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# Who's working for your vote?

## AFCA's election preview, exclusive to *T&F Enews*.

By **TIM LESTER**

AS they say in the classics, to the victor go the spoils. In the case of a Federal Election the spoils mean control of the House of Representatives in Canberra and the opportunity to direct the considerable resources of the Australian Government to a political and policy agenda.

Barring a repeat of the protracted negotiations for the hung Parliament following the 2010 election, in a few short days we should have the results which will set the course of the nation for the next three years.

In the 2022 election, forest industries were extremely successful in securing \$300 million in commitments and funding for a range of initiatives, including \$100 million for a new research institute, \$74 million for plantation establishment grants and \$10 million for workforce training. These investments are still being



**Unless we're in for a repeat of 2010, one of these two men will be Prime Minister come Sunday.** Images: supplied

rolled out so while the lack of major commitments to forestry industries is disappointing, it is also not necessarily a surprise.

Both major parties did turn their attention to housing, particularly the challenge of building more, sooner and more affordably – at least for first home buyers. Most detached and semi-detached housing in Australia uses timber frames and an uplift in the housing construction market would deliver benefits along forest products supply chains.

While general economic conditions will be an important influence on the business environment, for AFCA our interest through the campaign has been on resource security and stability. This was the underpinning for the number one priority in our election platform: that parties recognise that forests need to be actively managed including sustainable harvesting of production regrowth.




The Coalition was unequivocal in its statements that a Dutton Government would not support any

further bans on native timber harvesting and instead that it would work with State and Territory Governments to apply the Tasmanian approach of Permanent Timber Production Zones in other parts of the country to support both native and plantation timber.

The Coalition also promised \$40 million in matched grants to establish a new Timber Manufacturing Expansion Program, encouraging local utilisation of wood and the creation

Cont P 3

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From P 2

of more jobs in regional communities. Noting that it would take some time to build capacity and supply lines, well-targeted strengthening of local production could provide greater stability in the market and lead to better opportunities for supplier businesses.

Meanwhile the Labor Party has not released a forest policy statement and will continue to roll out the programs from 2022. In a letter to AFCA, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry the Hon. Julie Collins MP noted: "... both the Prime Minister and I have

**“AFCA STANDS READY TO WORK WITH WHICHEVER PARTY EMERGES VICTORIOUS.**

and continue to be strong advocates for both the plantation and native forest sectors. Our Government's position on native forestry remains unchanged. An Albanese Labor Government will never walk away from timber workers and communities.”

The ALP's commitments include \$8.6 million to extend Regional Forestry Hubs to June 2027, \$4.4 million to combat illegally logged timber imports, and up to \$24 million for the Boyer paper mill for decarbonisation and diversification.

Should the result on Saturday be minority government, the minor parties and independents will be critical to secure confidence and supply in the House of Representatives, and for the passage of legislation through the Senate. That said, the polls and betting markets have swung strongly

to suggest Labor will be returned. But elections are won seat by seat, not on national averages. Surprises do happen.

Of greatest concern is the Greens Party who continue to promote mischaracterisations and mistruths about industry regulation and operations. Early in the campaign the party announced that a ban of native forestry would be a condition of support for a Labor minority government. Their policy includes a \$10 billion investment over 20 years for ecological restoration and a just transition for workers, a proposal which highlights that a move from production industry to a preservation approach is enormously expensive for the taxpayer.

At the other end of the political spectrum, Pauline Hanson's One Nation has also released a forest policy focused on making

Australia self-sufficient in timber, including expanding plantation forestry and maintaining current levels of native harvesting. The party would also promote the use of Australian timber in construction through a local wood first policy for government procurement.

Regardless of the outcome, I would like to congratulate all the candidates for stepping up and having a go. Politics is a difficult, messy, often ugly and mostly thankless business. AFCA stands ready to work with whichever party emerges victorious to ensure our amazing forestry services businesses have the best opportunities for long-term success.

**On the cover: While the ALP has delivered on 2022's forestry promises, a 2025 commitment to native forestry from the Coalition is a vital difference.**  
Image: Shutterstock

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# Forest and wood products dinner

Timber luminaries are hosting a not-to-be missed event.

TIMBER Queensland, Timber NSW and the North East NSW Forestry Hub are hosting a premier networking event celebrating the past, present and future of the forestry and timber sectors in Casino on Thursday, 15 May 2025.

Timber Queensland's CEO Mick Stephens said the networking dinner has been scheduled to coincide with the renowned Primex Expo.

"Primex is emerging as one of the largest forestry expos on the east coast and



**Dinner tickets come with entry to the forestry, food and agribusiness goodness at Primex Expo.**  
Image: supplied?

an important opportunity for suppliers, growers and timber producers to network

nationally and particularly across Queensland and NSW," Stephens said.

"To that end we are very pleased to be co-hosting a side-event dinner in Casino with Timber NSW to provide additional value and networking for the industry.

"The dinner offers an invaluable opportunity for industry professionals to connect, share insights, and discuss the evolving landscape of forestry and timber in Australia. We appreciate the support of AE Gibson and Hurford's, their sponsorship has ensured the event is affordable for all to attend."

For the low price of \$35, attendees will receive a

two-course meal, plus entry to the pre-dinner function with two complimentary drinks and nibbles, plus an added bonus.

"The dinner ticket price also includes a three-day Primex Expo entry where will be a comprehensive array of trade exhibits, industry presentations and working demonstrations," said Stephens.

Highlighting the evening will be guest speaker Garan Hale, founder of Designer Woodworks.

A master woodworker, Hale is renowned for his craftsmanship in fine furniture, wooden boat restoration and guitar making. His commitment to sustainability is evident through his efforts in reforesting his Northern NSW property with endemic species, creating a seed bank for future generations. Hale also emphasises the use of ethically sourced Australian timbers and salvaged logs, which he mills on a bandsaw and solar-kiln dries for his bespoke creations.

The Primex expo will feature all the best in agribusiness brands and suppliers, including some 40 forestry suppliers alongside the paddock to plate delights of the region's food and drink producers.

The dinner will be held at the Casino RSM Club from 6–9pm. Bookings close 7 May, so get in quick! To book and for more details, click here.

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**“DINNER OFFERS AN INVALUABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TO CONNECT**

# TAFE shows off future tradies

Brisbane will host Australia's biggest skills show in June.



Team Queensland at 2023 WorldSkills Australia National Championships. Image: supplied

TAFE Queensland is celebrating after more than 100 of its students have been selected to represent Queensland in competition against hundreds of apprentices from across Australia. The students will show off their trade skills at the 2025 WorldSkills Australia National Championships in Brisbane on 12–14 June.

The National Championships is held every two years and is Australia's largest and most successful vocational education excellence event. With 63 skill area competitions on offer, students from all over the country compete in every vocation imaginable – from carpentry to cloud computing.

The top performers in

eligible skills may earn a coveted spot in Team Australia (The Skillaroos), to compete at the 48th WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai in 2026. This global event will bring together around 1300 competitors from over 60 countries, making it the largest skills showcase in the world.

Skills that are vital to meeting current needs are foregrounded at WorldSkills, including manufacturing and engineering technology, construction and building technology and IT.

TAFE Queensland Chief Executive Officer John Tucker said TAFE Queensland is excited to continue its strong support for WorldSkills Australia, partnering with the Queensland Government to

bring the nation's biggest skills event to Queensland.

"As the largest and most trusted Vocational Education and Training (VET) provider in the state, TAFE Queensland's students and teachers are among the best trained and most skilled in Australia," Tucker said.

"In fact, over 80% of the WorldSkills Queensland team is made up of TAFE Queensland competitors, showcasing our talent and dedication to supporting both our students, employers and industries.

"The WorldSkills Australia 2025 National Championships and Skills Show underscores our leadership in the training market and our commitment to providing industry-relevant

training that transforms lives, industries and communities.

"This event is about recognising and celebrating excellence in both participant skill development and educator training delivery and everyone at TAFE Queensland takes great pride in the success and excellence of our competitors and colleagues," he added.

This event is proudly supported by the Queensland Government and TAFE Queensland.

To attend the free competition or find virtual links for watching competitions remotely at Channel WSA, visit WorldSkills Australia at <https://www.worldskills.org.au/2025-national-championships/>

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# Special publishers' note

## A recent high court ruling has led to calls for legislative change.

THE High Court of Australia recently handed down a ruling that will allow activist groups legal standing to take action in the Land and Environment Court against Forestry operations in NSW.

Previously, only government entities such as the NSW Environmental Protection Authority (NSW EPA) could bring cases against forestry operations in the state in cases where it was alleged foresters had acted outside their duties and obligations. Under the new ruling, proceedings "can be commenced and maintained by persons with a 'special interest' in the subject matter of the proceedings".

In practice, this means that groups such as South East Forest Rescue (SEFR), which initiated the case that led to this ruling, are now free to pursue legal action whenever they consider an integrated forestry operations approval has been infringed.

SEFR is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that states its purpose is to "put an end to native forest logging and wood chipping". Its members are mostly non-expert activists. There is nothing listed in

its publications about allowing responsible operations to provide renewable timber for building homes or any other forms of construction.

Native forestry operations in NSW are already the subject of strict environmental conditions and the NSW EPA has legislated responsibility to regulate native forestry. Under the new ruling, non-expert bodies can now bring cases. This advances the stated goal of some activist groups to make life difficult and expensive for native forestry organisations. The rationale is that if the costs of legally defending forestry operations become too high, those operations will collapse. Of course, this will place even greater demand on imported timber to meet our needs.

*Enews* reached out to both sides of Federal politics asking if this ruling meant that new legislation on the issue was required to remove the unintended consequence of empowering anti-forestry



**Tasmanian Senator Jonno Duniam, Shadow Minister for the Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, with members of the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub.** Photo: courtesy Jonno Duniam/X

activists – and the attendant costs to the NSW government of defending cases brought on the basis of non-expert opinion.

We are pleased the Shadow Minister for the Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, Jonno Duniam provided the following policy statement:

"The Federal Coalition respects the judgements of the High Court.

"Like most Australians with a strong interest in forestry, we are concerned about the ongoing and increasing attacks on the industry from inner-city activists. The people who launch these attacks typically have no regard for the fact that forestry in Australia is already heavily regulated and is practised in the most

sustainable form anywhere in the world.

"Attempts to frustrate or stop forestry from occurring in Australia are completely counterproductive from an environmental perspective – as they end up offshoring such

activity to parts of the world that do not observe the same high environmental standards that we do here.

"If elected, the Coalition will seek to limit the standing of who can attempt to challenge lawful economic activity. We will also immediately terminate taxpayer funding of activist groups whose central mission is to try to stop or thwart vital economic activity, including forestry, across Australia," Duniam concluded

In previous policy announcements, the Coalition has committed to ending public funding for the Environmental Defence Organisation, which provides legal assistance to groups such as SEFR.

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**13: EUDR Insights Workshop – FWPA office, VIC and online.** Lunch - 12.00pm. Workshop 12.30-4.30pm. To register, please email [info@responsiblewood.org.au](mailto:info@responsiblewood.org.au)

**14: AFCA Mid-Year Forum & Dinner – Gold Coast, QLD.** The Forum will feature a tailored workshop on Chain of Responsibility for forest services businesses as well as a session on operator training and assessment requirements. To register, visit <https://afcaevents.zohobackstage.com.au/events/>

**15: NSW-Queensland forest & wood products industries dinner – Casino, NSW.** A networking event to celebrate the past, present, and future of the forestry and timber sectors. Dinner ticket includes entry into Primex Expo. For full detail and ticket purchase, visit <https://www.timberqld.com.au/event-details/primex-nsw-queensland-forest-wood-products-industries-dinner>

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**26-30: LIGNA 25 – Hannover, Germany.** The world's leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing plant, machinery and tools. For more details visit <https://www.ligna.de/en/for-visitors>

**30: NTHA SA/NT/WA State Awards – National Wine Centre, Adelaide.** Join us in celebrating the SA, NT & WA Timber and Hardware Industry. Contact Tahlia at [events@ntha.com.au](mailto:events@ntha.com.au)

**JUNE**

**22-26: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Brisbane.** WCTE is the world's leading scientific forum for the presentation of the latest technical and architectural solutions and innovations in timber construction. For

more information visit <https://www.wcte2025.org/event/df0d5655-c16d-47df-b4a6-457a7dc63d96/wcte-2025>

**29-JULY 2: 5th International Conference on Timber Bridges – Rotorua, New Zealand.** The focus is on timber bridges and the current need for resilient infrastructure to support thriving communities. For more information and to register your interest, visit <https://ictb-conference.org/2025/>

**SEPTEMBER**

**2-3: Timber Queensland Biennial Conference "Doing Timber Business in Queensland" – Brisbane.** For more information, email [admin@timberqueensland.com.au](mailto:admin@timberqueensland.com.au)

**OCTOBER**

**13-14: Timber Construct 2025 – Melbourne.** To register your interest, visit <https://timberconstruct.org/>

**20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore.** For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/home>

**20-23: Forestry Australia 2025 Conference – Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide.** The conference theme is 'Restoring forests and landscapes to secure Australia's future' and aims to develop both local and national collaboration. For more details visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-conference/>

**22-23: Melbourne Build 25 – MCEC, Melbourne.** Victoria's largest construction and design show. For more details visit <https://melbournebuildexpo.com>

**23-24: Field Trip – Vietnam.** (Follows on from the woodchip and biomass seminar in Singapore.) For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/fieldtrip>

**24: GTTIA – The Barn, Mt Gambier, SA.** Nominations are now open for 2025 Green Triangle Timber Industry Awards. Nominate online: <https://gttia.com/nomination-form/> For full details on award categories and submission guidelines, visit: <https://gttia.com/2025-award-categories/>

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# Trees for productivity

## An upcoming landholder forum in Wangaratta hopes to encourage more farmers to embrace forestry.

FARM forestry is one of the key ways in which Australia can economically increase its reliable timber supply. Major industry groups including Timber Queensland have been trialling models (as reported in past Enews editions) that show the process is not only financially advantageous from an added wood fibre production perspective, but can help to increase farm health and productivity for other crops and, in particular, stock.

FWPA last year released a report on private farm forestry that was devised to help landholders considering the option to understand issues including the development of the sector and deliver some guidance to help break down knowledge barriers. (Click [here](#) to read.)

Now, the Murray Region Forestry Hub (MRFH), in partnership with the North East Catchment Management Authority, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and Wangaratta Rural City Council is holding an informative landholder forum aimed at empowering local farmers with practical and research-backed insights into the benefits of integrating forestry into farming systems.

Titled 'Boost Your Farm's Future: Unlock the Power of Trees for Productivity and Biodiversity', this free event will take place on 27 June 2025 in Wangaratta, featuring a range of topics presented by leading specialists with practical expertise in the sector.

Opening with presentations on the value of farm forestry,



**Farm forestry can help to keep stock such as cattle healthier by providing shelter from extreme weather and improving soil fertility, in addition to added timber incomes.** Image: courtesy Forestry Australia

the challenges of investment and the ways in which forestry groups have formed various partnerships with landowners, the agenda will also cover the future of forestry and biodiversity plantings from an economic, social, and environmental perspective, presented by noted forest ecologist Professor Rodney Keenan.

Dr Hugh Stewart, director of the Natural Resources Conservation Trust will present Case Study 1: Drawing perspective from a family farm experience. This will be followed by Phillipa Noble, senior farm forestry officer at the Victorian Department of Primary Industries presenting Case Study 2 on the role of forestry and biodiversity plantings in farming systems and emissions balance.

Economist Diana Gibbs, who is also a director at AFWI, will present Economic Aspects: Discussing the economics of establishing a forestry development – socio and regional contribution and market opportunity. Gibbs has

a storied history specialising in regional economic development and primary industries.

Other speakers include Billie Jones, carbon project coordinator at SFM Environment Services, talking about carbon market opportunities; Responsible Wood's Matt de Jongh discussing responsible forestry, biodiversity and the role of certification; Andrew Morgan, founder and managing director at SFM Environment Services, who will talk about on-farm forestry investment's challenges and opportunities; and Alice Hebron, general counsel and commercial strategy advisor at SFM, who will help attendees identify key risks and pitfalls in plantation forestry carbon project structures.

Overall, the forum presents an opportunity for landowners to explore practical strategies for integrating trees into their farming practices, boosting both productivity and environmental sustainability.

"The forum is aimed to ensure landholders get access to well-researched information to make informed decisions about their own properties," said Carlie Porteous from MRFH.

"More trees on land can have benefits for the landholder and broader community through flow-on economic stimulus. We are very excited to provide the opportunity for the questions to be answered and to ensure landholders are connecting with the right people to aid the decision-making process."

Delivered by experts with actual experience in the field, the forum represents a rare opportunity to ask questions that will receive accurately insightful answers. Topics will focus on factual information regarding the opportunities for trees on privately owned land, based on federally funded research outcomes from Hubs, Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA), Australian Forest & Wood Innovations (AFWI) and other key industry bodies.

The forum, to be held at the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre (33-37 Ford Street, Wangaratta,) Victoria on 27 June from 9:30am to 3:30pm is free and will be followed by a networking session with drinks and canapes from 3.30–5pm.

For more information and to secure your spot, click [here](#).

**MORE TREES ON LAND CAN HAVE BENEFITS FOR LANDHOLDERS**



# New online timber design micro-credential

WOODSOLUTIONS and the University of Tasmania have launched a groundbreaking Timber Design for Residential Construction micro-credential, providing professionals with the skills and knowledge to master sustainable timber design in compliance with Australian Standards.

This online, self-paced course – ideal for those looking to upskill without interrupting their careers – delivers industry-aligned content covering everything from timber properties and structural systems to climate-responsive building techniques. Designed to support Australia's construction industry, the program bridges the gap between theory and real-world application, empowering builders, architects and engineers with cutting-

edge expertise in timber construction.

"Timber is at the forefront of sustainable construction, and this micro-credential ensures professionals have the skills to design and build with confidence," said Kevin Peachey, head of built environment programs at Forest & Wood Products Australia.

"Partnering with the University of Tasmania allows us to deliver high-quality, industry-backed education that meets the evolving needs of the sector and meets our goal at WoodSolutions to boost timber competency across the built environment so that we can reduce risk and drive market confidence in timber products."

This new micro-credential ensures that construction



**Increasing the people comfortable working in sustainable timber design will help solve both housing and climate change crises.** Image: Shutterstock

professionals are equipped with up-to-date knowledge on timber design. As the demand for sustainable construction methods grows, this course directly addresses the need for skilled professionals who are proficient in timber-based solutions that meet local standards.

The course fosters innovation and supports the construction industry's shift towards more climate

conscious, cost-effective building practices. It also strengthens Australia's position as a leader in the global transition to circular construction methods.

"By providing construction

professionals with the essential skills in sustainable timber design, we are not only advancing the knowledge base of the sector but also contributing to the broader goal of creating more sustainable and resilient built environments in Australia," said Professor Tim Finnigan, head of School of Engineering, University of Tasmania.

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# Chain of responsibility workshop

IF you employ heavy vehicle drivers, direct or control the use of a heavy vehicle, or schedule the transport of logs in your business, you are a party to the National Heavy Vehicle Law Chain of Responsibility. Are you confident that you know what that means?

AFCA's upcoming workshop will help to demystify responsibilities and clarify issues regarding your role.

Held as part of AFCA's Mid Year Forum, the workshop is run in conjunction with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to answer your questions about the Chain of Responsibility such as:

- what is the Primary Duty and how does it apply?
- who is involved in the Chain of Responsibility?



**AFCA training events and workshops are conducted by industry experts who understand the realities as well as the legalities of forestry-related businesses.** Image: courtesy AFCA

- how can I demonstrate compliance with National Heavy Vehicle Law?

Everyone who works with heavy vehicles is accountable for the safety of the vehicle, its driver and its load throughout its journey. All parties share the same primary duty, but what is reasonably practicable

will be different for different businesses.

Also under discussion will be other AFCA project updates and results, including the Log Haulage Gap analysis project and a presentation on the Forest Workforce Training Program

The Mid Year Forum is

being held at Twin Towns Conference and Function Centre at Tweed Heads, just 10-minutes drive from the Gold Coast Airport. Click [here](#) to download the full event guide. It's free for AFCA members and sponsors, though registration is required for planning and catering purposes. Non-members are welcome with a small charge to cover costs.

The forum has been timed to precede the Brisbane Truck Show (15-18 May) at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, a moderate drive or train ride away, and attendees will also be able to fit in the Primex Expo, which starts the following day, two hours away at Casino (see page 4 of this issue).

For more information and to book, click [here](#).

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# Victorian firewood supply problems

A cruel fire season and the end of native forestry has left some shivering.

DRIVING through rural and regional areas in the cooler months, the smell of woodsmoke from home heating is a classic sign that you're coming up on a town. But for residents of Victoria's northwest this winter, there's a choice between putting on all your woollies or digging into already tight purses.

While forests across the south and east of the state have been opened since 1 March for firewood collection, a large swathe of the northwest has been left without a single site for legal residential collection.

A brutal summer of fires is one of the main factors behind the closure, with some areas still designated as unsafe. A Department of Energy, Environment and

Climate Action spokeswoman told the *Weekly Times* (a respected rural news source) that areas in the northwest would open as soon as practicable, but with the season halfway over (autumn collections must be completed by 30 June), it is looking grim for residents.

Victorians can collect firewood for free from designated areas, with limits of 2m<sup>3</sup> per person per day up to a maximum of 16m<sup>3</sup> per household per financial year. Legal limits are enforced and



**A large bare area of harvesting sites shows where residents will struggle to source firewood.**

low with firewood as a by-product. Firewood is also used for cooking and heating hot water in some homes, making it a vital fuel source.

Sue and Bruce Shuttleworth told the *Weekly Times*: "Perhaps, supervised firewood collection in parks and state forests in the states west

some commercial operators are also licensed for firewood collection.

Those in the affected area have the choice of long drives elsewhere or paying upwards of \$1000/4m<sup>3</sup> for a commercial delivery. Previously, native timber harvesting kept costs

could be a way to provide this basic necessity for so many households while helping reduce fuel loads in these areas."

**Source: Weekly Times**

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# Fanco's Gaia Fan connects interiors to forest origins

BEFORE it became a ceiling fan, the timber in Fanco's Gaia was part of a living, breathing forest. That connection – to place, to process, to responsibility – is at the heart of Gaia's design. With blades made from FSC-certified wood and a motor housing composed of bio-based plastics, the fan reflects a growing shift in Australian interiors, where materials matter as much as form and where the story behind a product is just as important as how it looks or performs.

"We're always looking for ways to do better," said Miguel Araya, of Fanco's product team. "Better performance, yes – but also better materials, better sourcing, better outcomes for the planet and the people connected to these supply chains."

As an FSC Promotional Licence Holder, Fanco has committed to sourcing from forests managed to the highest standards of environmental care and social responsibility. FSC certification ensures that timber comes from responsibly managed forests, where biodiversity is protected, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and workers are respected. FSC certification is

independently audited, fully traceable and globally recognised.

"Choosing FSC-certified timber for Gaia was about more than just sustainable sourcing," says Araya. "It was about supporting a system that protects both the environment and the communities that depend on it. Environmental sustainability is crucial, but it's just one piece of the bigger picture. True sustainability means looking at the full impact of our choices – embracing responsible forestry, ethical sourcing and social responsibility."

Part of Fanco's EarthFirst range, the Gaia Ceiling Fan reflects more than two years



**With FSC-certified timber blades and bioplastics, the Gaia fan lowers the environmental cost of cooling.** Images: supplied

of design and development, with a focus on reducing environmental impact without compromising functionality or form. The fan's motor housing uses bio-based plastic, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, while the FSC-certified blades honour the natural grain of the timber – bringing warmth and texture into contemporary spaces.

These layered efforts were recognised in 2024 when Gaia received the prestigious Australian Good Design Award. As the jury noted: "The jury was impressed with the commitment to circularity through material selection and

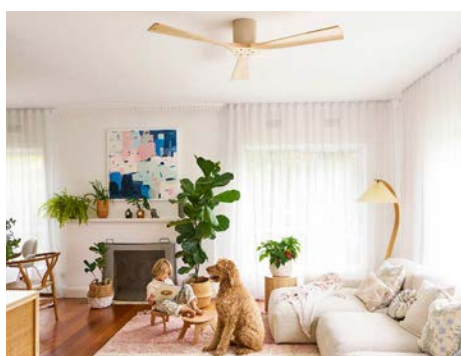
component choice, which were well-considered without compromising on aesthetics."

Fanco's decision to take out an FSC Promotional Licence also reflects a broader desire to inform and empower customers. It's not just about sourcing better materials – it's about helping people make informed, traceable choices in a world crowded with green marketing. As Araya puts it: "We're proud to partner with FSC, and even more

proud to be part of a global effort to drive meaningful change in sustainable practices. Sustainability isn't a checkbox—it's an ongoing process of learning, evolving, and finding better ways to do business."

For architects and designers, Gaia offers a way to align aesthetics with ethics, and to bring the principles of responsible forestry into the everyday. It's a reminder that good design can be rooted, quite literally, in better systems.

For more on Fanco's Gaia range, click here.



**In addition to its eco-credentials, the attractive Gaia range perfectly fits modern interiors.**



A leader in sustainable forestry with a common goal: protect healthy, resilient forests for all, forever.  
Visit us at [fsc.org](https://www.fsc.org)



# Proposed Tumut wind farm

Residents got their first look at a plan blending power and forestry.

NEOEN Australia representatives recently ran their first community consultation session for the proposed Bondo Wind Farm. The proposal would see up to 154 wind turbines installed across Bondo State Forest in what is currently a softwood plantation managed by Forestry Corporation of NSW.

The area has been selected thanks to strong and reliable winds, existing road infrastructure thanks to forestry and nearby transmission lines.

The wind farm plan, which is several years away from beginning implementation, is designed to operate in conjunction with forestry operations, with only a small area of plantation land

required for the turbines. None of the proposed works will occur in the native forestry areas, only plantation estate.

Edwina Mason, a journalist for About Regional, covered the consultation session, noting that a steady stream of locals attended through the course of the day, looking at the artist renderings of what the turbines will look like from town at different times of day and asking questions about the impacts on the town, both positive – including jobs and reliable cheap power – and potential



**An artist's impression of the view from town, with the turbines just visible on the horizon.** Image: Rendering courtesy Neoen

negatives, including noise and environmental impact.

Mason noted that Neoen's state development leader Emily Walker made it clear to attendees the current layout was far from final.

"This is just one iteration," she said. "We're still in the investigation stage, working through extensive environmental and technical

studies. The community's feedback is going to be a big part of shaping what this ultimately looks like."

As part of the early-stage groundwork, Neoen has planned to install four 180-metre meteorological masts at key locations within the Bondo plantation. These temporary structures, which would need council approval, would collect wind and ecological data and could also serve a secondary function as wildfire detection platforms, using automated cameras to spot potential fires before they spread.

For the full story from About Regional, click here. For more on the proposed Bondo Wind Farm, click here.

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# New biomass projects centre sustainable wood

**Clever technologies and certification combine to drive down carbon costs of energy production using waste timber.**

ENERGY has been one of the key questions in the current Australian election, and we're far from alone in centring rising power costs in our political concerns. There is no single answer to the problem, but a responsible mix of power sources can deliver reliable supply at economical costs.

One of these sources is biomass, including energy from wood. It's no surprise that wood is the most common biomass fuel around the world – we've been burning it for millennia – but new technologies are increasing the amount of energy recoverable as well as minimising the environmental costs of timber-based fuel sources.

In Australia, biomass accounts for roughly a third of our renewable energy production according to a report from IEA Bioenergy released in December last year, but that is still a small amount. Most of this is directed to heating, often for industrial processes (several of our major timber producers run their kilns and mills on waste biomass, with some even using excess energy to heat local homes), with little currently making its way into biofuels for transport. Overall our investment in the sector has been modest.

The National Bioenergy Roadmap from the Commonwealth Government seeks to increase the amount of energy sourced from biomass, seeing it as a way to increase fuel security, divert material from waste streams and reduce emissions. Despite



**Dale Nally announcing the biomass funding.** Image: courtesy Dale Nally/X

this, most local action in the sector has been industry-based, with private firms installing their own equipment to generate power and manage waste on site.

One reason for this has been the slow uptake of new technologies in biomass energy production. Traditionally, biomass energy is carbon neutral: waste wood products have been made into pellets and burned, which can emit a good whack of carbon as well as local smoke pollution, but then plants are grown to make biomass and the carbon is captured and stored in those plants. Most of the new biomass plants operating in Australia mitigate these issues by choosing pyrolysis technologies that create charcoal-like biochar and bio-oil rather than emit large quantities of carbon. Biochar can be used as a soil additive that sequesters carbon, and bio-oil can be injected underground or mixed with products like asphalt to provide carbon removal, or it can be further refined to make

hydrogen or other valuable fuels.

Historically, there have been concerns that displacing other land uses for biomass production can tip the process over into having a carbon cost overall. By choosing sustainable biomass sources that are solely waste and residue, the process can shift to being carbon negative when used in quality processes to make hydrogen or fuels and paired with methods for durable carbon sequestration.

Because the technology is advancing rapidly, government assistance is key to helping industry transition – and strong regulation is vital to keeping the technology's green promises.

## CANADA FOREST POWER

Canada's Alberta province has just invested CAD\$3 million into a new forestry waste-based hydrogen project that will help industry create jobs, attract investment, and reduce emissions.

The Alberta Government has a strong background in decarbonisation, from its work on carbon capture and storage (CCS) to working with industrial partners to move them towards low-carbon fuels and energy. Now, it has staked its plans to become "a global leader in low-carbon and carbon-negative hydrogen."

Emissions Reduction Alberta (ERA) is a government-run program that has invested revenues from the carbon price paid by large emitters over the past 16 years to accelerate the development and adoption of innovative clean technology solutions. Since its establishment in 2009, ERA has committed CAD\$970 million toward 306 projects valued at over CAD\$7.3 billion, which are helping to reduce emissions, create competitive industries, and lead to new business opportunities in Alberta. These projects are estimated to deliver cumulative reductions of 34 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030 and 95 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2050.

This \$3 million investment from ERA will help Hydrogen Naturally develop a project that converts forestry harvest residuals and fire-killed fibre – wood damaged by wildfire – into hydrogen. It will then capture and sequester the carbon typically released into the air during this process underground, transporting it to saline aquifers or depleted gas reservoirs. Carbon-negative hydrogen will then be blended with natural gas to produce carbon-neutral energy.

Cont P 15



From P 14

Importantly, the project plans to embed itself within existing industrial facilities to achieve direct carbon reductions without needing to transport the hydrogen or purchase offsets. The provincial funding will allow Hydrogen Naturally to conduct a front-end engineering and design study that will provide the regulatory, engineering and environmental information needed to build its first hydrogen production unit.

At the recent announcement of the project, Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, said, "We have the energy and the innovation to help power the world in the most environmentally responsible way. That's why we are investing in technology and innovation to help create jobs, fuel our economy and keep attracting investments into our province."

As a major timber-producing area, Alberta is ideally positioned to reap the benefits of such a project, but it is the province's history of supporting alternative energy production that is making it viable, with solid returns to the local economy. This project is being supported through ERA's Continuous Intake Program (CIP), which helps to speed the uptake of new technologies. The CIP is a funding mechanism designed to identify and advance high-impact opportunities outside of scheduled calls for proposals. This doesn't result in a free for all – ERA funding recipients must produce a final outcomes report that is shared publicly to help advance technologies toward commercialisation. The report also includes project outcomes, achievements, and lessons learned, including emissions reductions,



1/ **Alberta has been strongly supporting hydrogen as a fuel, and timber biomass-sourced hydrogen has strong potential.** Photo: courtesy Dale Nally/Facebook

2/ **The Malaysian Timber Certification Council and stakeholders. Dr Farrah is centre in a red jacket.** Photo: courtesy MTCC

job creation, and other environmental, economic, and social benefits.

"Hydrogen offers major potential for Alberta to leverage our vast natural resources, skilled workforce and existing energy infrastructure," said Dale Nally, Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction. "Alberta is the largest hydrogen producer in Canada, and we're just getting started. Investing in this promising, emissions-free, economically friendly fuel source is diversifying Alberta's economy, creating jobs and positioning Alberta as a world leader."

## SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

At the heart of making biomass a carbon-negative fuel source is using materials from only responsibly produced sources.

Malaysia has moved to

ensure that its biomass products are produced in line with the PEFC-backed responsible forest management scheme run by the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS). Malaysia's forests generate over 1.94 million tonnes of woody biomass annually through around 5000 primary wood-based factories. Much of the residue is converted into wood pellets, bio-composites, woodchips and green fuel for biomass power plants. Last year, Malaysia's wood pellet export lifted 31% to 1.13 million tonnes, mostly sold into Japan, South Korea, and the Netherlands.

As global demand for wood energy rises, the Malaysian timber sector is determined to ensure that biomass is sourced sustainably.

Dr Farrah Shameen Mohamad Ashray, CEO of MTCC, explained: "Sustainable

forestry isn't just about timber, it's about securing a renewable energy future where MTCS/PEFC certified biomass serves as a responsible and sustainable alternative to fossil fuels."

Dr Farrah added that MTCS ensures sustainable forest management and traceability of wood sources through its Sustainable Forest Management Malaysian Criteria & Indicators (SFM MC&I), and Chain of Custody (COC) certification.

"MTCS/PEFC certification ensures certified wood products, including biomass from both natural forests and forest plantations, are responsibly managed to preserve biodiversity and respect local communities."

MTCS certifies companies through its COC certification to ensure that wood products, including biomass, are tracked and remain traceable throughout the supply chain. This ensures that the entire process is fully sustainable and compliant with certification standards, from forest to consumer.

"Wood residues and by-products from MTCS/PEFC certified forest operations can be converted into pellets, chips, and biofuels that power homes and industries while maintaining a lower carbon footprint," Dr Farrah added. "When sourced sustainably, this biomass represents a renewable cycle that complements solar, wind and other clean energy sources."

Through a combination of support for more efficient technologies and rigorous certification, wood-based biomass has strong potential to lift its percentage of our fuel mix and help to lower our carbon costs at the same time. Here's hoping that Australian governments learn from Canadian and Malaysian ones!

# CLT central to affordable home design

Leading NZ architects RTA Studio are behind a workable new housing concept.

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand face many of the same challenges around new housing. Both countries have had enormous price increases over the past two decades, limited labour availability, slow response in demand to need and then slow approvals on top of that.

When the team at RTA Studio began an in-house research project to find a better, faster, more affordable way to build, it wasn't a simple question.

The result is a modular system that uses precision-manufactured cross-laminated timber (CLT) modules, significantly reducing both build time and cost. The design, 'Living House' is a three-bedroom, 85m<sup>2</sup> home, which the architect team says: "is assembled using exactly the right amount of materials and labour – nothing more, nothing less".

The practice has gone into partnership with Fisher & Paykel Home Solutions for solar energy and appliances, Red Stag Timber Lab for engineered timber solutions and The Lever Room for carbon accounting and modelling, and is delivering its Living House model to the market in June.

The Living House is a low cost, fast build, climate-positive, architect-designed house. For NZ\$10,000, buyers purchase detailed drawings and



**1/ The house design may be standardised, but there is endless scope for individualisation in finishes.**

**2/ There is no need to paint the CLT interiors.**

**3/ A large, light-filled central living area is kept warm in winter and cool in summer thanks to materials choices.**

**4/ Although the overall footprint is modest, the bathroom and three bedrooms are all comfortably sized.**

specifications, complete with a builder's manual, MultiProof approval certificate and exclusive access to preferential rates the RTA Studio team has negotiated with its partners on building modules, cladding, joinery, heating and ventilation products, plus premium appliances.

The 36 timber modules each house comes in are flat-packed and can fit onto a truck for easy transport. The design focuses on modern living, with a central living space, seamless flow to the outdoors and healthy indoor air quality, efficient heating, cooling and ventilation.

Buyers still need to provide the land, consents and groundworks and engage the builders – 'above the piles' costs are estimated at NZ\$335,000 – but the architect-designed house plans already have a MultiProof approval certificate saving time and costs in design and consent phases. The specified modular construction is also quicker (as little as six weeks for a three-person build team), substantially reducing build time and associated labour costs.

The Multiproof approval certificate will cover the house to be built in most locations

in New Zealand apart from the area designated earthquake Zone 4, which would require additional engineering and need to be modified to suit, incurring additional cost.

The CLT modules the design is based on have multiple advantages in addition to the quick build time they

are naturally insulative, both in terms of temperature and sound, strong and fire resistant, highly sustainable (and can be re-used in other projects at the end of the building life) and they have a high visual appeal for people who choose not to paint the interiors.

Exterior and interior colourways are easily changed, but the structural layout and wiring placements are standardised, so customisation options are limited. But it's a small price to pay for making the dream of home ownership significantly more accessible.

For more, click here.



# Diversity builds resilience

ONE major environmental benefit of native forestry over plantation forests is the mix of species in a natural forest. Not only does this provide habitat for native species of flora and fauna, it improves soil health, protects nearby waterways and has a beneficial effect on the surrounding ecosystem.

Unfortunately, creating the same complex mixtures of plant species found in nature is impracticable in a plantation forest, where the percentage of area available for harvesting is many times that of native forestry. However, new research from the UK shows that even somewhat increasing species diversity in plantations has multiple financial as well as environmental benefits.

The paper, published in the *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*—shows that greater species diversity in productive forests can address multiple crises, from climate change and biodiversity loss, to housing and domestic timber shortages.

Authors Andrew Leslie, head of silviculture and wood properties at Forest Research, and Ian Short, broadleaf silviculture senior research officer at Teagasc suggest that mixed species forest stands (consisting of broadleaves (UK hardwoods) or broadleaves with conifers) can increase resilience to extreme weather, benefit wildlife, reduce damage from pests and diseases, increase productivity and improve the financial returns from broadleaved trees.

Hardwood sawlog harvesting is much lower in



**Silviculture experts Andrew Leslie (left) and Ian Short investigated the benefits of species diversity in plantation forestry.** Images: supplied



**This new woodland is being planted with a biodiverse mix of species to mitigate risk and improve the environmental effects of the planting.** Image: Shutterstock/Callums Trees

the UK than in Europe, but the authors say increasing both the mix and harvesting of broadleaf species in plantations will have multiple benefits on top of helping to meet the UK government's new Timber in Construction Roadmap. A mix of species such as sycamore, lime, oak and ash will have different responses to now commonplace extreme weather events such as drought and heavy rain periods: where one struggles the other will thrive. Similarly, pest attacks – both insect and fungal – are often species specific and will struggle to take hold as quickly or as thoroughly outside the traditional monocultural plantation plantings.

Co-author Andrew Leslie said, "The increased resilience of mixed stands to climate impacts, coupled with potentially higher overall biomass production, can also play a role in climate change mitigation through carbon

sequestration. Additionally, the species diversity inherent in these stands supports a more complex ecosystem, which is vital for enhancing biodiversity."

In upland areas, where growing conditions are more challenging, mixed stands have demonstrated particular benefits. Evidence from trials in the North York Moors showed improved growth of broadleaves when mixed with conifers like Scots pine and Japanese larch, while studies at Gisburn forest showed that sessile oak performed better with Scots pine and alder than in monoculture.

The literature review also points to soil health improvements through strategic mixing. Incorporating nitrogen-fixing trees like alder, for example, can enhance overall growth, particularly in nitrogen-poor soils.

As a result, diversity has the potential to increase yields, in some cases up to 30% above monoculture plantings.

The paper opens up the potential for further research looking at ideal planting combinations and invites the question as to whether a similar reassessment of planting strategies is worthwhile for plantations in other countries with different dominant species, such as Australia and New Zealand.

For the full story by the Royal Forestry Society with links to the research, click here.



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