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COVER STORY P 8



Vale
Judy Tilling



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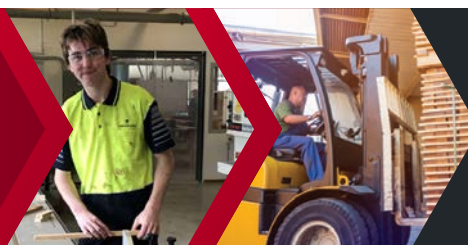
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Vale Judy Tilling

A pivotal figure in timber importing, Judy Tilling leaves behind a monumental legacy.

THE Australian timber sector has lost a giant with the passing of Judy Tilling on Tuesday evening.

Yesterday, Shane Hicks, CEO of Tilling Timber, broke the news. His announcement read:

"The Tilling Group would like to sadly announce the loss of its matriarch of more than 62 years, Judy Tilling. Known and loved across the global timber industry, Judy is remembered as a timber industry icon – founding and directing a significant international business with her husband Norm. Judy is survived by husband Norm, daughters Peta and Jennelle, and son Glenn.

"Since starting the Tilling Timber business in Eltham, Victoria, with husband Norm, Judy's intelligence, charm and astute approach to business has always shone through. She managed a busy life with three growing children while developing a rapidly expanding Timber importation and distribution network. Hardworking and



Judy Tilling with husband Norm. The two took their business from their backyard to an international concern. All photos: courtesy Tilling

dedicated, Judy would regularly fly internationally to develop timber import supply chains across the world, decades before this practice became commonplace. She was strongly interested in strengthening the timber industry and its associations, developing her employees and promoting women in the timber industry wherever she could.

"Judy was inducted as the first recipient of the annual Women in Timber award for her significant contributions, and in 2021 TABMA (now

NTHA) recognised Judy and Norm as industry icons at their annual conference in the Hunter Valley.

"Judy also founded Tilling Timber Imports which managed end-to-end logistics of timber products before containerisation. She effectively "wrote the book" on timber importation through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. She remained active in the business until going part-time from 2017 until she retired in 2021.

"Judy Tilling was respected and admired for her strong

sense of fairness and ethics. Judy's many current and former employees, the many industry associations she contributed to, and Tilling Timber's trading partners across Australia and abroad have lost a great friend and an industry icon.

"Funeral arrangements will be announced in the coming days."

FROM ELTHAM TO THE WORLD

The earliest iteration of Tilling Timber was called N&J Tilling, and the J was always a pivotal part of the business.

Judy Tilling was a pregnant young wife when her husband decided to quit his secure sales job and go out on his own. With a loan from a family friend and a can-do attitude, Judy and Norm were soon running a joinery shop and delivering their wares from a second-hand truck – "An old Bedford without a working park brake and gear stick that would only stay in reverse if firmly held in place, which was

Cont P 3

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From P 2

my mother's job with my then baby sister, Peta, on her other knee," said Glenn Tilling.

The pair quickly found a solid niche in supplying quality mouldings made of various exotic timber species which they sourced locally.

Ever the astute businesswoman, Judy realised that importing directly was the next logical step for the company to lift its margins. She and Norm hopped on a Qantas 707 at the newly opened Tullamarine Jetport and began the multi-leg journey to Vancouver, hoping to bring in cedar and Oregon from the West Coast of the US and Canada themselves.

Once there, they knocked on a lot of doors and received a lot of versions of the same lecture about the trading arrangements being long-established and not the sort of thing anyone wanted to upset. They were told to go home and stop bucking the establishment.

Instead, they kept knocking until a few of the smaller cedar and Douglas fir mills agreed to supply them, which began Tilling's decades-long position of strong supply within the market.

The company outgrew its Eltham base and moved to Kilsyth in 1978, where it expanded its range of architectural products. Local mill strikes were a gift to the importing firm with its guaranteed supply, and Norm and Judy took on more distinct roles, with Judy managing sales and marketing.

The business changed its name to Tilling Timber and in the early '80s opened wholesale yards in Wetherill Park in Sydney and Springwood, Brisbane. The focus remained on sawn wood in those days and Tilling took a leadership position around

imports, hosting a four-week West Coast study tour with around 30 customers visiting Oregon, Washington State and Vancouver sawmills in 1984.

Recalling the event, Glenn said, "They drank the entire city of Portland dry of red wine!"

Long-time colleague Jeff Harvey from Bowens was on that trip and noted that there was as much forestry education as there was networking. "While travelling through the forests, I got to the point where I could recognise the Douglas Fir, Hemlock, and Western Red Cedar trees by their various features," he said, remembering that seeing the Californian Redwoods had been a highlight for the tree-loving group.

CREATING THE MODERN MARKET

Judy understood that timber products needed to stay at the front of the market if the sector was going to succeed against its well-funded competitors. She and Norm were at the vanguard of importing EWP, with their first glulam offer in 1988.

Judy's focus was now on the import operations including due diligence. This work saw her not only



- 1/ **Judy had a comprehensive understanding of timbers that was only surpassed by her knowledge of the import/export world. Her ability to build networks and trust was pivotal to the sector.**
- 2/ **Tilling's first delivery vehicle was an old red truck that required Judy to keep a hand on the gearstick from the passenger seat whenever they wanted to reverse.**
- 3/ **Norm and Judy were a devoted couple, even if she wouldn't let him win at golf.**

open up solid partnerships to drive the new market but also help to birth the well-balanced regulations that see Australian imports deliver safe, sustainable and trusted timber to the market.

And it worked both ways: she was a keen voice of advice at timber events throughout her career (and into her retirement) and would

flag issues, offer solutions based on her hard-won learning and help to bring Australian producers as well as other importers to the place where wood products from reliable brands in and from our market could be trusted domestically and globally.

In 2018, Tilling appointed its first 'outside' CEO, with the plan for Norm and Judy to have a little more time for their life outside the business, including a shared passion for golf – Judy was a skilled player and Norm longed to beat her.

However, in 2019, Norm had a life-threatening stroke. Judy moved away from the day-to-day of Tilling to help Norm recover and have more time with him. Yet she remained an influential part of the business as it worked through the challenges of Covid supply and Russian conflict timber as well as the excitement of opening an office in Vietnam.

From two people in their backyard, Tilling now employs over 160 in two countries and has helped tens of thousands of Australians build their dreams. Judy's drive, intelligence and sense that working together will always deliver the best result is behind every one of those builds.

Vale Judy Tilling

150 years of SA plantations

A celebratory dinner brought sector leaders together.

SOUTH Australia proudly celebrates a major milestone in 2025: the 150th anniversary of the state's plantation forest and timber industries.

Accordingly, leaders of the forest and timber sectors and VIP guests including the Premier, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Minister for Forest Industries, State politicians, local members of parliament, mayors and members of the community gathered in Mount Gambier last Friday, 13 June, to celebrate their shared history and highlight the contributions the industry has made to our national and cultural identity. Nathan Paine,



1/ From left, Premier Peter Malinauskas; Wendy Norris, CEO of OneFortyOne, Tammy Auld, chair of SAFPA Governing Council; Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Forest Industries, Clare Scriven MLC; Senator Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Diana Hallam, CEO of Australian Forest Products Association; Cameron McDonald, executive general manager - forests, OneFortyOne; and Nathan Paine, CEO, SAFPA.

2/ Premier Peter Malinauskas was a guest at the event and spoke of the sector's key role in the state's circular economy.
Photos: courtesy SAFPA



CEO of the South Australian Forest Products Association, said, "This celebration is more than a dinner, it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity

to stand behind an industry that has shaped regional communities, driven economic growth and delivered environmental benefits for 150 years.

"From the first hectare of trees planted in 1875 in the Bundaleer Forests in the Mid-North, the industry has grown to 176,000 hectares, directly and indirectly employing over 21,300 people, processing fibre that builds our homes, the pallets that move consumer products from manufacturer to shop, the pulp and paper products that are used in our everyday lives from toilet paper to cardboard boxes, to the potting mix that grow our fruit and vegetables."

The dinner was held at The Barn in Mt Gambier and – as if to join the celebrations – there had even been some decent rain in the preceding week to loosen the grip of the state's drought.

The Premier spoke warmly of participants on his Twitter/X account, saying "To all the people here tonight, you are taking this vital

industry into the future, with greater invocation, greater sustainability, and a stronger circular economy, so thank you."

Paine agreed, saying, "South Australia's forestry plantations are the foundation of our state's future. Our State has long been at the forefront of innovation and sustainable forest management, and the 150th celebratory dinner marks a proud reflection of the industry's enduring success and its growing importance to the State's economic value chain, regional development and environmental sustainability.

"The anniversary dinner also highlights the importance of those who have dedicated their career to the industry. Their commitment, passion, drive and innovative practices have shaped South Australia as a leader in forest management, timber production and research."

Major partner, OneFortyOne and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions were key supporters of the event.

Australian Forest Products Association

AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

Traditional turpentine piers

A chance discovery sees history repeat.

EVERY now and then, social media turns up a yarn good enough to justify the rest of the twaddle we scroll through. This week, Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) had a gem of a tale on their socials about a surprise find that started in the Watagan Mountains near Lake Macquarie and ended up in Sydney Harbour.

During sustainable timber harvesting in Olney State Forest, FCNSW and Tawmar Timbers staff identified a small patch of turpentine trees, an important timber known for its durability and resistance to disease.

As the FCNSW socials team said, "Forestry staffers Andrew, Hank, Dan, Dean, Jordan, Ryan and Macca performed a broad area search, checking for any features requiring protection during any potential harvesting."

A comprehensive survey found no ecological risks nor danger to protected flora or fauna, along with no Aboriginal Cultural Heritage or other heritage



Structural timbers and some of the piles at Campbells Cove are being replaced with the turpentine find. Photo: supplied

protection values to the stand. So staffers James and Allan updated the existing harvesting roading plan to provide access to the site.

Following this team effort, Tawmar Timbers kicked off sustainable harvesting activities. Over two-three months, a range of important timber products were extracted including:

- 74m³ of girders
- 230m³ of piles
- 99m³ of sawlog
- 196m³ of salvage.

Turpentine is an extremely hard and durable Australian native hardwood timber that has a wide range of construction and engineering applications and is resistant to marine borers.

Now, some of that timber is being installed as replacement piles and wharf structure at Campbells Cove in the shadow of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The FCNSW team excitedly asked, "Who would believe that timber from Olney State

Forest would be installed at Campbell's Cove in Sydney Harbour!"

Turns out, a lot of people who grew up in the area would. Facebook follower Larry Ward replied, saying, "Turpentine piles have been supplied out of the Watagan Forest since at least the 1950s. A lot of Turpentine piles were cut out of Beavans Ridge and out over the Basin in the '80s

and '90s to go to Sydney for Darling Harbour."

In the words of FCNSW, "Thanks to Dan for sharing this team story, a special shoutout to Tawmar Timbers for their commitment to sustainable harvesting and huge thanks to everyone involved for showing how sustainable forestry and smart teamwork can make a lasting impact."

Nominate today

2025 Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award nominations are now open.



Read our selection criteria.
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Recognise a leader and celebrate excellence in responsible forest management and sustainable timber utilisation practices.

Entries close June 30, 2025.

Submissions are to be emailed to

info@responsiblewood.org.au

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The Future of RFAs in Australia

FORESTRY Australia is holding a member-only digital briefing and discussion titled *The Future of Regional Forest Agreements in Australia*. To be held on Thursday 10 July from 12:00–1:00pm (AEST), the session will not be recorded, so interested parties will need to attend live. The event will also be capped at 80 participants and is free for members.

Australia's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) have underpinned the management of native forests for over two decades – balancing environmental, economic, and social objectives. As place-based, long-term policy instruments, RFAs have provided a stable framework for sustainable forest management and intergovernmental cooperation.

In this exclusive member-only digital briefing, Forestry Australia will unpack the history and achievements of the RFA: what they are, what they were designed to deliver, and how they have supported forest management outcomes since the 1990s.

With a wave of change now sweeping across Australia's forest policy landscape, this session will explore the implications of shifting government policy on the future of the RFA framework. What do emerging policy shifts mean for sustainable forest management and harvesting?

We'll also discuss Forestry Australia's evolving position in this context, offering



Former CEO at PFT Penny Wells (right, with Forestry Australia CEO Jacquie Martin) received a prestigious Forestry Australia fellowship in 2023 for her outstanding contribution and commitment to the forestry industry.
Photo: courtesy Private Forests Tasmania

members an opportunity to engage in a pragmatic discussion about the future of RFAs and contribute to shaping a constructive, forward-looking policy narrative.

Presenters include Penny Wells (retired member) talking on the history of the RFA and what have they

achieved; Andrew White (CEO, VAFA) discussing the changing RFA environment, potential impacts on plantation forestry and private native forestry; Dr Bill Jackson (acting president FA) on what does a pragmatic future look like? and Suzette Weeding (general

manager conservation & land management, STTAS) on the importance of RFAs for native forest management.

Dr Michelle Freeman will chair an open discussion about Forestry Australia's position and response.

Members should click [here](#) to register, or click [here](#) to join.

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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

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 More details to follow.

18-19: SAVE THE DATE: THU 18 - Onetrak/Tigercat field demonstration day followed by AFCA AGM & dinner. FRI 19 - Networking breakfast – 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/>



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FSC Australia and New Zealand welcomes new board director at AGM

ON Thursday, 29 May, FSC Australia and New Zealand (FSC ANZ) held its Annual General Meeting, bringing together members to reflect on a year of meaningful progress, increasing momentum, and a shared dedication to responsible forest management.

The AGM highlighted significant developments, including the ongoing revision of the National Forest Stewardship Standard for Australia. Senior Policy Manager Stefan Jensen shared key updates, such as strengthened protections for Intact Forest Landscapes and Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, improved worker rights, and tighter regulations on the use of highly hazardous pesticides. A first draft of the revised Standard will soon be available for public consultation.

Among other notable achievements over the past year:

- Revenue from the Promotional Licence Holder Program grew by 96% between 2023 and 2024, with continued growth expected in 2025 as more businesses join monthly.
- FSC Forest Week 2024 saw a 64% rise in participation from Australian and New Zealand brands, highlighting FSC certification's key role in tackling climate and biodiversity challenges. The



The FSC ANZ members at the AGM, where achievements were both acknowledged and planned. Photo: courtesy FSC

campaign encourages our FSC network of certificate holders, licence holders, and members to celebrate the importance of FSC certification and urges consumers to look for the label on forest-based products to support sustainable forestry.

- The launch of the world-first 2024 FSC Fashion Roundtable Series, held in Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland, sold out rapidly. These events highlighted the vital link between forests and fashion, raising awareness about responsibly sourced forest-based materials in the textile industry.

At the AGM, members appointed Simon Cook as board director representing the Economic Chamber. Simon brings over 25 years of forestry sector experience across the UK, New Zealand and Australia. Since 2014, he has been Sustainability

Manager at Forico, where he has played a key role in shaping the company's internationally recognised Natural Capital Reports and has actively contributed to its Reconciliation Action Plan, building meaningful partnerships with First Nations communities. Simon also contributed to the Standards Development Group for the National Forest Stewardship Standard revision and now steps down from that role as he joins the Board.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Jon Dee for his exceptional leadership as Chair of the FSC ANZ Board. Serving an unprecedented second term, Jon has brought clarity, purpose, and strong values to every discussion. His unwavering support for the team has made a lasting impact. We're grateful that Jon will remain on the Board, continuing to share his energy and insight. In accordance with the Constitution, the next Chair

will be appointed by the Board at its first meeting following this term.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Carlie Porteous, who concluded her term as director within the Economic Chamber after serving since August 2020. Carlie's insightful and dedicated contributions have been invaluable to FSC's mission and governance.

Members also approved a special resolution to extend the Board chair's term from one year to two, enhancing continuity and strategic focus in governance and aligning FSC ANZ with FSC International's practices.

Finally, we thank our guest presenters for their valuable insights: Michelle Wong, deputy regional director, FSC Asia Pacific, who provided an update on the European Union Deforestation Regulation; Tolita Davis-Angeles, chair of the Indigenous Working Group, who shared progress and future plans; and Michael Schofield, resource and sustainability manager at Midway Tasmania, who presented on FSC-certified native forest regrowth thinning.

We thank all our members for their ongoing commitment and support in advancing responsible forest management across Australia and New Zealand.

On the cover: New board Simon Cook has over 25 years of forestry sector experience. Photo: courtesy FSC



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)

Farmers encouraged to add trees

FARMERS are always looking for practical and sustainable ways to improve the productivity of their land. With that in mind, the Murray Region Forestry Hub (MRFH), in partnership with North East Catchment Management Authority, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and Wangaratta Rural City Council, is inviting landholders to a free, informative forum on 27 June 2025, at the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre.

Titled "Boost Your Farm's Future: Unlock the Power of Trees for Productivity and Biodiversity", the forum is designed for farmers, by people who understand farming – offering real-world insights backed by federally funded research into how



Trees on farms can increase stock and produce productivity as well as providing an additional revenue stream. Image: supplied

trees can work alongside existing farming systems to deliver long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits.

With presentations from leading experts and fellow farmers, the day will cover a range of topics including:

- The benefits of integrating trees into farms;
- Investment potential and challenges in farm forestry;
- Practical case studies from local farming families;
- Economic returns and regional market opportunities;
- Earning carbon credits and understanding the carbon market;
- and Risk management and responsible forestry practices.

"This forum ensures landholders get access to solid, research-backed information to help make informed decisions on their own properties" said MRFH's Carlie Porteous.

"More trees on farms not only benefit the landholder but stimulate local economies and communities. We're excited to help farmers get

their questions answered and connect them with the right people to support the journey."

Admission is free and MRFH says the event is perfect for all farmers, whether they're just curious or already considering integrating forestry into their operations. The forum is designed to arm attendees with the tools, contacts, and confidence to explore new opportunities.

EVENT DETAILS

DATE: Friday 27 June

TIME: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

VENUE: Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre

Networking with drinks & canapés from 3:30 pm. While admission is free, places are limited, so please register.

BOOKING: [click here to register](#) or for more info



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TFPA election priorities

As the island state heads to another election, forestry needs are clear.

TASMANIA has decided to honour the great Australian tradition of rolling political leaders and another election will befall its residents on 19 July. Legitimate frustrations aside, there are significant issues about the island's future in play.

One of these is support for the state's sustainable forestry industry, a major employer and source of state revenue.

The Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) has launched its election priorities – spanning a wide range of portfolios and showcasing the important and diverse role forestry plays in the state of Tasmania.

Speaking at the launch of the priority list, TFPA CEO Nick Steel said the forest industry is vital for the state's economic, social and environmental success in the years ahead.

"Over 5500 Tasmanians are employed by the Tasmanian forestry industry," Steel said.

"They live, work and play across our state. That's why our priority list for the



TFPA CEO Nick Steel and Independent Chair Sarah Courtney at the priority launch. Image: courtesy TAFPA

upcoming election spans not only the resources portfolio, but also education, small business, housing and red tape reduction."

The list focuses on four key components for candidates and political parties.

"This year, our priorities focus on housing and wood products, community engagement and industry modernisation, climate change and the fire threat, and timber trees and productivity," Steel said.

"These priorities will assist the industry to remain a key driver of the state's economy and will be able to support the many regional and rural communities that our businesses operate in.

"Our industry is vital to secure our rural communities, for our economic prosperity and to help meet the state's ambitious climate change targets."

TFPA also announced that in the coming weeks the association will be reviewing

the promises made by all parties and candidates and assessing them against the election priorities list.

"Our wish list prioritises the key election policies needed to ensure that our sustainable industry can continue to thrive in years to come," Steel said.

"Closer to the election the TFPA will release an election scorecard which will rate all parties' policies against their support of the Tasmanian forestry industry. That score card will allow Tasmanians who care about our sustainable industry to determine where their vote can go, to truly support our industry.

"I urge all political parties and candidates to work with the TFPA to ensure that their policies can ensure the Tasmanian forestry industry can continue being successful and sustainable for many years to come."

The TFPA election wish list is available by visiting: <https://tfpa.com.au/tfpa-2025-tasmanian-election-priorities/>

Calls for action on PSHB

FOLLOWING our story in *Enews* #852, Federal and State governments are being called on to ramp-up efforts to eradicate the foreign Polyphagous Shot-hole borer (PSHB) that could destroy Australian trees from backyards to vast forests

"Without all jurisdictions committing to a properly funded and coordinated approach to eradicate the PSHB, there's a serious risk the pest could spread across Australia and seriously impact not only the forestry industry,

but also suburban trees across parkland, backyards and reserves, as well as other forests and national parks," said Diana Hallam, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA).

Under Australia's biosecurity provisions, the resourcing of responses to environmental pests is cost-shared by the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments – which have been working to date with Western Australia's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)



PSHB (*Euwallacea fornicatus*) with frass. Photo by Pia Scanlon, courtesy DPIRD, WA

to eradicate the beetle through a combination of regulatory, surveillance, tree removal and public information activities.

"We welcome the efforts

being made so far – but we're concerned insufficient resources are being provided in Western Australia in the attempt to eradicate or contain the PSHB," Hallam said.

In South Africa and California, where PSHB has already established itself, the losses and cost of management are in the billions of dollars across local governments, horticulture, forestry and the environment through tree deaths or increased management costs.

Pre-apprenticeship training gets the nod

A new report says early training is key to boosting completions.

"Of the estimated 34,000 apprentices who will commence a construction trade apprenticeship this year, we expect fewer than 20,000 will make it through to complete their qualification. This must improve," said Geordan Murray, executive director - Future Workforce at the launch of a new report this week.

"New research released by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research [shows that] aspiring tradies who completed a pre-apprenticeship program had a significantly higher likelihood of completing a trade apprenticeship. The problem is that only a small proportion of apprentices participate in any pre-apprenticeship training and access to this type of training is limited."

The report, Understanding the value of pre-apprenticeships, found that students who completed a pre-apprenticeship in the same field of education as their apprenticeship (a term that for the sake of the research included both apprenticeships and traineeships) saw a 7.3%



The program seeks to help more apprentices reach completion, like these Victorian tradies (left to right): plumbing apprentice Campbell Oakley, qualified plumber James Peachman, carpentry apprentice Lucas Heritage and shopfitting apprentice Luca Mascaro Photo: courtesy Victoria DJSIR

difference in completion rates for their apprenticeship compared to those who did not enrol in a pre-apprenticeship program.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) managing director John King said the findings highlight the important role pre-apprenticeships can play in preparing students for

success: "Pre-apprenticeships help turn initial curiosity into commitment, building both skills and passion."

The positive effect of pre-apprenticeships was evident in the trade occupations, where those who had completed a pre-apprenticeship had 66.4% completion rates for their apprenticeships compared to 60.7% for those who did not.

"This may reflect the value of hands-on preparation and the motivation among students who actively choose trade pre-apprenticeships," said King.

"Helping more students complete their apprenticeships is a national priority. This research confirms well-designed pre-apprenticeships can make a difference, especially those aligned to job

tasks and tailored to different learner needs."

The research analysed the outcomes of 280,707 apprenticeship commencements of which 4% (11,210) had a prior pre-apprenticeship program enrolment. The biggest impacts were seen in younger apprentices, males and those not identifying with an equity group.

The study also found that around one in three students who did not complete their pre-apprenticeship still moved into apprenticeships with employers. However, they were then less likely to complete their apprenticeship when compared to those who had not enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship.

King said, "We need to understand why students who leave pre-apprenticeships early are less likely to complete their apprenticeship. That insight could help the VET sector design better supports to ensure students succeed."

To read the report, click [here](#).

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Housing data shows upward movement

Labour and red tape remain issues in most states.

THE Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and HIA have recently released reports tracking dwelling prices, lending and home sales in Australia.

March quarter figures released by the ABS last week show that for the first time the average Australian dwelling price has hit \$1 million.

Dr Mish Tan, ABS head of finance statistics, said, "The national mean price of residential dwellings passed \$1 million for the first time in the March quarter 2025, rising 0.7% to \$1,002,500. Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland were the main drivers of the rise, with Queensland reaching the second-highest mean price in Australia, behind New South Wales."

The total value of Australia's residential dwellings rose by \$130.7 billion (1.2%) to \$11.4 trillion in the same period; great news if you own a house, not so good for first home buyers.

LENDING FIGURES

FWPA's Statistics and Economics program has taken a deep dive into the quarterly lending indicators published by the ABS, which reflect new loan commitments made by lenders for both housing and business finance. Within the housing finance category, lending is further broken down into three key borrower groups: owner-occupiers, first-home buyers, and investors.

FWPA's team reports, "According to the ABS's latest release of lending indicators for the March quarter 2025 (Q1 2025), year-on-year comparisons (aggregated

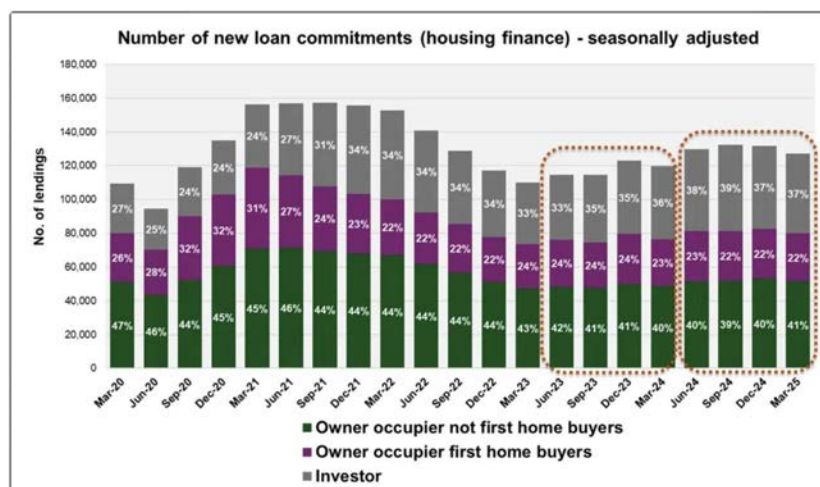


Figure 1: Number of new loan commitments. Source: ABS, FWPA analysis. Graph courtesy FWPA

across four quarters) show a general upward trend in housing finance commitments.

"Between March 2023 – March 2024 and March 2024 – March 2025, the number of loan commitments for owner-occupiers grew by 7%, increasing from 194,531 to 208,134. First-home buyers within the owner-occupier category recorded a more modest rise of 4%, growing from 112,358 to 116,968. Notably, investors showed the strongest growth among the three groups, increasing by 19% over the same period.

"These figures suggest a continued recovery and renewed activity in the housing finance market, particularly among investors." (See Figure 1.)

The Statistics and Economics program found similar trends when it came to the total value of new loan commitments. Owner-occupiers saw a 17% increase in lending value, from \$127 billion to \$148 billion. First home buyers saw a more cautious 10% increase from \$57 billion to \$63 billion. But

the most significant growth was observed in the investor segment, where the total value of new lending commitments surged by 27%, from \$102 billion to \$129 billion. This sharp increase highlights more favourable investment conditions, including rental market dynamics and price expectations.

The FWPA team notes that ongoing challenges in the construction sector, including shortages of skilled labour, material constraints, and extended completion times, continue to delay new housing deliveries.

For more, click here for the full article from FWPA's Statistics and Economics program.

HOME SALES

The HIA New Home Sales report, a monthly survey of

the largest volume home builders in the five largest states and a leading indicator of future detached home construction, showed the volume of new home sales increased by 6.9% in the month of May 2025, to reach the highest level in 13 months.

"This rise in sales follows the second cut to the cash rate in over four years," said HIA Senior Economist, Maurice Tapang.

"The monthly increase in new home sales is consistent with demand factors remaining robust, as Australia records low levels of unemployment, strong population growth and rising prices for established homes."

Results across states were mixed. New South Wales and Victoria were the only states surveyed to report increased sales volumes, albeit from very depressed levels.

The volume of sales in South Australia and Western Australia fell in the month but have risen over the quarter and remain robust. The continuation of a \$10,000 incentive for construction workers to relocate to Western Australia will assist to resolve its key constraint, labour capacity.

"Even with further cuts to the cash rate, and a recovery in market confidence, there remains a shortage of housing in Australia due to the regulatory barriers to increasing supply," concluded Tapang.

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Tasmanian architecture awards

Innovative uses of timber feature heavily in the award shortlist.

THE Australian Institute of Architects has released its 21 shortlisted projects across 10 categories ahead of the 2025 Tasmanian Architecture Awards, which will be announced on Saturday 5 July.

Timber stars in multiple categories, with designers using wood-based products not just for their beauty and sustainability, but for their engineering strength and ability to fulfil briefs. We took a closer look at some of our favourite timber-rich projects.

THE SHED

Designed by Wardle Studio, The Shed is the home for health, medicine, science education and research for the University of Tasmania. Recalling the train sheds that graced the area in the past, the materials are traditional and industrial, with structural Tasmanian mass timbers in the building's higher levels and a lining that is predominantly built from local timbers.

The interior is designed for disassembly at the end of the building's life, with panels able to be removed without damage and reused elsewhere, adding significantly to the embodied carbon benefits found in the construction of the build. Accordingly, the building has been shortlisted for both the Interior Architecture and Sustainable Architecture awards.

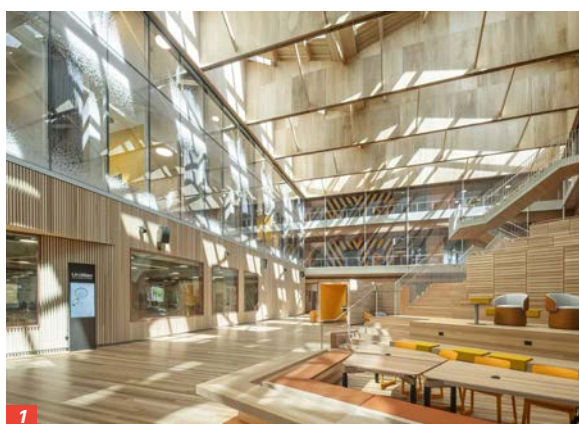
Rich natural tones keep the light inside The Shed warm and welcoming, which ties into the university's goal to make this an inviting and inclusive space. The atrium is open to all most of the time and has plentiful seating for study and quiet reflection.

THE ST LUKES BUILDING

Living up to the urban and natural environmental goals of Australian/Danish architect and urbanist collective TERROIR, the St Lukes Building is labelled as Tasmania's most sustainable and carbon-positive office development. It achieved a 40% carbon reduction on similar builds in traditional materials, which has seen it shortlisted in the Sustainable Architecture as well as Urban Architecture awards, in addition to a nod for Interior Architecture.

The mass timber tower that rises above the existing heritage warehouses echoes the retained timber trusses of the old build, as well as capturing 7665 tonnes of carbon in its structure.

An open-air garden on the top level adds to user amenity as well as softening the impact of the building on the streetscape. All the sustainably sourced timber elements have been designed for deconstruction and re-use at the end of lifecycle.



1/ The Shed at the University of Tasmania is lined in local timbers, creating an inviting interior. Photo: John Gollings - all images courtesy the Australian Institute of Architects

2/ A mass timber tower rises above the old warehouse structure at The St Lukes Building, with an open-air garden on the top floor. Photo: Adam Gibson

3/ Heritage trusses were retained within the building at St Luke's, reflecting the timber extension above. Photo: Adam Gibson

a 'listening bar'; a type that features high quality sound systems and encourages the lingering enjoyment of music.

The interior is a series of overlapping design references: dark blackwood-lined trusses conceal structure while recalling eastern bloc modernism, materials and details add the warm luxury of a jazz age speakeasy, elsewhere there are nods to the gold record and the reel-to-reel tape player.

Altogether the design takes the visitor into a floating space of music and conviviality, making it a natural for the Interior Design shortlist.

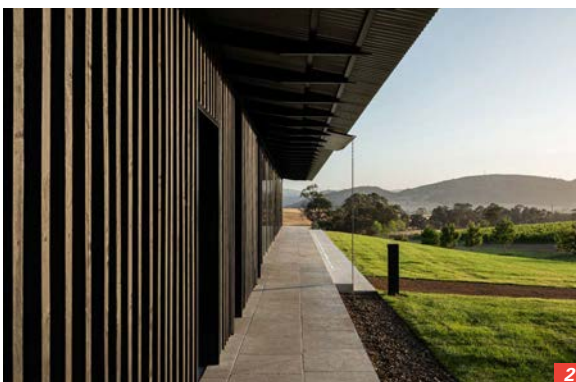
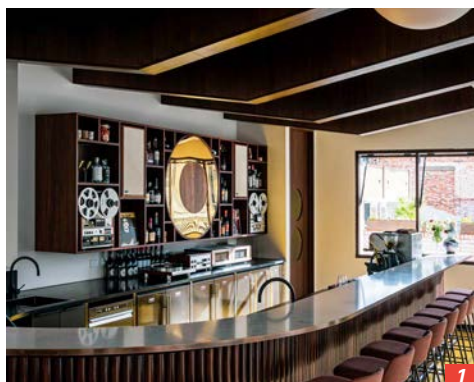
TOLPUDDLE TASTING ROOM

This modest shed-like structure from Tanner Architects sits on one of Tasmania's most famous wineries with views stretching out around it. With such a beautiful environment and

top drops starring, the building didn't need to dominate, but the dark-stained macrocarpa structure instead provides a

THE DILL PICKLE CLUB

Located on the first floor of a 1960s building in St John St, Launceston, the Dill Pickle Club by Workshop Architecture is



1/ The retro vibe of the Dill Pickle Club comes with thoroughly contemporary finishes. Photo: Matt Sansom

2/ The new Tolpuddle Tasting Room sits quietly into the surrounding landscape. Photo: Adam Gibson

3/ While the Tolpuddle build is designed to let the wines star, it plays a beautiful supporting role. Photo: Adam Gibson

4/ The new build at John Paul II Catholic School is part library, part school hall and entirely welcoming. Photo: Sam Shelley

5/ The student-scale shelves and seating encourage a love of reading and invite students into the library. Photo: Sam Shelley

From P 16

comforting accompaniment to the main business of the winery.

Its agricultural shed lines open out through large glass windows onto the nearby hills and the dark tones of the timbers highlight the bright green beauty of the vines and the freshness of the wines. Hydrowood timber, salvaged from Tasmania's western lakes, is used in the interiors, connecting the building strongly to its locality.

The tasting room is shortlisted for three awards: Commercial Architecture, EmAGN Project Award and Sustainable Architecture.

JOHN PAUL II LIBRARY & MULTI PURPOSE BUILDING

Libraries sit at the heart of their communities, and this

adaptive reuse project from Hobart's MANA Architects is a warm and beating one. Replacing a dark, old hall sandwiched between two other buildings, the school's new library and multi-purpose space is filled with invitations for students to learn, from comfy reading nooks to easy-access shelves.

Placed in the centre of the school, the library is accessible to parents at drop-off and pick-up, helping them to foster a love of reading in their kids.

Local Tasmanian oak was sourced for the interiors from Britton Timbers. "We wanted a warm material that we could use in multiple areas, including shelving, joinery, and wall cladding. Tasmanian Oak gave us the ability to unify all elements of the space," said MANA architecture director



Nicky Adams, who also noted the local material delivered significant sustainability benefits and reduced embodied carbon.

Shortlisted in the Small Project Architecture award, this build is one that has already changed the world around it. "A student stopped and asked, 'Excuse me, is this for me? Thank you for making me feel so special.' Moments like these remind us of the impact thoughtful design can have," said Adams.

The public is encouraged to vote for their favourite build for the People's Choice Award. Voting closes 31 July 2025, and you can see all the projects and access the entry form by clicking here.



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Final weeks to apply for Timber Queensland's Growth Scholarships

Up to \$10,000 is available for early and mid-career professionals.

TIMBER Queensland is calling on businesses across the state's forest and timber industry to encourage their employees and networks to apply for the 2024–2025 Growth Scholarships Program, with just three weeks remaining before applications close on 30 June.

The scholarships offer up to \$10,000 in funding for early and mid-career professionals (aged 18–45) working or studying in Queensland's forest and timber supply chain to pursue a professional development opportunity of their choice – without needing to leave their current role or rely on internal company funding.

"This program backs potential and builds opportunity," said Timber Queensland strategic relations and communications manager Clarissa Brandt.

"These scholarships are an investment in the talent already working in our industry—from the forest to the frame and beyond."

Four individual scholarships are on offer thanks to the generous support of industry sponsors:

- Kennedy's Timber Award – \$10,000
- HQPlantations Award – \$5000
- AKD Award – \$5000
- and DTM Timber Award – \$2500.

Scholarship recipients can tailor their application to suit their career interests and aspirations, with funding available for a wide range of learning opportunities, including:

- course or qualification fees;
- attendance at national or

- international conferences;
- study tours to explore global forest management and timber innovation;
- secondments within other parts of the industry;
- or a unique initiative aligned with their professional development goals.

"The only limit is imagination," Brandt said. "We're encouraging businesses to think about who in their team could benefit from this chance to broaden their skills, experience and leadership capacity."

Now in its fourth year, the Growth Scholarships Program reflects Timber Queensland's commitment to developing the future capability of Queensland's \$3.8 billion forest and timber industry.

Last year's recipient of the Kennedy's Timber Award was Trinh Huynh, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Forest Research Institute, University of the Sunshine Coast. Her project was a learning activity that would make a significant contribution to the development of silvopastoral practices in Queensland.

"Silvopastoral systems integrate trees, pasture and livestock, providing environmental and economic benefits," said Huynh.

"The aim of my learning activity is to acquire practical knowledge and first-hand



Recipients of the 2024-2025 Growth Scholarships, clockwise from top left: Trinh Huynh, Matt Kavanagh, Kristiina Marquardt and Bianca Andreis da Cunha. Image: supplied

experience to enhance the development of silvopasture in Queensland, drawing on practices from the South East Climate Hub in the United States."

HQPlantations Award recipient Matt Kavanagh's application saw him travel to Finland to visit Risutec to view a new forwarder-based planting machine called the "Forest Maker".

"Working in our industry is just so enjoyable, there is always something different with new challenges," said Kavanagh, MD at K&S Contracting.

"Mechanical planting has been another great experience but I believe there is a lot more to learn to make it cost effective and provide efficiencies across the different types of plantations we have in Queensland."

Attracting more women to work in Queensland's male-dominated forest and timber industry is an associated benefit of the learning activity that saw Bianca Andreis da Cunha, who works as Planning

and Development Lead Forester at HQPlantations, receive the AKD Award.

"My learning activity aims to leverage the insights and training from the Yale School of Management Executive Education's online Women's Leadership Program, providing me with the tools to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the substantial benefits of diversity and inclusivity in management," she said.

Coming at forestry from a different angle, Kristiina Marquardt from Verterra Ecological Engineering won the DTM Timber Award for her plan to undertake a Remote Pilot Licence Multirotor 25kg course to obtain an initial Remote Pilot Licence, furthering her research and management opportunities in forests.

"We want to see people from every corner of the supply chain—whether they're working in growing and harvesting, sawmilling, manufacturing and wholesaling, design, research or construction—put their hat in the ring," said Brandt.

"By backing those already in the industry, we're creating a motivated, connected and skilled workforce ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future."

Applications are open until 30 June 2025. Eligible applicants must be aged 18–45, based in Queensland and currently working or studying in the forest and timber industry.

Support is available for anyone who needs help putting together their submission.

For full details and to apply click here.

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