits, sequester carbon for financial gain and carbon offset, and contribute to meeting Western Australia's future timber and fibre demand.

The program complements the State's \$350 million softwood investment plan to ensure a robust and sustainable forestry industry.

WHEN DO APPLICATIONS FOR EOIs CLOSE?

“SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS RECEIVE FREE, HIGH-QUALITY PINE SEEDLINGS

Applications close at 5 pm on Friday, 3 May 2024. Late applications may be considered for the 2024 program at the discretion of FPC but are discouraged. If not considered for 2024, they may be eligible for the 2025 program.

IS THERE A MINIMUM PLANTATION AREA?

Yes, planting should be a minimum 20-hectares in size.

DO THE PLANTATIONS HAVE TO BE IN A SPECIFIC LOCATION?

The plantation must be established within Dardanup cell of the Softwood Industry Hubs as outlined in the FPC's Softwood Industry Strategy for Western Australia.

To ensure that your plantation will be able to contribute to WA's softwood industry, grant eligibility criteria may include:

- located within a viable haul distance from processing facilities;
- located in areas which have at least 600 mm annual rainfall in order to support healthy plantation growth;
- have access suitable for heavy vehicles and trucks to facilitate harvesting in the future; and
- soils that are free draining to a minimum of 2.5m and not saline.

Please refer to the Grant Eligibility Criteria and the Establishment Checklist prior to registering your interest.

IS THERE A DEADLINE FOR PLANTATION ESTABLISHMENT?

Yes, the plantations must be established during the winter planting season once seedlings are provided.

WHO OWNS THE TREES AFTER ESTABLISHMENT?

The owner of the property has full possession of the trees and has all rights to the trees.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A FARM FORESTRY ASSIST GRANT?

If you are interested in applying for a Farm Forestry Assist grant, please complete the expression of interest form and email it to farm.forestry@fpc.wa.gov.au

For more information on the grant criteria and how to apply click here.

For the FPC's Softwood Industry Strategy for Western Australia click here.

Hyne Group expands into pallet manufacturing

THE Hyne Group has announced that pallet manufacturing will soon be a part of the broader Group operations, following the acquisition of Rodpak.

Rodpak is a Melbourne based pallet and packaging manufacturer that, like the rest of the Hyne Group, prides itself on strong sustainability credentials and a commitment to producing premium quality products.

This announcement comes just over two years since the Hyne Group partnership with UK based company, James Jones and Sons Ltd, and the combined Group's focus on achieving growth and expansion.

Hyne Group CEO, Jim Bindon said the acquisition is an exciting addition for the company:

"Rodpak is a highly regarded business with a long history in the manufacture of softwood timber pallets, with quality equipment and technology, and great customer relationships. All these factors are very consistent with the core position of the Hyne Group, which has operated in Australia for over 140 years.

"While it will be business as usual for Rodpak's brand, staff, suppliers, and customers, being a part of the Hyne Group brings the strengths of the international connections with James Jones and Sons Ltd, who are a leading pallet manufacturer in Europe with several sites throughout the

United Kingdom.

"The broader security of being a part of a large timber manufacturing business, also brings further certainty for the Rodpak business and its customer base." Mr Bindon said.

The Hyne Group has been a long-term supplier of timber to the pallet industry, and this remains a core focus for the sawmilling operations.

Mr Bindon stated the Hyne strategy is not to add new capacity to the pallet market, but rather work with customers and industry participants who are ready to exit the industry or explore strategic partnerships as part of their own succession process.

"Continuing to supply these long-term Hyne pallet customers remains an essential part of the broader Group strategy,

"This acquisition has no impact to our high-quality, structural framing product range for the construction sector, which continues to be a critical focus for the Hyne Timber business.

"I am very pleased the current owner, Dean Roderick,



Jim Bindon, CEO of Hyne Group and Dean Roderick of Rodpak, welcome the new ownership in order to take the company forward.

will be staying on with the business, as he is well respected in the market and indeed internationally within the pallet sector. Dean has been known to the James Jones & Sons pallet business for some years, and he is most highly regarded by them also." Mr Bindon concluded.

Dean Roderick said the new ownership model was a welcome move to take the company forward:

"Becoming part of a national and global ownership model is a significant milestone for us as a business, for our team members, customers and suppliers and we have been pleased with the process to get to this point.

"Rodpak is a great business

with strong partnerships, built over many years. With the local strength and global reach of the Hyne Group, I am very confident the company is moving in a great direction, and I personally look forward to working with the broader Hyne Group team." Mr Roderick said.

The full acquisition of Rodpak will finalise on 1 May 2024 subject to all Completion Precedents being met.

Hyne Timber was established in 1882 and today operates a range of large-scale softwood sawmills and engineered wood products manufacturing assets, including Australia's first Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) processing facility.

In 2022, a partnership with UK based timber company James Jones and Sons Ltd (JJSL) was announced, with JJSL becoming the majority owner of the Hyne Group.

In 2023, the Hyne Group announced a partnership with the Rocky Point landscaping products business in Yatala, Queensland, in which Hyne Group is now the majority owner.

For more information on the Hyne Group, click here.



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Growers and AFCA sign Australian Forest Industries ForestFit™ MOU

FOREST Growers and contracting businesses are strengthening risk management and increasing confidence in Australian forest products with the signing of the Australian Forest Industries ForestFit™ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The ForestFit™ Standard has been the result of years of work to contextualise international quality, work health and safety and environmental management standards for the requirements of active forest management.

AFCA General Manager Tim Lester said “ForestFit™ is a world leading scheme that has been codesigned

with Growers and contracting businesses. It is another great example of the proactive professional partnerships that are key to the ongoing success of everyone.

“Forestry operations are high risk activities and require great skill. Working to the ForestFit™ Standard, certified annually by an independent third party, means all stakeholders can be assured that the critical



ForestFit™ site assessments are part of the pilot for the National Optimal Auditing Pathway. Image: AFCA

management, Grower signatories of the MOU and their partner contracting businesses will be undertaking a pilot of the draft National Optimal Auditing Pathway to test and validate onsite assessment activities for ForestFit™ certified businesses. Outcomes will contribute to the finalised pathway for national adoption.”

AFPA Chief Executive Officer Diana Hallam

risks are managed, and performance is first class.”

ForestFit™ Project Manager with AFCA, Dionne Olsen said, “The industry has successfully developed a national Standard for contracting businesses to certify their business systems and manage their operational risk whilst supporting Growers to manage their commercial and reputational risks.

“To support the streamlining of roles and responsibilities for risk

said, “AFPA welcomes the ForestFit™ MOU and the role it will play streamlining the strategic partnership between two critical sections of the supply chain in Growers and contracting businesses.”

Certification to the Standard provides assurance of performance and continuous improvement. The scheme is aligned to international management system standards ISO 9001: Quality, 45001: Occupational health and safety and 14001: Environment and contextualised for harvest and haulage, silviculture, civil works and the production of minor forest products.

The ForestFit™ Standard is undergoing its first revision, with stakeholders invited to make comment.

For more information about ForestFit™ click here.

“NATIONAL STANDARD TO CERTIFY BUSINESS SYSTEMS AND MANAGE OPERATIONAL RISK



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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.

To find out more:

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Breakthroughs in 3D printed wood

AN eco-friendly, water-based ink has been developed by Rice University to create 3D printed wood. In previous approaches, there has been a lot of waste due to the shaping process of the wood which has led to increase in costs and environmental impact. However, the newly created additive-free, water-based ink is made from lignin and cellulose, key natural components of wood.

Speaking on this new innovative approach, Professor Muhammad Rahman said, "The ability to create a wood structure directly from its own natural components sets the stage for a more eco-friendly and innovative future...It heralds a new era of sustainable 3D-printed wood construction".

The new method is groundbreaking and could continue to revolutionise the field.

"Unlike previous attempts, this method exclusively uses nanoscale wood components for 3D printing, marking a significant advancement in the field," said Pulickel Ajayan, the Benjamin M. and Mary Greenwood Anderson Professor in Engineering and professor and chair of materials science and nano-engineering.

The researchers optimised the composition of the ink by adjusting the ratio of lignin, cellulose nanofibers, and nanocrystals, yet they also maintained the natural lignin-cellulose balance. When compared to natural wood, the 3D printed product was found to be incredibly similar in



Muhammad Rahman (centre) an assistant research professor of materials science and nanoengineering at Rice University and his lab. Photo: Gustavo Raskoky / Rice University

texture, scent, and strength.

The breakthrough comes at a time when scientists are more and more looking to 3D printed wood as a means of creating environmental sustainability. Recently, researchers from MIT also published their results of successfully creating a method of lab-grown wood. The scientists' goal is to one day be able to easily 3D print wooden furniture. The researchers

utilised cells from the common zinnia flower to which then used hormones to adjust its strength, density and stiffness when printing custom wooden shapes.

"The idea is that you can grow these plant materials in exactly the shape that you need,

so you don't need to do any subtractive manufacturing after the fact, which reduces the amount of energy and waste. There is a lot of potential to expand this and grow three-dimensional structures," says lead author Ashley Beckwith, a recent PhD graduate.

For information on Rice University research, click here.

For information on the MIT research, click here.

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FWPA's guides and assets already making their mark

THE FWPA-funded three-part carbon guide series – published towards the end of 2023 to support industry efforts to combat climate change – has been met with an enthusiastic response from stakeholders.

Since the first carbon guide was made available in September, the online webpage has received more than 1,966 views by 1,082 unique users and since 7 Feb 2024 we have had 132 (tracked) downloads of the carbon guides + social media assets on the landing page.

The guides are an example of FWPA providing industry with the knowledge to help create widespread understanding amongst timber users and policy makers of the positive role of forestry and wood products in the face of a changing climate.

The information in the guides is designed to help members promote the advantages of forestry and timber use and support the Australian Government's goals of a 43% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF FORESTRY IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

While every industry has a part to play in addressing the changing climate, forestry



FWPA and WoodSolutions have created easy-to-use resources to help promote the timber industry and the carbon sequestering abilities of trees.

occupies a unique position thanks to its role in the global carbon cycle. The guides shed light on the multifaceted positive impacts of sustainably managed forests and use of the resulting wood products on Australia's carbon balance.

Head of Built Environment Programs at FWPA, Kevin Peachey, said that while the guides illustrate the widely acknowledged carbon sequestration capabilities of forests, they also promote the often-underestimated role that wood plays in carbon storage during its service life and after disposal.

"The industry has a compelling, positive story to share when it comes to carbon, and we must be our own strongest promoters," Peachey said.

"As we've seen from the uptake by members since the

guides were published, they are already informing our industry's dialogue around carbon and forestry.

"By coming together in this way, all members can do their bit to help position forestry as key to shaping a future in which timber is recognised and embraced for its inherent advantages in helping to curb carbon emissions. In turn, this will drive sustainable industry growth."

Australian Forest Products Association Communications Director Joe Prevedello agrees the guides are a positive resource for the industry to tap into.

"The FWPA carbon guides have provided an excellent resource to help easily explain what can be complex concepts, with the help of case studies and visual graphics," Prevedello said.

"When you need to explain something related to production trees and carbon to the uninitiated, these carbon guides are the way to go."

- The Carbon Primer and Glossary is for forest and wood product sector company representatives.
- The Forests, Plantations, Wood Products and Australia's Carbon Balance Guide is for policy makers.
- The WoodSolutions Technical Design Guide, 'The Role of Wood Products in Zero Carbon Buildings' is a valuable resource for timber and wood product users, including building and design professionals aiming to incorporate sustainable materials.

To further support industry stakeholders to actively and constructively contribute to the ongoing carbon and sustainability dialogue, FWPA has created a complimentary library of freely available social media assets, with infographics, images and short animations for organisations to download and use in their own communications and social media channels.

FWPA's series of carbon guides was created in collaboration with thinkstepanz and Dr Fabiano Ximines, Senior Research Scientist at the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

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The right to disconnect – what is fair and reasonable

By **PETER MAGUIRE**

THERE has been a lot of noise about the potential challenges for employers arising from employees getting a legislated “right to disconnect” from work. The truth is that a lot of that noise is just that – noise.

Let’s have a look at what this ‘right to disconnect’ really is and why it might actually not be a bad thing.

So, when does this all happen?

The legislated right takes effect for businesses with 15 or more employees 6 months after the legislation receives royal assent and for smaller businesses 12 months after that. So we have a bit of time to work through the implications for our own businesses.

What does ‘disconnect’ mean?

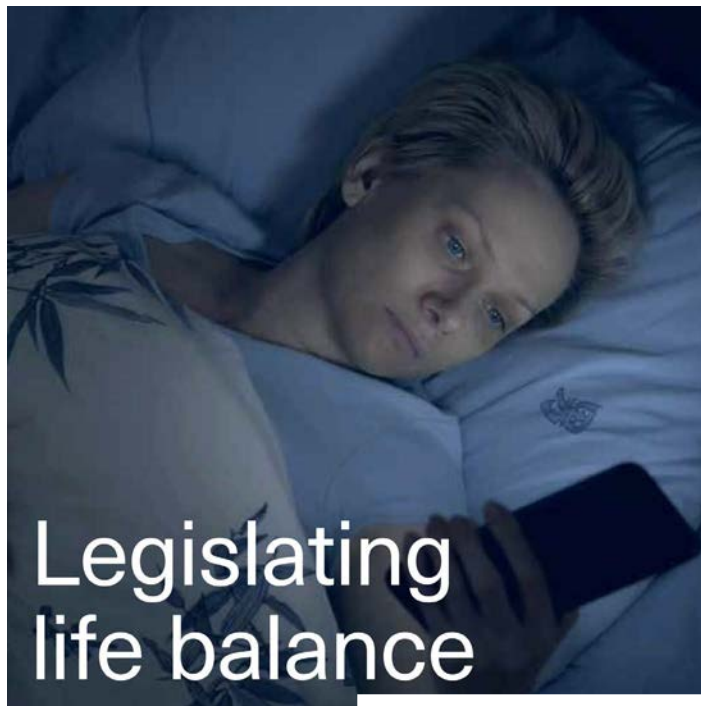
What it essentially means is that an employee can decide not to monitor, read, or respond to unreasonable contact (actual or attempted) outside their contracted working hours from their employer or a third party like a customer or supplier.

That doesn’t mean that their employer or a third party can’t send them a communication outside their contracted hours – it just means that they don’t have to make themselves available to receive or respond to it.

What does ‘unreasonable’ mean?

As always with these sorts of things, there are a few factors that come into play under the legislation like:

- Why the contact is made.
- How it is made.
- What disruption it causes to



1/ Peter Maquire... an expert in workplace relations compliance and high-performance leadership coach.

the employee.

- If the employee is compensated for being on call or for working additional hours.
- The role the employee performs and their level of responsibility.
- The employee’s personal circumstances like family or caring responsibilities.

The more senior a role is and the more that remuneration is structured to compensate for out of hours contact, the less likely it is that there will be a problem. Similarly, where roles are involved in out of hours contact because they require them to deal with people in different time zones, that will be OK, provided that the contact is not unreasonable having regard to the factors noted above.



There are also exemptions where contact is due to an emergency or for welfare reasons. Some operational considerations like contacting workers to see if someone can fill in for someone who hasn’t come in are also OK.

What happens if there is a disagreement?

There is a requirement that employer and employee try to work it out first.

If they can’t, either party can take it to the Fair Work Commission which has the power to order an employer

to stop or modify contact or an employee to stop refusing contact.

Additionally, if the employee perceived that they had been penalised or subjected to disadvantage for exercising that right, they could make a claim of adverse action to the Fair Work Commission under the General Protections provisions of the Fair Work Act.

The ‘Work and Care’ review

On 29 January 2024, the Fair Work Commission announced that it is to undertake a “Work and Care” Review of modern awards on the instructions of the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations to address a number of recommendations arising from a Senate Inquiry into Work and Care.

What this really means is that we can expect the legislative changes in relation to the “right to disconnect” to be transitioned into modern awards with the prospect for further expansion of the Commission’s role in dispute resolution and further prescription of employer responsibilities under modern awards as well as legislation.

So, is all of this going to be a problem for me?

For the vast majority of workplaces, the answer is probably “no, other than in the case of an emergency or for welfare purposes” which is of course allowed under the legislation.

The qualifier on that is that we are yet to see what the Fair Work Commission does under the Work and Care regime.

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Sure, there will be times when you are working into the night and want to get an email off to an employee for their attention when they come in in the morning. So it doesn't matter if they don't see it tonight - as long as they do see and act on it in the morning. Of course, you can minimise the potential for issues if you delay sending communications or use the scheduling facility on your email service for it to automatically go to the employee's inbox at the time that you want them to know about it.

It really should be that easy to manage in most cases.

Do you really want to be contacting your employees outside their contracted hours?

Because we live in such a digitally connected "look at it now" world, if you send something to an employee

outside their contracted working hours, there are many who will not be able to resist having a look.

If, by having a look, that raises something for them that creates some level of anxiety and that in turn interferes with their state of mind and/or their sleep and/or their leisure time/rest and recovery and/or the relationship with their partner.....well, do you really want an anxious, tired, sleep deprived employee coming into work the next day?

That is why I suggested the scheduling function for emails and try to avoid phone calls and texts.

Connection to psychosocial hazards

Around the country, State and Territories are progressively legislating a positive duty on employers to eliminate or control psychosocial hazards. These hazards include remote work, unreasonable job

demands, lack of job control and inadequate reward and recognition – there is a clear connection to the "right to disconnect".

So, if it isn't managed well, there could be a WorkCover claim or worse as well as the exposure to an adverse action complaint noted above.

What do you need to do?

This is a great opportunity to have a bit of a reality check – are you or your customers or suppliers making unreasonable demands on your people?

Do they feel under pressure to respond even though it might be disruptive to their personal lives and needs?

Is that affecting their wellbeing because the contact has caused them to lose sleep or impacted on family or personal time and relationships?

You need to understand what the situation is for your people and put in place the

right measures to minimise the impacts of out of hours contact on your people, always ensuring that where it is necessary, it is reasonable, and they are properly remunerated for it. And you need to engage your people in the conversation as an organisation, in teams and with individual employees.

So, in closing, is this really just about legislating a right to life balance? And is that a bad thing?

I don't think so.

Peter Maguire is the owner and practice leader of Ridgeline HR, an award winning HRM consulting practice which he founded in 2000. Peter is an acknowledged expert in workplace relations compliance and a high-performance leadership coach with over 40 years' experience in HRM. Ridgeline HR's by-line is Helping PEOPLE in BUSINESS and that is essentially what Peter does – help business people with their people business.

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Have fun this school holidays in NSW

PART TWO OF TWO

LAST week, we brought to you part one of our way to 'have fun this school holidays' list. In part two, we continue to highlight creative ideas to get families outside and having adventures! Enjoy the NSW Forestry Corporation's list of camping grounds, day excursions, forests to explore, and scenic picnic spots.

List of popular activities:

- Orara East State Forest – Coffs Harbour - Picnic at Niigi Niigi/Sealy Lookout.



Exploring the NSW state forests and activities is fun for the whole family. Photo: Forestry Corporation NSW

Take in the views of Coffs Harbour from the Forest Sky Pier and Korora Lookout, walk the Gumgali, Garraan. gurr, Rainforest, Bangalow

and Midway tracks, enjoy a coffee at the Nyanggan Gapi Café and take to the high ropes course at TreeTops Adventures Coffs Harbour.

- Styx River State Forest – Located between Armidale and Ebor – Tour along Styx Forest Way to Wattle Flat and camp on the open grassy areas next to Styx River, wet a line, land a trout. Free camping, basic facilities and dogs are always welcome.
- Wild Cattle Creek State Forest – near Dorrigo and Cascade – Recently upgraded day use area on the stunning Mobong Creek, some limited camping spots (first in best dressed) with picnic facilities linking to the amazing Mobong walking track back to village of Cascade.
- Wedding Bells State Forest – west of Woolgoolga - Take

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the kids mountain biking on the fresh single tracks managed by the Woolgoolga Mountain Bike Club.

- Bom Bom State Forest – South of Grafton - Family mountain biking on the undulating single trails managed by the Grafton Mountain Bike Club.
- Pine Creek State Forest – A mixture of family friendly and intermediate mountain bike trails managed by the Coffs Harbour Mountain Bike Club, including the famous Cows with Guns and Sawmill trails. For a scenic drive: follow Crossmaglen Rd out to Tuckers Nob State Forest, visit Never Never Creek at Gleniffer Hall, head along the new Gleniffer Road back into Bellingen for coffee, shopping and cake.
- Nambucca State Forest – Hyland Park – Access deep creek from the northern edge of the forest with a number of secluded spots to cool off or go fishing. Take in a sunset over the water looking west towards Viewmont and Bollanulla Nature Reserves.
- Newry State Forest - Urunga - Paddleboard or kayak along

“ENDLESS PLACES TO DISCOVER AND EXPERIENCES TO SHARE



Wild Cattle Creek State Forest. Photo: Forestry Corporation NSW

Picket Hill Creek into the Kalang River. Gain access to the water off Martell’s Road, paddle down to Urunga with the outgoing tide.

- Double Duke State Forest – near New Italy Rest Area, south of Ballina – Explore the coastal forests and ranges, take the kids for a ride around the New Italy Mountain Bike Forest. Enjoy a coffee at Tastes of New Italy Café to break up the drive if you’re heading up or down the coast.
- Visit the beautiful Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens – Mogo State Forest
- Pack a picnic basket – Bermagui Picnic Area – Bermagui State Forest
- Take a leisurely walk at one of the many South Coast walking trails.
- Explore hundreds of

kilometers of sweet Single Track at one of the many State Forest based mountain bike destinations.

- Try and spot a platypus at Imlay Creek Rest Area – Timbillica State Forest.
- Wake up to bird song – Paddys River Dam – Bago State Forest

Forestry Corporation’s Partnerships Leader Ryan Ellis said there’s been a steady pace in facility improvements over the past year, helping the public to make the most of their family day trips.

“Sealy Lookout is an award-winning tourism attraction and always a hit, the best place to start any holiday by getting your bearings and setting off in any direction. You can see up and down the coast and along the Great Dividing Range, as well as into the surrounding hinterland. It’s perfect for a

short visit or easily fill in a day with the nature walks.”

Forestry Corporation’s Southern NSW Partnerships Leader, Brendan Grimson, said State forests offer a lot to people wanting to get away for a day trip.

“Yadboro Flat Camp Ground, Bermagui Picnic Area and Scrubby Creek Rest Area are just the tip of the iceberg of family friendly locations on the South Coast.

Visitors should visit the Forestry Corporation website and make a note of closures, notices and Solid Fuel Fire Bans before heading out, stick to formed roads and trails and be mindful of other forest users and changing conditions.

With more than 2-million hectares of State forests across NSW, there are endless places to discover and experiences to share.

“Our State forests have spectacular scenery and award-winning visitor areas. I encourage everyone to get out and discover their new favourite places and make the most of the favourable conditions these holidays,” Ryan said.

For more information about Forestry Corporation of NSW click here.

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ALSO NEW FROM WOODSOLUTIONS

WoodSolutions team has recently updated its Technical Design Guide Mid-rise Timber Building Structural Engineering to better cater to the changing needs of today’s structural engineers.

The updates were made in response to the increasing use of timber building systems in mid-rise construction, and the demand for engineering and design professionals to be familiar with requirements.

The guide provides structural engineers with the latest state-of-the-art design information to enable them to confidently design a mid-rise

timber building.

Additionally, WoodSolutions recently published its 2023 Sustainability eBook, with a focus on the evolving

“PROMOTE ADVANTAGES OF FORESTRY AND TIMBER USE

landscape of sustainability in the built environment, as well as the actions being taken to address the changing climate.

Download the guides here:

- Carbon Series and Social Media Assets
- Technical Design Guide: Mid-rise Timber Building Structural Engineering
- 2023 Sustainability eBook

Crafting fully functional cars predominately from wood

DURING childhood, many of us enjoyed the classic puzzle game of assembling famous cars from 3D wooden pieces. Yet, a remarkable duo, Well, and his young son, has elevated this concept, crafting fully functional cars predominantly from wood.

Artist and YouTube duo 'ND - Working Art' boast 2.8 million subscribers on their channel, dedicated to showcasing their wooden creations. Initially, they embarked on their journey by crafting wooden toy cars from blocks of timber. One captivating video depicts the meticulous woodcarving process of a Mercedes S600 Maybach 2020, while another showcases a meticulously detailed toy Honda Civic Type R 2020. Their ingenuity reached new heights when they constructed a wooden model Ferrari Aperta, allowing their son to actually sit in and drive, igniting his imagination as a supercar driver. Complete with a sleek white paint job, chrome badges, and intricate detailing down to the gearstick, the wooden car looks authentic. This raises the inevitable question: Why not create a fully functional real-life car entirely out of wood?



- 1/ **The Ferrari Aperta made from wood is large enough to sit in.** Image: ND Wood Art
- 2/ **The fully functional recreation of the Tesla Cybertruck made from wood.** Image: ND Wood Art
- 3/ **A smart tablet installed in the Tesla Cybertruck maintains the Tesla connection to technology.** Image: ND Wood Art

The duo decided on a Lamborghini Vision GT. They began by sketching out the design, assembling a metal frame with a real engine attached to the rear axle, and then came the woodcarving. Finally, after 96 days of craftsmanship, the car was finished—complete with working lights! The father and son celebrated by taking hold of the wooden steering wheel and taking the car to the roads.

The duo has also created an EBR 105 Tank, a Rolls Royce, and even a train!

But probably the craftsmen most attention-grabbing build would be their recreation of the Tesla Cybertruck! The fully functioning truck even comes fitted with a tablet, keeping the high-tech spirit of Tesla alive, and a fully functioning cyberquad that sits in the truck-bed. The wooden build took ND - Working Art 100 days to build, but their efforts paid off, having earned the attention of the spaceman himself, Elon Musk. Upon completion of the wooden recreation, ND - Working Art reached out to Mr Musk on his social media platform 'X', saying:

"I am a passionate content creator with a deep love for wooden vehicles and a tremendous admiration for

both you and Tesla. Over the years, I've embarked on several wooden car projects to gain valuable experience. And today I launched a car that I am very impressed with, the Cybertruck...I hope to have the honour of gifting this wooden Cybertruck to you and Tesla, and wish you and Tesla continued success and maintain your position in the international arena." Elon Musk accepted the kind offer.

To see more of their creations click here.



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