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ISSUE 854 // June 12 2025

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news

## Unveiling hidden koalas with new drone tech

COVER STORY P 2



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# New koala monitoring technology

The new methodology will allow for accurate wildlife counts in forests.

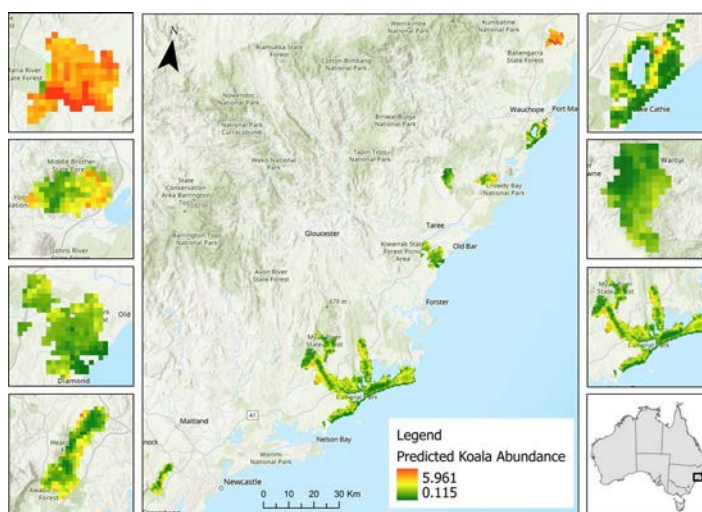
KOALA numbers are a major environmental concern in NSW. Some population surveys in the past have delivered notable overcounts and others undercounts. As one hardwood harvester told *T&F Enews*, "We need to know where they are because no one wants to hurt one of those guys."

Now, a landmark survey has combined thermal drone searches with spotlight verification and statistical modelling to conduct the largest and most accurate peer-reviewed koala survey to date.

The study, funded by WWF-Australia and led by the University of Newcastle, estimates a population of 4357 koalas across 67,300 hectares of bushland spanning 208 sites in New South Wales, which is encouraging news, if not 'thriving' as reported elsewhere.

Researchers have also uncovered a hidden koala population of almost 300 animals living on the fringes of Newcastle at Sugarloaf State Conservation Area.

Co-author of the study Dr



**The new method allows for a fast and accurate predicted abundance level of koalas or other arboreal mammals.** Image: courtesy University of Newcastle

Ryan Witt said, "The aim of the study was to determine the number of koalas that we have across seven different national parks between Newcastle and Crescent Head."

He noted that this was the first study trying to achieve good, accurate data on koala numbers at a landscape scale. Its methods were designed to work around the main problem of koalas often being hidden by tree canopy from ground observers.

"We fly the drone [above the canopy] and are looking for a

tiny thermal dot on the screen. When we find one, we navigate the drone to that spot and will turn on the visual camera to determine if it's a koala or some other type of animal," Witt said

Each detection takes about two minutes, and the surveys were conducted at night in winter, when the ground was cold, so the thermal signatures were more obvious. Surveys were repeated at the time for accuracy and then over time to see if populations were stable, growing or declining.

Witt called the unexpected Sugarloaf colony "quite surprising". A local researcher, a Gamilaraay and Wiradjuri man named Daryn McKenny, tipped off the group that there could be a koala population out there after capturing some on his camera traps.

"Sugarloaf was practically my backyard as a kid. But we never saw koalas there," McKenny said. "It wasn't until about five years ago that I first spotted a koala at Sugarloaf."

He set up camera traps to record koala activity in the area. In his reviews of previous studies, he "wasn't even counting double figures" of documented koalas. "But our work over these past years was showing otherwise. To know there's close to 300 is just incredible," said McKenny, who worked with Witt and his team for a week in the field, sharing his knowledge to help guarantee the success of the project.

"Daryn has a huge amount of knowledge of the land and the koalas at Sugarloaf. We were grateful to learn from

Cont P 3

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From P 2

him," Witt said.

The world-first method surveyed 208 25-hectare (500m by 500m) sites over several nights then study lead author Shelby Ryan put all that data into her model, which allowed for accurate predictions of overall numbers at each site and park.

PhD candidate Ryan said, "Repeated count data and statistical modelling lets us estimate not only how many animals are in the data but potentially how many we've missed. We've also used this model to extrapolate across the landscape, so it's a very efficient method."



Some of the surveys conducted in 2022 found that koala populations persisted in areas that had been heavily affected by the Black Summer bushfires, including Old Bar, Taree and Lake Innes. However, the modelling showed that koalas were at lower densities



**1/ The drones are small and agile, allowing them to get into the canopy for visual confirmations.** Photo: courtesy University of Newcastle

**2/ Koala at Sugarloaf State Conservation Area.** Photo: courtesy Daryn McKenny

in the most severely burned parts of the parks, indicating either that populations had moved away from them or been killed during the fires and not re-established.

One notable finding was that the koalas found in fire-affected areas in Taree were

in very large flooded gums, suggesting that the tree size was a factor in their ability to escape the flames.

Witt noted that cool burns done for fire management, which stay at the base of trees, and floods do not affect koalas, whose response to danger is simply to climb.

The drones allow for large areas to be covered as well as reliable counts. This surveying model is particularly useful for inaccessible locations, as previous methods were often based on things like scat surveys. Other species, including gliders, can also be surveyed by this method.

For more on the story including links to the paper, click here.

**On the cover: Dr Ryan Witt and Daryn McKenny doing a thermal drone survey at Sugarloaf State Conservation Area.** Photo: courtesy University of Newcastle



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# Prime Minister flags simplifying housing

ON Tuesday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese spoke at the National Press Club about his government's priorities and agenda.

Housing was high on the list, with the PM highlighting the Five Per Cent Deposit Plan the ALP took to the election.

While affordability was a frequent refrain, building was the key chorus. The Prime Minister reiterated that the government's \$43 billion Homes for Australia plan sets the goal of building 1.2 million new homes before the end of the decade.

To this end, he mentioned a focus on efficiencies and productivity in construction that would include faster

approvals for housing, energy and infrastructure projects, while ensuring sustainability.

Answering a question from Mark Riley from Seven News, the PM said, "It is too hard, and one of the areas is regulation. So, there's a conscious decision ... to appoint Clare O'Neil as Minister for Housing and Cities, because one of the things that we have to do is to make it



Clare O'Neil being sworn in as the Minister for Housing, Homelessness and Cities last month. Image: Clare O'Neil MP/X

She called on the government to include housing "front and centre" at the roundtable the Treasurer will be convening with industry leaders in August as part of shaping future economic growth and productivity.

"The Productivity Commission's *Can We Fix It?* Report on Housing Productivity (click here to download)

easier. Developers say that it's just too complex, adds to costs as well. So, we have to look at ways in which we can bring costs down ... if we can cut through on some of the red tape, then that will reduce costs."

These comments were warmly received by building groups, including HIA.

"The process of home building in itself is quick and efficient. Government red tape and excessive regulation have been the key reasons why it is so difficult to increase supply," said managing director Jocelyn Martin.

called on efforts to 'eliminate bottlenecks in the system and provide certainty to the residential building industry'. HIA's 2025 Report on the Taxation of the Housing Sector (click here) found that almost half of the cost of a new home are taxes, fees and regulatory charges," Martin said.

"While housing policy is largely influenced at a state and local level, this does not mean that the Australian Government can shy away from ambitious housing policies and reforms. This should include policies that would help deliver more land to market to meet demand, attract more workers into the industry and to ease the taxes and unnecessary regulations imposed on building a new home."

**"IF WE CAN CUT THROUGH ON SOME OF THE RED TAPE, THAT WILL REDUCE COSTS"**

## AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR



# Women in forestry mentoring program

## Forestry Australia opens expressions of interest for mentoring.

FORESTRY Australia in partnership with ForestWorks has launched a new Mentoring Program for women in the industry.

CEO Jacque Martin describes the program as a transformative nine-month pilot initiative designed to empower women in the forest and forest products sectors.

"We are now calling for expressions of interest from both mentors and mentees to join this ground-breaking program, funded by ForestWorks through the Australian Government's Forestry Workforce Training Program (FWTP)," Martin said.

"Mentoring fosters personal and professional growth by building trust-based relationships that support goal setting, confidence, and leadership readiness.

"For women in male-dominated industries like forestry, mentoring provides critical support to overcome systemic barriers, access career opportunities, and build a strong, inclusive community that champions growth and connection."

The program will connect 25 mentor-mentee pairs, who will be carefully matched based on shared interests, goals, and communication styles.

Participants will engage in monthly one-on-one sessions (virtual or in-person), quarterly webinars, and peer support groups, exploring key themes such as:

- Defining your career path
- Establishing goals
- Time management for life
- Confidence, self-advocacy, and self-belief
- Work-life integration and wellbeing
- Building networks and connections
- Strategic influence and leadership

Mentors will receive training on effective, inclusive mentoring practices, while mentees are encouraged to

invest approximately one hour per month for meetings, plus six hours for preparation, goal setting, and development activities.

"This initiative is about creating lasting change," said Martin.

"Participants will connect with role models, strengthen their leadership and career pathways, and build peer networks that endure beyond the program.

"We're committed to fostering a supportive community that empowers women to thrive in the forest and forest products industries."



**Forestry Australia has strongly empowered women in its core team. Here CEO Jacque Martin (in green) with colleagues accepting an award at the Associations Forum Awards in 2023.** Photo: courtesy Forestry Australia

Following the pilot, Forestry Australia will provide ForestWorks with the program's framework, resources, learnings, and webinars, ensuring long-term accessibility and impact for the broader

industry.

Any woman working in the forest industry sector seeking mentorship is welcome to apply. For mentors, Forestry Australia is looking for expressions of interest from women, men and non-binary individuals who are committed allies of women in the industry. Mentors will be selected based on their experience, values, and willingness to support and uplift the next generation of women leaders in forestry.

For more information and to apply, click [here](https://www.forestry.org.au) or contact [PD@forestry.org.au](mailto:PD@forestry.org.au) before Friday 4 July.

## Nominate today

2025 Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award nominations are now open.



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# AI making wood recycling easier

A NEW AI system that can automatically identify contaminated construction and demolition wood waste has been developed by researchers from Monash University and Charles Darwin University (CDU).

Wood from construction and demolition sites often ends up in landfill due to the difficulty of sorting out contaminated timbers manually. Some contaminants, such as paint and small amounts of metal, could be easily removed for reuse. By applying analytical AI models, the team found strong precision and recall across six types of wood contamination.

Published in *Resources, Conservation & Recycling* (click here to read), the study presents the first real-world image dataset of contaminated wood waste – a major

step toward smarter recycling and sustainable construction.

The research team, led by Madini De Alwis with Dr Milad Bazli (CDU), under the supervision of Associate Professor Mehrdad Arashpour, head of Construction Engineering at Monash, trained and tested cutting-edge deep learning models to detect contamination types in wood waste using images.

“We curated the first real-world image dataset of contaminated construction and demolition wood waste,” said De Alwis, a PhD candidate at Monash’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

“This new system could be deployed via camera-



Some of the contaminated wood materials capture by the AI tool.

enabled sorting lines, drones or handheld tools to support on-site decision-making.”

While similar tools are used in general waste streams, their application to contaminated wood waste has previously been limited.

“By fine-tuning state-of-the-art deep learning models, including CNNs and Transformers, we showed these tools can automatically

recognise contamination types in wood using everyday RGB images,” Dr Bazli said.

“This opens the door to scalable, AI-driven solutions that support wood waste reuse, recycling and reclamation.”

The study supports Australia’s circular economy goals and the global push for greener construction.

“This is a practical, scalable solution for a global waste problem. By enabling automated sorting, we’re giving recyclers and contractors a powerful tool to recover valuable resources and reduce landfill dependency,” De Alwis said.



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## JUNE

### 20-22: Perth Home Show – Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Perth 10.00am - 5.00pm daily.

Explore hundreds of home related products, exclusive Show specials, attend free seminars, and gain insights from top Australian renovation and building experts. For more information and to book tickets, visit <https://homeshows.com.au/perth/>

**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/>

**30: WoodSolutions Workshop "Timber in a carbon neutral environment" – Pridham Hall, Adelaide. 8.30am - 3.30pm.** Discover how timber is reshaping the future of sustainable construction. For more information and reserve your place visit <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/woodsolutions-workshop-timber-in-a-carbon-neutral-environment-tickets-1363725101489>

## 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)

**7-12: Gottstein Trust's Understanding Wood Science Course – Albury and Canberra.** The course is designed to provide exposure to a wide range of industry & research experts and includes site visits to

leading plants across 3 types of end products. For further information and registration details visit <https://gottsteintrust.org/grants-courses/understanding-wood-science-course>

**13: SAVE THE DATE: WFTN Cocktails for Charity event – Brisbane, 2.00pm - 6.00pm.** Sponsorship opportunities available - contact [jenni@versacetimbers.com.au](mailto:jenni@versacetimbers.com.au) More details to follow.

**18: SAVE THE DATE: Onetrak/Tigercat field demonstration day followed by AFCA AGM & dinner – Canberra.** More details to follow.

## 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 – Perth, WA.** (Follows on from the woodchip and biomass seminar in Singapore.) For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/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/>

## More bird poisonings in NSW

*Enews* recently reported on corella poisonings in NSW and Victoria (see issue 849). Now the NSW EPA is seeking information from the Blue Mountains community in relation to a series of

suspected bird poisonings in Katoomba.

Approximately 38 sick or dead birds – including cockatoos and pigeons – have been found near

Katoomba's Pryor Place.

Bird seed found nearby has tested positive for the restricted pesticide alphachloralose. Fines of up to \$500,000 for an

individual and \$2,000,000 for a corporation can apply for pesticide misuse.

For information about preventing pesticide misuse, click here.

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# New laminated timber testing

NZ is conducting novel research on the durability of low embodied carbon laminated timber elements and systems.

By DR GARY RAFTERY

INNOVATIVE research investigations are currently being undertaken to address key durability knowledge voids in relation to the development and applications of low embodied carbon laminated timber systems for civil and structural applications at The University of Auckland's structural test hall facilities.

These extensive initiatives



1/ Dr Sulo Shanmuganathan with Dr Gary Raftery.  
2/ From left, Head of Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Professor Seosamh Costello, chief engineer at Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency Dr Sulo Shanmuganathan and Dr Gary Raftery. Photos: courtesy Dr Gary Raftery

are assessing more environmentally conscious combinations of systems and



aim to establish suitability for full exterior exposure, ensuring long-term durability and achievement of full-

service life in New Zealand's and Australia's diverse climates. The research programs are being led and supervised by Dr Gary Raftery, co-director of the CIRCUIT research centre at the university.

The work of doctoral student Weixi Wang is focusing on the longevity of cross-bonded assemblies of laminated

systems with combinations

Cont P 9

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From P 8

of engineered timber that can further enable the transition to a circular economy.

With the construction industry being one of the largest contributors to global warming potential, and considerable use of preservative treated chromated copper arsenic wood, there exists significant technical challenges for reuse, repurpose and remanufacture applications which are the most favoured options for the adoption of circular economic principles.

The research therefore investigates alternatives to traditional practices with work using unique approaches such as the

single-end notched beam fracture test arrangement, advanced techniques such as microscopy analyses and fourier transform infrared spectroscopy to examine the chemical compatibility of the assemblies.

Exposure to both natural ageing and artificial ageing weathering regimes that replicate real-world conditions is ongoing, which will allow a more rigorous understanding of how the next generation of laminated timber elements

and systems will behave when subjected to challenges such as solar radiation, moisture variations and environmental contaminants.

The research is particularly critical for the further development of future low-carbon civil infrastructure with special attention to core knowledge advancements in relation to longevity of full-scale vehicle bridges. Strong focus is placed on advancing such sustainable and resilient infrastructure by

Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) who holds a pivotal role in bringing the upcoming International Conference on Timber Bridges (ICTB 2025) to the Southern Hemisphere for the first time, with the conference scheduled to be hosted in Rotorua from 29 June to 2 July, 2025.

To learn more about research at CIRCUIT, click [here](#). For information and to book for ICTB 2025, click [here](#).



3 & 4/ Vehicle timber bridges in Japan (left) and Norway. Photos: courtesy Dr Gary Raftery

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# Guulabaa – Place of Koala wins 2025 Asia Pacific Award for Excellence

LAST September, *T&F Enews* reported on Guulabaa – Place of Koala winning the international Gensler Community by Design Award (see issue 822). Now, Guulabaa, sited near Port Macquarie and the world's first purpose-built wild koala breeding and rehabilitation centre, has been named a winner of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) 2025 Asia Pacific Awards for Excellence. Announced at the recent ULI Asia Pacific Summit in Hong Kong, the award recognises Guulabaa as a global exemplar of conservation-led design, Indigenous collaboration, and resilient land stewardship.

The Urban Land Institute is a global organisation with a mission to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. The Asia Pacific branch's Awards for Excellence are among the region's most respected honours in real estate and urban development, celebrating projects that raise the bar for design quality, sustainability, and positive community impact. Guulabaa is one of only twelve winners across the Asia Pacific, and one of just two from Australia to be recognised this year.

Guulabaa was conceived in direct response to the catastrophic 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires, which impacted koala habitats across the region. Developed by the Forestry Corporation of New South Wales and designed by global architecture and design firm Gensler, the project is grounded in deep collaboration with First



1/ Tom Owens (centre), principal at Gensler Australia, accepting the 2025 ULI Asia Pacific Award for Excellence for Guulabaa – Place of Koala at the ULI Asia Pacific Summit in Hong Kong.

2/ Guulabaa's 25-hectares are packed with conservation, education and eco-tourism activities for all visitors. All photos: courtesy FCNSW

Nations communities and integrates traditional cool burning practices to reduce bushfire risk and restore forest health. This approach also enabled the use of local sustainably sourced native hardwoods in construction, setting a benchmark for ecologically responsible and culturally informed design.

"Guulabaa challenged us to rethink what regenerative architecture should be. It is not about making a

bold statement, but about designing with care, deep listening, and respect for Country," said Ken McBryde, design director at Gensler Australia. "This project shows what is possible when we listen to our client, stakeholders, project partners, and First Nations knowledge holders, and design with long-term impact in mind. We are honoured that ULI has recognised that vision."

Set within a 25-hectare site in Cowarra State Forest, NSW, Guulabaa, meaning 'Place of Koala' in the local Gathang language, offers a unique blend of conservation, cultural storytelling, and eco-tourism. Visitors experience elevated timber walkways, immersive educational spaces, and First Nations-led narratives that deepen understanding of wildlife, heritage, and environmental stewardship.

Activities focus around The Hub, a series of architecturally designed decks that allow visitors to relax and enjoy the forest canopy views while also providing access to Guulabaa's visitor experiences.

Families looking for a quiet day out can enjoy a picnic or visit the Bunyah Café and meet the Big Koala, a 2.5m-high sculpture painted by Pauline Roods, which is part of the region's Hello Koalas Sculpture trail. There are comfortable bushwalks nearby where you might see one of the region's koalas in its native habitat or book





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1/ The venture brings together local forest groups, Traditional Owners and koala specialists to create a space where people can learn about and protect koalas while having fun.

2/ At 2.5m tall, the Big Koala is the heavyweight of the region's Hello Koalas trail.

3/ Wildnets has adventures suitable for ages three and up, from fun bouncing to active challenges.

4/ Adventurous visitors can zipline through the trees.

5/ Activities at Guulabaa are focused around The Hub, a series of architecturally designed decks that bring visitors closer to the trees.

6/ The local koala population benefits from the sustainable forestry around Guulabaa and the monies raised for the koala hospital and conservation centre.

All images: FCNSW

From P 10

for a visitor experience at Koala Conservation Wild Breeding Guulabaa. Here, visitors learn about the shy marsupials and can view some of the resident koalas while meeting the carers who rehabilitate sick and injured koalas that are brought in for treatment.

For more active visitors, the Wildnets Adventure Park is Australia's largest suspended playground. With rope- and net-based adventures scaled safely for the ages 3 and up, you can compete challenges, play in

the treetops or ride a zipline.

Soon the Bunyah Bilbay Cultural Centre, run by the Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council will also be opening, along with the Guulabaa Cathedral gathering space.

"Guulabaa is about more than protecting koalas. It brings people together, across generations, cultures and disciplines to care for Country and build a shared future where nature and community thrive," said Kathy Lyons, senior manager, country and community at Forestry Corporation of NSW.

"Its success is already

inspiring similar projects across New South Wales, and ULI's recognition affirms that this model is both powerful and scalable when approached with care and respect."

Guulabaa now serves as a flagship model for forest-based conservation

“

GUULABAA BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER, ACROSS GENERATIONS, CULTURES AND DISCIPLINES

infrastructure in Australia, inspiring four additional forest tourism sites across NSW. It stands as a compelling demonstration of how design, Indigenous knowledge and environmental stewardship can come together to protect biodiversity, support sustainable tourism, and create places of lasting impact.

To learn more about Guulabaa or to book a Koala Visitor Experience or Wildnets adventure, click here. To learn more about Gensler, click here.



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# New forwarder with 25 tonne load capacity: Komatsu 898

THE Komatsu 898 takes the next step in the development of larger forwarders adapted for plantations in South America as well as final felling in Australia, North America and Europe. A new powerful engine, robust transmission and a large load space with many options providing advantages for the Komatsu 898 to meet the demands in the larger market segment.

## NEW POWERFUL ENGINE

Komatsu 898 has a new generation engine. It's a powerful 7.5 litre AGCO engine with high performance and good fuel economy, with new CORE platform engine. Maximum power of 250kW and maximum torque of 1450Nm.

The engine has a larger radiator with hydraulically driven fan and oil cooler with electrically controlled thermostat for improved control of oil through the cooler. Overall providing high cooling efficiency at high power output, with ability to reduce fan speed to save energy. A reversible cooling fan is an option. The new engine requires AdBlue regardless of emissions legislation. The engine has exhaust gas treatment that meets MAR 1, Stage V and Tier IV Final.

“THE NEW KOMATSU 205F CRANE IS SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR OUR LARGEST FORWARDER MODELS



The new Komatsu 898 forwarder with 25 tonne load capacity. Image: courtesy Komatsu

## NEW STRONGER TRANSMISSION

The Komatsu 898 has a larger transmission than the 895 to handle the higher load capacity with larger bogie rear axle and wheels, the rear wheels are 30.5 and the front wheels are 28.5. The strong powertrain ensures the machine moves effortlessly with heavy loads with a maximum tractive effort of 345kN.

The new generation transmission has dual hydraulic motors and a larger hydrostatic pump than the 895 which provides similar characteristics to 895's XT transmission, but higher traction force. The new hydrostatic motors are designed to handle higher pressure and speeds, when combined with the new engine provides a more powerful machine with high productivity.

## NEW POWERFUL CRANE

The new Komatsu 205F Crane is specially designed for our largest forwarder models. It has a lifting torque of 205 kNm and a swing torque of 51.9 kNm. The crane pillar has a robust welded pillar together with the main and outer booms provide good lifting height and geometry.

The 205F has the largest grapple model, G88H with a tip to tip area of 0.55m<sup>2</sup> and a powerful rotator. The crane was developed with an emphasis on increased productivity in final felling.

## GENEROUS LOAD SPACE

The Komatsu 898 load space has the same concept as the 895 but larger to accommodate 25 tonne loads. It consists of a robust gate that can be telescopically adjusted with new robust bunks with telescopic

widening and optional height adjustable stakes. This increases productivity during loading and unloading as well as contributing to reduced fuel consumption.

## GENERAL

The Komatsu cab is classified for a higher ROPS weight to handle a fully equipped machine and tracks.

The new larger AdBlue tank offers the option of a larger fuel tank with 500 litres capacity. New design cab entry provides easier and safer access with new ladder and larger platform.



To learn more, click the QR code or watch the video <https://youtu.be/4YKsNkmQkjo>

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komatsuforest.com



# Komatsu

## PC270HW



The Komatsu PC270HW Extreme model was developed in collaboration between Komatsu Forest and Komatsu Osaka Factory to meet our tough forest conditions.

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# Scion celebrates 10 years of UAV research

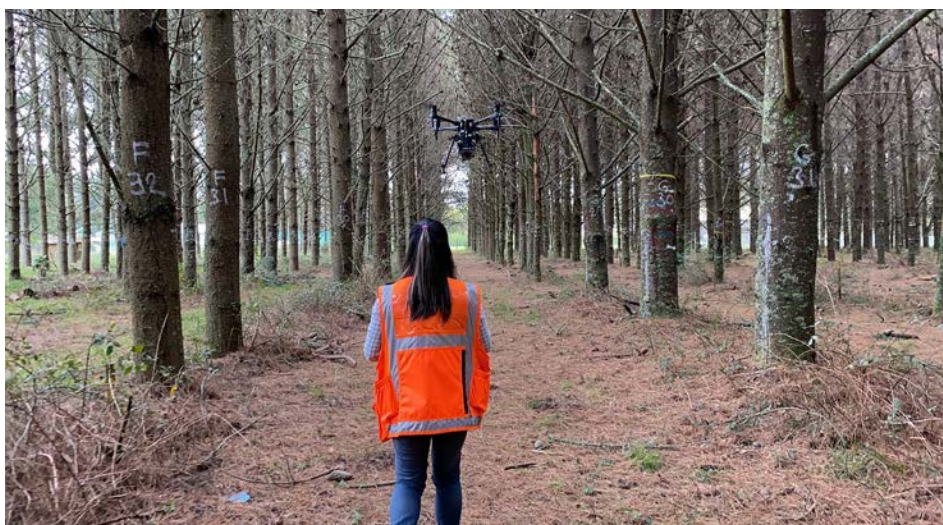
The innovative Kiwi team has adapted drone tools for use in forestry.

DRONES are proving to be critical tools in forest and ecosystem research and supervision (see cover story, page 2). Scion, New Zealand's leading Crown Research Institute in forestry, has been at the forefront of developing drone/unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) technology and tools for the sector.

This year marks a decade since Scion adopted UAVs as a research tool – forging a path towards more effective forest management.

A pioneer in the field of UAV research, Scion bought its first drone in February 2015. Since then, UAVs have become a key tool for aerial data capture, for use in high-definition mapping and monitoring of forests. Scion also uses them for 3D modelling, sample collection, sub-canopy data captures and various types of imaging across multiple programmes.

It is the only Crown Research Institute with Civil Aviation Authority Part 102 higher tier certification, which enables it to undertake UAV activity outside what standard operational licences allow. Scion scientist Robin Hartley says UAVs add a lot of value to the organisation's research. "We regularly capture high-definition LIDAR for measuring trees. We can get ultra-high-resolution maps of stands and trials, we are capturing spectral and thermal data to understand more about tree physiology



Scion has been using UAVs as a research tool for 10 years. Image: supplied

remotely, and we're working with companies to develop UAV spray systems specific to forestry needs. We're also exploring niche areas such as sub-canopy flying for characterising stem and branch structure and collecting upper canopy samples."

The autonomous systems team has worked with other teams across Scion and industry over the past 10 years to enable them to adopt UAV technologies. "There is plenty of potential for UAVs to be used for other purposes within research and commercial forest management, too, such as forest inventory, phenotyping and manual applications such as spraying and planting," Robin says.

It all started in 2012, when research group leader David Pont was a scientist monitoring the development of UAVs and miniaturised laser scanning technologies. By 2015 a commercially available scanner had been matched to a drone from Aeronavics, a NZ-based UAV

company working with the Hollywood film industry. At the time, a geomatics team was being formed at Scion that comprised scientists with expertise in airborne LiDAR. A state-of-the-art LidarPod weighing 3kg was bought from Scotland and the Scion team ordered the largest UAV they could find to carry it. This UAV gave Scion a modern way to laser scan forest stands.

Scion staff Toby Stovold, Kane Fleet and Marie Heaphie (who has since left the organisation), learned to fly a small UAV, which meant when the larger craft arrived they were ready to deploy it for forestry research.

The wider industry took notice as the technology continued to develop. Several forestry companies have since invested in trials and built their own in-house UAV capacity. The strong industry adoption was highlighted in a 2020 study (click here) that showed 83% of forestry companies in NZ use UAVs to capture aerial imagery, compared to none in an earlier 2013 survey.

Scion also helped set up the Tools for Foresters (TFF) industry initiative (click here for details), which connects researchers and foresters using UAVs in forests to share research, knowledge and resources. This helps enhance UAV technology development and encourage adoption of these tools.

Timberlands inventory manager Michael Wilson says Scion's work with UAVs over the past decade has helped shape how his company uses the technology in forest management operations. "Scion's work helped us see what was possible with drone technology – from precision aerial mapping to advanced canopy analysis – and gave us the confidence to invest in UAVs ourselves. It's hard to imagine modern forest management without them now."

Robin says Scion continues to work with forest managers to develop systems that are relevant and cost-effective. "A recent survey showed a 20 percent increase across some key UAV uses that have been developed and promoted through TFF."

Scion's autonomous systems team is focused on advancing techniques for the capture and use of LiDAR, photogrammetry and thermal and multi-spectral imagery.

For more on Scion, click here.



# State forests target illegal activities

DESPITE clear signage and rules for visitors and recreational forest users on websites, state forests and national parks, Queensland and NSW continue having to crack down on a range of antisocial and dangerous activities.

In Queensland, fines have been issued and people received warnings on vehicle offences and other compliance issues.

In response to local community concerns around illegal motorbike usage, from the noise nuisance to environmental damage, rangers are conducting targeted compliance operations.

Senior Ranger Greg reiterates that people should not think they can break laws including the road rules just

because they have entered a state forest or national park.

"We will take appropriate compliance and enforcement action to any illegal and unsafe activities within Queensland's protected areas," Ranger Greg said.

"If you wouldn't do it in the middle of Stanthorpe or the local botanic gardens don't do it in a national park or state forest."

Fines were also issued for unlawful camping, fossicking and other illegal conduct.

"We encourage the community to report any illegal activity to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service or local



**Illegal motorbike riders have damaged fencing in some state forest locations** Photo: courtesy Queensland police

police," said Ranger Greg, encouraging users including professional foresters to note the anonymous reporting hotline number: 1300 130 372.

Meanwhile, Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has been using CCTV and other tools to crack down on illegal motorbike use in Attunga State Forest near Tamworth. Both unlicensed

riders and off-road riders have been active in the park, leading to serious concerns about environmental damage as well as the possibility of injury to both riders and other park users.

The park has become a popular place for illegal riding in recent

years and rangers are now actively targeting users who break the rules.

FCNSW also reminds recreational users to keep a close eye on its website, [www.forestrycorporation.com.au](http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au), for information on park and area closures due to safety concerns after the recent flood events in northeast NSW.

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# Passivhaus clarity

## A new guide and conference demystify the Passivhaus standard.

THE Australian Passivhaus Association (APA) has launched a new guide *Claiming the Passivhaus Standard* targeted at design and building professionals, policy experts, real estate agents and more (click here for a link to download the free publication).

"As the popularity of Passivhaus continues to grow, the guide seeks to clarify the legitimate process for achieving the Passivhaus Standard, outline correct terminology use, and forewarn the industry of the legal risks of misusing the term Passivhaus when marketing the sustainability credentials of projects," said APA CEO, Alexia Lidas.

The guide seeks to clarify issues around Passivhaus standards, including common misconceptions. The first of these is the frequently seen anglicisation of the standard's name to Passive House. APA wants to see the original German upheld, in part to make it clear that it is an international standard that is consistent around the world, but also to indicate the sectors where Passivhaus applies.

"The term 'Passive House' has limited the market's understanding of the breadth of the system – inferring it's purely for the residential market," Lidas said. "When in reality, the Passivhaus system can be, and is, working in all manner of built environments, including hospitals, day care centres, workplaces and multi residential settings."

The APA also notes that a building can only legitimately



**Thrive 25 Passivhaus Conference will feature a raft of experts to advise on all things Passivhaus.** Image: courtesy APA

claim to be Passivhaus when it's complete and operating to all of the criteria required to satisfy the Standard. For example, claiming a project has Passivhaus 'principles' or 'standards' is incorrect.

However, while under construction, claiming a house or building is aiming to meet the Passivhaus standard and/or certification is acceptable. Projects that involve some initiatives or materials that are included in the Passivhaus system should refer to those initiatives specifically – e.g. solar panels, air filtration or double-glazed windows.

"We like to say Passivhaus is like an educational qualification – only when you have all of the required papers do you have a diploma or degree," said Lidas, who emphasises the worth of pursuing official Passivhaus certification.

"Given the commitment required by project stakeholders to meet this

high standard, we are encouraging those aiming to achieve Passivhaus to also seek official certification via the global authority. While this is not currently compulsory, there is a wealth of knowledge and support through official channels to help project leaders achieve Passivhaus in the most cost-effective way whilst also ensuring project claims are legally sound."

### THRIVE CONFERENCE

For suppliers, designers, builders and more who want to learn more about Passivhaus, Thrive 25 Passivhaus Conference will be held in Melbourne at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre later this month.

Registrations close this Friday, 13 June (the website still has the old closing date, but Lidas says it has been extended) and 27 expert presenters, over 250 Passivhaus professionals,

18 Trade Show exhibitors, three Training Sessions and three extra fringe events will feature during the event from 19–20 June.

Topics covered include Passivhaus adaptations to non-European climates, suitability of the standard for rental accommodation, material complexities including windows, training tradies and builders for Passivhaus and how the future impacts of climate change are likely to affect the standard.

The training sessions include building to Passivhaus using SIPs, a topic entirely pertinent to modular timber builders.

CPD points are available for architects, engineers and builders, and Passivhaus professionals.

For more and to register, click here.



# More for the middle in CLT

AUSTRALIA has embraced cross-laminated timber (CLT) in recent years, with the increase in reliable domestic production speeding the uptake of the material. Its strength, size and ability to quickly deliver panelised building with a high-quality finish are more than enough to explain its popularity, even before carbon cost savings are discussed.

Several notable CLT projects have been grabbing attention in the past month. In Perth, it's the sale of the site at 4–8 Charles Street with planning approval for construction of C6, the revolutionary 51-storey residential tower, set to become the world's tallest hybrid timber building.

Over in Adelaide, plans for the world's tallest timber hotel have been announced. Brian Harrop from Thrive Construct told ABC's Adelaide Breakfast's Sonya Feldhoff and Jules Schiller about the 'flat-pack' hotel, saying, "As we speak, an entire city is being built in Sickla, Sweden from cross-laminated timber. It stores carbon: it's about a net zero city and a pathway to a sustainable future."

Harrop talked about the plans to build on top of Adelaide's historic MLC building in Victoria Square. The historic façade will be retained and the building made compliant with current regulations, then the CLT addition will be assembled on top; a feat made easier thanks to the comparative lightness of the material.

"It's essentially a gigantic Lego set that arrives and is assembled. All the tolerances are to within less than a millimetre," Harrop said.

"The hotel will be built in



**These Sydney CLT terraces began their build schedule at the end of 2024 and had reached this stage by March. They will be completed in the next couple of weeks.** Photo: courtesy Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects/X

less than 14 months; typically a hotel like this would take three to three-and-a-half years to build."

He explained the advantages of building offsite: "There's 65% less skilled workforce required on site, but more importantly, we're 75% faster to the market."

Meanwhile, in Sydney, at the opposite end of the scale, Twitter/X users may have seen regular posts from Bondi Junction locals marvelling at the quick construction and stylish results of four terraces developed by famed architect Luigi Rosselli as his own build-to-rent investment.

The buildings are his first foray into designing in CLT and he told the *AFR* that it was a "self-inflicted experiment".

Rosselli told the *AFR*, "It works for me because I wanted to do building that provides housing and is not too expensive, and I wanted a construction method that would be economical and also – but mostly – with a very

small environmental footprint."

Again, the speed of the build has been a key consideration. Despite Sydney's recent appalling weather and the Christmas shutdown, the first-time CLT build schedule has blown out by only one month, to the delight of neighbours and at a build cost around half the usual per-metre cost of similar builds in that area.

Those using CLT are rightly singing its praises, yet in the commercial building sector where it would seem a most natural fit – mid-rise apartments, educational buildings, offices, etc – its use has been mostly confined to higher educational campuses, where it has been a hero material at several universities in their accommodation and study builds.

As Australia tackles the need to build quickly and well without blowing through our carbon budget, CLT is an obvious solution. WoodSolutions have a range of resources available for those unsure of their expertise in timber builds, including CLT, with case studies and technical design guides. Click here to access them for free.

To read the whole Rosselli interview, click here.

“IT'S ABOUT A NET ZERO CITY AND A PATHWAY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE”



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