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ISSUE 863 // 14 August 2025

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## 19 August is National Forestry Day

COVER STORY P 2

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# National Forestry Day

Next Tuesday, take time to celebrate the industry!

THE Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) instituted National Forestry Day in 2022 to celebrate all that's great about Australia's forest industries and to help raise the profile of the sector among Australia's governments, elected representatives, consumers and the broader community.

"National Forestry Day on Tuesday the 19th of August is a day worth celebrating," said Richard Hyett, AFPA's deputy CEO. "It's a day to recognise our forestry and forest products sector that contributes so much in terms of jobs, essential products, economic activity, enhancing our environment and fighting climate change."

"Think about all of the forestry products you love and need to use. The timber house-frame inside the walls of your home, the cardboard boxes your latest delivery arrived in, the hardwood dining table in your living area

and of course the toilet paper in your bathroom! Without Australia's sustainable and renewable forest products sector, we wouldn't have these locally made products."

Shadow Minister for Fisheries and Forestry Senator Ross Cadell took the opportunity to mention the event in the Senate recently, saying, "This speech is a two-minute speech, and in the Australian forest holdings, every two minutes, enough timber is grown to build a house."

After discussing a recent visit to Hyne Timber in Queensland, where he saw the highly technical ways in which timbers are selected, processed and replanted, he added, "Our forest industry is a great one. It means that we aren't taking other timbers from such places as Borneo and The Congo. I want to celebrate on August 19 all the [forestry] workers!"

Forest businesses around



Forestry is a major employer in regional Australia and key to helping us meet our carbon targets. Image: supplied

the country have added 80,000 direct jobs and support another 100,000 indirectly, contributing \$24bn to the economy annually, much in regional Australia, where local towns are often timber towns.

"Our people are highly experienced professionals who understand the science behind growing productive and healthy forest ecosystems

with multi-value benefits," Hyett said.

"We are critical for the environment and fighting climate change. As production trees grow they absorb carbon, which then continues to be stored in timber and wood-fibre products and the built environment, long after the trees are sustainably harvested. We are a big part of the answer to Australia reaching its net zero goals."




"We encourage all Australians

to stop and reflect on the importance of our forestry and forest products sector and what it provides for the country this coming National Forestry Day."

**“OUR PEOPLE ARE  
HIGHLY EXPERIENCED  
PROFESSIONALS**

**On the cover: National Forestry Day is a chance for the industry to celebrate and to educate others on our importance.** Image: Shutterstock/totalja

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# Timber Queensland welcomes release of draft Queensland Future Timber Plan

THE draft Queensland Future Timber Plan was released last week for consultation. Its goals are to expand sustainable timber supply to meet the state's future housing, construction and infrastructure needs.

Timber Queensland, the peak state body for the forest and timber industry in Queensland, has welcomed the release, which has received preliminary input from the Timber Supply Chain Ministerial Roundtable comprising industry, First Nations, forest science and building sector representatives.

Mick Stephens, Timber Queensland CEO, said, "This draft plan provides clear recognition of the vital contribution this industry makes to the state economy as well as the social and environmental benefits from sustainably managed forests. For too long this sector has been neglected at the expense of rural and regional jobs, green building outcomes and housing affordability.

"The Government listened to our call at the last election for a comprehensive plan to remove productivity barriers and has put the forest and timber industry back at the forefront of strategic economic development. We support the plan's key focus areas of securing future supply, delivering an internationally competitive supply chain, better regulation, workforce development and greater innovation and extension."

The consultation period runs until 5 pm on 3 September and you can

register to make sure your input is saved, so that you can't be timed out while responding. You can comment on the entire plan and in particular which actions should be considered for the initial 5-year action plan. Click here to download the draft plan from the document library on the right of the page (including an accessible version) and links to both more information and various feedback avenues.

The Queensland Government is also holding two public webinars where interested parties can learn more about the plan and share ideas.

• **Webinar 1 will be Friday, 15 August 2025, 10 am – 12 pm. Click here to RSVP.**

• **Webinar 2 is Tuesday, 26 August 2025, 3 – 5pm. Click here to RSVP.**

Or you can email [timberplan@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:timberplan@dpi.qld.gov.au)

Minister for Primary Industries Tony Perrett said successive Labor governments had failed Queenslanders and caused shortfalls in timber supply.

"This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of Queensland's forestry and timber industries and ensure there is renewable Queensland timber to build



**Minister for Primary Industries Tony Perrett says the plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.** Image: supplied

homes and deliver on our infrastructure needs," Minister Perrett said.

"The plan has been shaped by key industry leaders and now we want to hear from everyone – from timber producers, small and family businesses, manufacturers to environmental groups and regional communities."

The focus areas provide a framework that will be co-designed, co-invested and co-delivered with industry, said the Queensland Government. It is looking for input on priorities within that framework.

"These focus areas will help deliver the additional resources, processing capacity and skilled jobs to meet the rising demand for timber building materials," said Stephens.

"An important next step will be to identify and implement key actions to support the 25-year plan. A number of

areas we are focusing on for key priority actions in the first 5-year period include:

- a targeted planting program of additional plantations to complement existing resources and downstream processing;
  - putting in place long term crown resource contracts for the native hardwood industry (noting most existing contracts expire at the end of 2026);
  - a world class industry led private forest grower and landholder forestry extension service, including partnerships with Indigenous communities;
  - lifting the international competitiveness of local growing and processing supply chains through investment in infrastructure, resource recovery and value added technologies;
  - smoothing cyclical market fluctuations through long-term public procurement and leveraging major projects such as the Brisbane Olympics;
  - removing sovereign risk through a long-term right to harvest in sustainably managed private native forests; and
  - removing policy and financial barriers to investment in plantations and farm forestry such as existing impediments in the Land Restoration Fund.
- "We look forward to working with the Government on the co-designed strategy and actions to ensure a thriving and sustainable forest and timber industry into the future," Stephens concluded.

# Relief from the Reserve Bank

TUESDAY'S announcement that the RBA was lowering its benchmark cash rate from 3.85% to 3.6% has been widely welcomed.

After holding on a split decision at its last meeting, this unanimous drop was explained by the trimmed mean measure of inflation having been within the bank's 2-3% target for over a year, and continuing to decline.

All of the big four banks have announced they will pass on the cut in full.

While the news comes as welcome relief to anyone with a mortgage or loan, HIA Senior Economist Tom Devitt says that it will also provide a further boost to home building activity across the country.

"With three interest rate cuts in the back pocket, established home prices are



**RBA Governor Michele Bullock at the press conference following the rate cut announcement** Image: supplied

rising, making new home building increasingly viable for new households," Devitt said.

"The RBA's current cash rate settings remain in restrictive territory and will constrain household and private sector business spending across the economy, including in the home building industry. Household spending

has been particularly constrained, with Australia having been in an almost uninterrupted per capita recession since mid-2022.

"Despite this, and ongoing increases in taxes and restrictions on new home building, the volume of homes commencing construction is set to continue to increase.

Elevated population growth and government job creation have created demand for new homes and will continue to support ongoing growth in the number of new home starts."

Devitt is not optimistic that rates will drop back to the comfortable levels seen around the start of the decade.

"These same factors are also likely to keep inflationary pressures higher than last decade ensuring that this cutting cycle is relatively short-lived," he said.

"Policymakers cannot rely on the RBA to achieve 1.2 million homes over the five years. More significant structural reforms to regulation and taxation of homes are required to address Australia's housing shortage."

Australian Forest Products Association

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# Fire fighting Demo



## The Komatsu 895 Firefighter

**When:** 21 August,  
10.30am start, running  
for 4-5 hours

**Where:** HVP Depot at  
Rennick, Victoria (Just  
on the Vic side of the  
VIC/SA border)

KOMATSU has announced the contractors who created this new firefighting machine, Peter and Mark Rodwell, will

be at the demonstration, along with the tank manufacturer Garry Kennedy. This is a great opportunity to meet the guys

and ask questions on the day.

All are welcome. Finger food and beverages will be provided on the day.

For more details and to RSVP, contact Joanne Johnson on 02 9647 3603 or via [joanne.johnson@komatsufire.com](mailto:joanne.johnson@komatsufire.com)

## Forestry carbon webinar

THE New Zealand Institute of Forestry has been grappling with many of the wider issues Australian foresters are seeking to answer. Its upcoming webinar, Forestry as a viable and credible climate solution, will focus on forestry's role in global and NZ climate policy, from UN carbon markets to the NZ Emissions Trading Scheme. Dr Elizabeth Heeg (CEO; NZ Forest Owners Association) will be sharing on the opportunities and challenges for nature-based solutions amid growing preference for technology-based removals

and the implications of recent legislative changes.

The evolution of the UN-supervised article 6.4 carbon market mechanism has highlighted tensions between nature-based solutions (NBS) and technology-based removals. The role of NBS such as afforestation and reforestation in delivering scalable, cost-effective carbon removals with significant co-benefits for biodiversity, water quality, and rural communities has been called into question because of their reversal risk, including fire and drought.

Emerging technology-based removals are being favoured in some international policy settings, as part of the ongoing policy debate around permanence, verification, and market integration. Amid this debate, the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS) is subject to increased scrutiny due to the current tensions between forestry and agricultural land use. Recent legislative changes will be discussed in the context of tightening emissions budgets and the need for robust, data-driven policy.

### EVENT DETAILS

**DATE:** Monday, 25 August

**TIME:** 7.30pm to 8.30pm (NZST)

**COSTS:** \$NZD (Credit card fees applied).

\$20.00 NZIF members  
\$20.00 Australian Forestry Members (please quote membership number in 'note to administrator')  
\$40.00 Non-Members  
FREE NZIF Student members only

**Ticket Sales close:** 3:00 pm on the day

Everyone who registers will receive a copy of the webinar recording.

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



## AUGUST

### 19: Victorian Trees on Farms Program Information Session – ONLINE ONLY.

Learn the ins and outs of the Victorian Trees on Farms Program and the Trees on Farms Incubator Program and how you can take the next steps to grow trees on your farm. For more information and to register, visit <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/trees-on-farms>

## SEPTEMBER

### 2-3: Timber Queensland Biennial Conference

#### "Doing Timber Business in Queensland" – Brisbane.

Highly informative conference covering a variety of topics including: building farm resilience, Queensland's future timber plan, EUDR and illegal logging, timber, beef and carbon opportunities. building our future in timber, housing demand, modern methods of construction, timber mid-rise apartments and social housing. Plus, networking dinner and industry site tour. To register, visit <https://www.timberqueensland.com.au/education-events> or for more information you can email the team at [admin@timberqueensland.com.au](mailto:admin@timberqueensland.com.au)

### 7-12: Gottstein Trust's

### Understanding Wood

**Science Course – Albany 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 three 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.** Tickets \$65. Visit <https://www.ntha.com.au/eventdetails/32982/wftn-cocktails-for-charity> to purchase your ticket. RSVP by Tuesday, 27 August.

**18-19: SAVE THE DATE: THU 18 - Onetrak/Tigercat field demonstration day + AFCA dinner, 5.30pm. FRI 19 - Networking breakfast, 7.30am-9.00am & AGM, 9.00am-10.00am – QT Canberra.** Click here to book breakfast or click here to register AGM attendance.

**30: Hoo Hoo meeting and dinner, 6.30pm-8.30pm – Sydney, Club Ryde Ex.** Dinner \$42. The Sydney Timber Industry Institute, AKA "Hoo Hoo International", have a few willing members that want to re-establish this

great organisation. To RSVP, contact Heather Gattone on 0411 490 169 or email [heatherbelle@iinet.net.au](mailto:heatherbelle@iinet.net.au)

## OCTOBER

**13-14: Timber Construct 2025 – Melbourne.** The program includes timber framing innovations, timbers strategic return to the light construction market and High-performance timber products for modern construction, architectural excellence in wood design, fire safety for timber's critical performance barriers and much more. For more information and to register, visit <https://timberconstruct.org/>

**20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Conference and Networking Event – Singapore.** Subjects covered include: global & Asian macro-economic outlook, pulp-woodchip end user, improving chip quality and export yields, carbonised pellets, biomass trends and much more. For full conference details and to register, visit <https://www.danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/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: Conference Field Trip – Perth, WA.** Follows on from the woodchip and biomass conference in Singapore. 2-day trip includes accommodation, breakfast, lunch, dinner and bus transport for site visits. Registrations or full field trip details, visit: [danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/fieldtrip](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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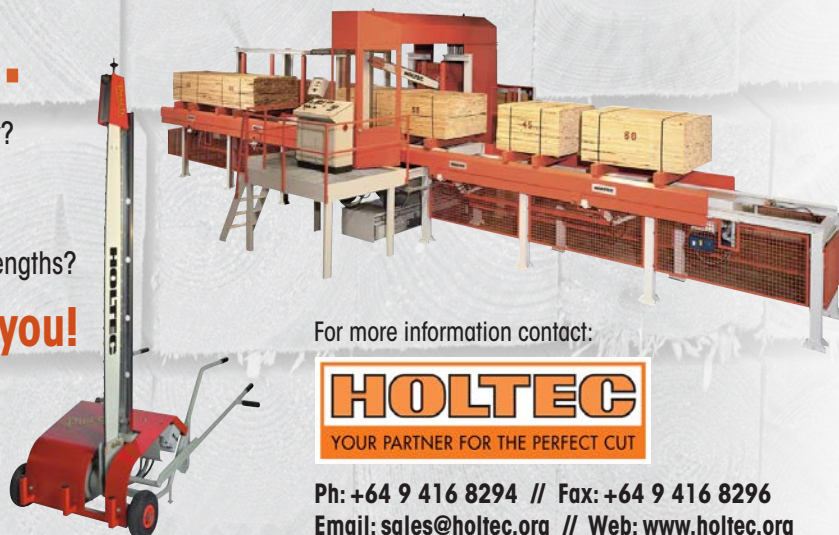
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# Victoria makes some home builds easier

HOMEBUILDING Victorians received a little treat on Sunday, with Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny announcing the 'Single Home Code', a state-wide amendment to Victoria's planning schemes that will streamline approvals for single homes and small second dwellings on lots under 300 square metres – cutting red tape and getting homes built sooner.

If a home meets the updated standards – including requirements for setbacks, tree canopy, solar access and street amenity – it will be 'deemed to comply' meaning it can be approved without further assessment. Neighbours will still be notified and can provide feedback, but if the standards are met, there'll be

no VCAT appeals or costly delays.

The changes improve the existing 10-day VicSmart fast-track process by simplifying what applicants need to submit and clarifying how councils assess it.

It will apply across all residential zones in Victoria and will ensure clearer, more consistent assessments for single and small second dwellings, adhering to good design while streamlining approvals.

"This is another way we're making our planning system say 'yes'," said Minister Kilkenny. "Yes to well-



Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny. Image: CC

designed homes, yes to more homes, and yes to people making the most of the land they already have."

HIA Executive Director, Keith Ryan called it "another small, but important, step, towards improving the Victorian planning system.

"The Single Home Code follows the Townhouse and Low-Rise Code introduced earlier this year. The government also reminded us that a Medium-Rise Code is also coming soon. Together these reforms help to gently increase housing density without excessive impacts on communities and local amenity.

Ryan added, "One disappointment was the lack of an update about the government's progress on the two homes on one block reforms. This was announced by the Premier back in October 2024. Reforms to make it easier to subdivide a block into two lots or build a second home on one block will make a significant improvement."

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# Agriculture Minister's Productivity Roundtable

## AFPA put forestry's case at the policy setting event.

AHEAD of next week's Economic Reform Roundtable, specialist sectors have been meeting with ministers around Australia. On Tuesday, it was the turn of the Agricultural sector and, lacking our own specialised roundtable, the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) represent forestry at the event, which was convened by Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Julie Collins.

AFPA's Deputy Chief Executive Officer Richard Hyett said, "Our sector provides the solutions to many of the Government's challenges, including helping solve the housing crisis and decarbonising the economy.

"It's important we work with Minister Collins and her Ministerial colleagues in the Albanese Government to get the policy settings right, to improve productivity for our sector and to enhance our national contribution to the economy, climate and the creation of essential products."

AFPA went into the



**Minister Julie Collins speaking at the Agricultural Minister's Productivity Roundtable in Brisbane this week.** Image: courtesy Julie Collins/Facebook

roundtable with a focus on the importance of strategic regional planning, increased forestry research and development (R&D) investment, improved timber and wood-fibre outcomes, along with improved supply chain technology and policy settings that promote the sustainability of the forestry industry and its products.

These goals align with the Strategic Forest and Renewable Materials Partnership's Timber Fibre Strategy (see *Enews* 858). It also recommends a number of Albanese Government actions to drive a step change

improvement in productivity, including:

- Recognising forestry and wood products as a priority industry under the Government's Future Made in Australia Network
- Promoting investment in workplace productivity across the sector including trialling the "smarter" High Performance Workplace model to encourage programs, projects and pilots
- De-risking investment in modern manufacturing capability by improving cross-government regulatory reform

"We have a huge potential

using our amazing materials, maximising use and value of the resource as well as developing new uses. It's all key to our future success," said Hyett.

Directly after the event, Minister Collins said, "Today's roundtable was an important opportunity to reaffirm the Albanese Labor Government's strong commitment to putting agricultural productivity front and centre.

"We know that improving our agricultural productivity is good for our farmers, our regional communities, our national economy, and our trading relationships. That is why we continue to collaborate with our farmers and producers on ways we can enhance productivity, support economic growth, and address the challenges and opportunities in our agricultural sector.

"There were a number of constructive discussions today, and I want to thank leaders from across our agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors for their contributions," she concluded.

## Nominate today

2025 Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award nominations extended.

[Click to learn more and nominate online.](#)

Recognise a leader and celebrate excellence in responsible forest management and sustainable timber utilisation practices.

[Click here to apply online.](#)

**Entries close August 15, 2025.**

Responsible Wood 

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# Tasmanian Liberals drop FPPF

The 'wood bank' promise has been shelved as the Premier seeks support.

NEWLY returned Tasmanian Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, has backed away from his 'wood bank' policy as he seeks to secure support for his government in the parliament against another threatened no confidence motion from the State Opposition.

Announced in 2024, the policy saw 39,000 hectares of Tasmanian forest zoned as Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF). This would have been made available for harvest at short notice and the Liberal Party said that it was intended to give certainty to the industry.

The policy was met with criticism from the state's forest industry, with members saying they were being used as political footballs and that such a decision risked reigniting the 'forest wars'. Conservationists were also against the proposal, particularly when Right To Information requests suggested that some of the FPPF areas were ones that had been set aside as future reserve land under the old Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA), the 2012 'peace deal' between Tasmanian foresters and conservationists.

At the time, Tasmanian Forest Products Association CEO Nick Steel released a statement saying the association was disappointed: "The Liberals have been in government for a decade and could have solved our wood supply issue at any time. But instead, they have decided to make it an election issue."

Two elections later (fingers crossed there's not a third) and Liberal Member



**Liberal Member for Braddon Felix Ellis, second from left, in July in Launceston on the campaign trail, with Chris Gatenby, Liberal candidate for Bass, Dave Clarke, CEO of Master Builders Tasmania and labourers Jhye and Kacey.** Photo: courtesy Felix Ellis/Facebook

for Braddon, Felix Ellis, announced on Saturday that the plan would not go ahead.

"We have made this decision in line with community expectations and further consultation," he said.

"The government will instead focus on maximising value from existing resources, including private forests, and ensuring growth in the industry through more innovative on-island processing."

The announcement was made shortly before a press conference was due to be held by Tasmanian Labor leader Dean Winter, who still hopes to convince the Greens and Independents to support a Labor Premiership when the State Government returns next Tuesday.

Winter called the move a backflip and said that the government was so "desperate to cling onto power" it was adopting Labor's policies.

"You have got to question the cynicism," Winter said. "This is a Liberal government who is desperate to cling onto power, desperate to get the votes of the crossbench."

The Greens called the announcement a win, with Tasmanian Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff saying, "[With] the Greens in the crossbench and a more progressive group of independents there with us, too, there is no doubt that the vote in Tasmania will be able to put pressure on the major parties to deliver these sorts of policy changes."

Nick Steel commented that the decision reflected the new political reality of compromise in the state, a position that others in the forestry sector resonated with.

Sawmiller Matthew Torenus, of Torenus Timber in Forcett, told Radio National Tasmania Mornings presenter David Reilly that he thought both the Liberal and

Labor parties had now moved back to a position very similar to the TFA

He described the process of the TFA as one that cost a lot of money and time to implement, and that no one was completely satisfied with, but which all parties just worked to maintain.

"We moved on from there; what got in the way after that was politics," Torenus said. "I guess in

the sense that no one got what they wanted, does that mean it ended up working alright?"

He praised the spirit of compromise that had underpinned the TFA, noting that the Greens had signed up to that agreement and saying that both the Greens and the Independents needed to have some flexibility now.

"There was a lot of effort that went into building that agreement and sometimes that's what it takes," Torenus said, "but people have to be willing to compromise on both sides and that's what happened."

He noted that forest protests essentially ceased under the TFA, but that people and towns who relied on forestry had still been able to make a living, and expressed his hope that a similar spirit of productive compromise could be found again.

To listen to the full interview, [click here](#).



# Chenming mills reopening?

IN late 2024, the closure of huge pulp mills owned by Chenming, one of Chinas' biggest pulp companies, had a major negative demand influence on hardwood woodchip imports into China in 2025 - and therefore on the fortunes of Australia's 680,000 hectare eucalyptus plantation industry and woodchip export trade.

However, Goldman Sachs has recently announced that Chenming may reopen its biggest pulp mills, which has immediately sparked renewed optimism in the industry.

The announcement said

## CHENMING CAPACITY (IN THOUSANDS OF TONNES/YEAR)

Plant	Grade	Capacity
Zhanjiang	Paper	2680
	BHKP	950
	BCTMP	650
Huanggang	BHKP/BSKP	600
Shouguang	Paper	3120
	BHKP	1400
	BCTMP	650
Jiangxi	UWF	350
	Ivory Board	350
	BCTMP	200
Jilin	UWF	300
	APMP	85

Source: Goldman Sachs

the company has secured a ~US\$300M loan to restart operations, and the company has issued notice to suppliers, distributors and employees that it plans to restart most, if

not all, operations.

This would use an additional four million Bone Dry Metric Tonnes of hardwood woodchips per year. This is MORE THAN Australia's total hardwood woodchip export volume in 2024, and will be in 2025.

This will no doubt be a major talking point at the DANA-Ginkgo Global Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference on October 20-21 in Singapore. For details and registration (including a post-event West Australian Field Trip) click this link <https://danaevents.co.nz/>

## Stanton Award entries closing

NOMINATIONS for the Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award **close THIS FRIDAY at 5 pm AEST.**

This esteemed award recognises individuals who have made significant strides in Forest Management or Chain of Custody Certification within the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme.

For full details on the award and how to nominate, click [here](#).



## 2025 DANA - GINGKO

### GLOBAL WOODCHIP AND BIOMASS TRADE CONFERENCE & NETWORKING EVENT















### SINGAPORE CONFERENCE 20 - 21 OCT + 2 DAY FIELD TRIP TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA 23 - 24 OCT

#### 2 day conference at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore

##### 26 speakers on several themes:

- Global Wood Chip Trade: Regional user and supplier updates
- Details of 160+ dedicated woodchip vessel shipping fleet
- Global Biomass: w/chips, white/black pellets and PKS
- Global pulp-mill status/expansions/future: Market pulp trends
- A 'New Projects, New Products' panel

#### Optional 2 day field trip to Western Australia

##### Visits to:

- Eucalyptus nursery/plantations/harvesting
- Pine harvesting
- Pine Sawmill
- Bunbury Chip Export Port
- Albany Chip Export Port

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# Adbri AI cameras cut truck collision risks

WHEN a concrete truck rolled over on a Queensland road after taking a roundabout just a little too fast, Adbri's transport team asked a sobering question: What if we could have seen this coming?

While the accident was serious, it also became a catalyst for change at Adbri. Instead of simply reacting to incidents, the company set out to prevent them.

The bold solution was to install AI-powered cameras in all truck cabs. These smart systems now monitor over 100 trucks, tracking distracting behaviours such as fatigue, distraction, harsh braking and unsafe cornering. The new program was designed specifically not to punish drivers, but to provide them with information and feedback that they could use to improve their performance.

As a member of the National Timber & Hardware Association (NTHA), the program led to Adbri being nominated for the NTHA Safety Culture Award at the recent 2025 SA, NT & WA Timber & Hardware Industry Awards. Adbri's nomination came about because the innovation was about empowering drivers to drive better, rather than just handing out consequences after an incident.

"We are not here to catch drivers out," says Adbri's national manager – logistics Edwin Ng. "We are here to empower our drivers by



1/ Adbri Quarries have been running the AI cameras on 100 trucks, with positive results.  
 2/ The driver-facing camera is unobtrusive. Research shows that this type of monitoring system is much more effective than indirect systems.  
 3/ A driver nodding off for a moment in a microsleep will trigger the camera and sound an alarm. All photos: NTHA

driving behaviours.

"This gives drivers the chance to rectify a behaviour that they may not even currently know they are doing, without a 'Big Brother' approach reprimanding them for an action that could have been potentially dangerous," he said.

The AI cameras have already potentially saved the life of a driver named Tim, who was flagged for a microsleep while driving his truck. Inside the cab the camera showed his head dipping briefly, then a beep, and him looking up again, completely unaware of what had happened. When shown the footage, Tim was shocked. A medical check revealed severe sleep apnoea.

"He did not lose his job. We supported him," says Mr Ng. "He got a CPAP machine and now he feels better and drives better, too."

For those concerned that the cameras are 'spying' on drivers all the time, Mr. Ng says, "We only get footage when an event is triggered. Just four seconds before and four after. If a driver is driving perfectly, no footage ever goes anywhere,"

Drivers also responded positively. With access to their own data, many began actively

trying to reduce their 'event' counts, treating it like a game, or a challenge.

giving them information and feedback that they have never had."

The program started with 20 trucks in a pilot funded by

the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), using inward and outward-facing cameras along with real-time AI analysis to identify risky

“WE ONLY GET FOOTAGE WHEN AN EVENT IS TRIGGERED”



1/ Devices in the interiors of trucks include many essential for work, such as GPS, but can be distracting for drivers.

2/ Everybody deserves to get home from work safely, including drivers, for whom fatigue and distraction are serious risks.



From P 12

"Most drivers want to be better. If you give them the tools and the feedback, they improve on their own," he said.

The data also enables positive reinforcement. Drivers with low event counts may

be eligible for safety bonuses, something that would not be possible without this kind of visibility.

### BEYOND ADBRI

The successful program has now attracted attention from across the transport

industry. Its combination of AI, driver support, and privacy protections is being seen as a model for how tech can be used with, not against, the workforce.

For Tim, the technology might have saved his life.

For others, it could be the difference between a close call and a career-ending mistake. And for Adbri, it is a step toward a smarter, safer future, one where drivers are not part of the problem, but instead part of the solution.

## DRIVER MONITORING SYSTEMS

Heavy truck drivers in Australia have been conscientious partners in reducing the road toll over the past few decades. Yet still there were 157 road deaths involving heavy trucks in the 12 months to March 2025.

The mantra that everyone deserves to get home from work safely includes drivers. Key causes of truck accidents are known to be fatigue and distraction. The 2024 NTARC report shows that inattention/distraction had double the rate of any other truck accident cause, and that there has been a 75% increase in accidents due to inattention/distraction since 2022. Fatigue plays a significant role here as our brains look for something to keep us awake when we are tired.

Many companies have now turned to driver monitoring systems (DMS) to alert drivers who may be in need of a break or who may have looked away from the road for what they think is a second but is actually much longer.

Research carried out by the American Automobile Association (AAA) in 2022 compared direct DMS, where a driver-facing camera monitored at all times, and indirect DMS, where steering wheel input was used to gauge fatigue or driver disengagement (eg looking at a mobile phone or radio).

It found that direct DMS were significantly more effective at mitigating driver disengagement: on average, the percentage of time drivers were engaged was approximately five times greater for direct systems compared to indirect systems.

The evaluated direct systems also issued an alert at least 50 seconds sooner than indirect systems in the various scenarios the research investigated.

There were caveats in the research that are reflected in other papers on the topic: if drivers were made to feel as though the system was part of a 'gotcha' mindset on the part of management, or if the alerts were set to go off too quickly and became intrusive, they would disengage with the process and try to find ways to circumvent the DMS.

But where the company worked with the drivers and designed the DMS to get them home safely from every trip, as at Adbri, the DMS has become a valuable tool in helping drivers to manage their health, focus and safety.

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# Workplace inclusion concerns

NEW research from Diversity Council Australia (DCA), Australia's leading peak body for diversity and inclusion, has turned the spotlight on a powerful but hidden barrier holding Australians back at work: their social class.

While we enjoy an image of a class-free Australia, the evidence does not support this as a reality.

Early findings from DCA's highly anticipated Class Inclusion at Work report (to be released in October) have revealed a persistent 'class ceiling' limiting career opportunities for workers who are marginalised by their social class (class marginalised). The



The panel speakers include (from left) Gwladys Ngo, Tedga, Doug Taylor, Farhana Laffernis and Travis Lovett. Images: supplied

data shows:

- only 44% of class marginalised workers have been offered career development opportunities in the past year, compared to 76% who are privileged by their social class (class privileged). This is supported by the fact that only 4% of leaders surveyed reported being class marginalised, while 40% reported class privilege;
- despite this, just 24% of

leaders recognise that social class makes a difference in Australia, compared with 33% of other workers;

- fewer than 1 in 4 (22%) of class marginalised workers feel valued and respected in their team, compared to 41% of class privileged workers.

However, the data also showed that workplace inclusion makes a big difference – class marginalised employees who work in inclusive organisations

are more than twice as likely to have participated in career development opportunities.

DCA will be holding a panel discussion to explore the issues and set the scene for DCA's upcoming Class Inclusion at Work report

on Friday 22 August 2025, immediately following DCA's 2025 Anna McPhee Oration, where the Governor-General of Australia will reflect on her first year in office.

Panel speakers include:

- Travis Lovett (he/him) – Former Deputy Chairperson and Commissioner, Yoorrook Justice Commission

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# National Skills Week

NATIONAL Skills Week will run 25–31 August this year and, in addition to the traditional celebration of vocational education and training (VET), organisers are encouraging young people to consider non-traditional careers with the theme Explore All the Options.

National Skills Week promotes the wide range of educational and career pathways available through vocational training, including the options to get the qualifications required for roles in skills shortage.

While Workplace Gender Equality Agency data shows women and men have close to equal participation in the total workforce, there are significant gender imbalances in many industries.

Many of these same industries also are facing serious workforce shortage pressures, as revealed in Jobs and Skills Australia data.

Traditionally male-dominated industries have notable gaps. Construction, where 79% of workers are men, has a workforce shortage pressure of more than 70%; mining (78% male) has a shortage pressure of more than 60%; and electricity, gas, water and waste services (74% male) has a shortage pressure of more than 40%.

For education as well as healthcare and social assistance, the imbalance is

sharply reversed.

Accordingly, this National Skills Week sees industry stalwarts as well as VET trainers encouraging young people and those retraining to think outside the box.

Holly Willcox, CEO of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), said, "The building and construction industry is evolving, and we want to empower women to be at the forefront of this change by taking on a career that is both rewarding and energising, and offers endless potential for growth and impact.

"Building and construction pathways are incredibly diverse and extend far beyond traditional roles, ensuring there is something to inspire everyone. At CITB, we're committed to providing the support, training, and pathways women need to trade up and thrive. It's about building a future where every woman can see herself making a powerful contribution to our state and its development."

Electrician Ellie Wotherspoon won 2024 Apprentice of the Year at the Western Australian Training Awards. Ellie's brother, father and grandfather are all electricians but she had never



**Electrician Ellie Wotherspoon holds a Certificate III in Engineering – Industrial Electrician apprenticeship and a Certificate IV in Instrumentation.** Image: supplied

seen a female electrician so it was never something that she thought she would do.

After starting a teaching degree, she took a break from studies and got practical experience as a nanny for a female electrician. "I remember thinking, 'Wow if she can do it, maybe I can do it, too'" Wotherspoon said.

"That's when I pursued an introductory course into what is involved in working in industry, and from there I've never looked back."

Through over 500 events nationwide, National Skills Week aims to inspire new participants in the workforce and those looking for a change to embrace VET – particularly in fields where it may not be expected. You'll find a whole new career as well as help solve Australia's skills shortages.

For more information or to get involved, visit [www.nationalskillsweek.com.au](http://www.nationalskillsweek.com.au)



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## HEAD OFFICE

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd  
PO Box 3001  
Maraylya NSW 2765

## PUBLISHER

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd

## EDITORS

Donyale Harrison  
Jess Hockridge  
Nicky Ainley  
[editors@timberandforestryenews.com](mailto:editors@timberandforestryenews.com)

## ADVERTISING

Campbell McInnes // +61 (0) 406 223 007  
[campbellm@timberandforestryenews.com](mailto:campbellm@timberandforestryenews.com)

## ACCOUNTS

Chris Parker // +61 (0) 413 710 203  
[cparker@ttnews.com.au](mailto:cparker@ttnews.com.au)

## SUBSCRIBE

[www.timberandforestryenews.com](http://www.timberandforestryenews.com)



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From P 16

- Gwladys Ngo Tedga (she/her) – Partner, Risk Advisory, Ashurst
- Doug Taylor (he/him) – Chief Executive Officer, The Smith Family
- Farhana Laffernis (she/her) – Research Manager, DCA.

"Five years on from DCA's

ground-breaking 2020 Class at Work report, these new findings prove that social class remains one of the most powerful, yet least acknowledged, barriers to inclusion at work," Catherine Hunter, CEO of DCA, said.

"This discussion will set the stage for an important conversation on why class matters at work, and why we must begin dismantling the

systemic barriers that continue to hold people back."

The event will run from 11.30 am to 2.30 pm on 22 August at Zinc at Fed Square, Melbourne, and includes a two-course lunch, in addition to the keynote speech by Her Excellency, panel discussion and networking opportunities. For more details and to book, [click here](#).



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### CONTACTS

**Media releases and editorial:**

Donyale Harrison // Jessica Hockridge // Nicky Ainley  
e: [editors@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:editors@timberandforestrynews.com)

**Display ad bookings:**

Campbell McInnes // e: [campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com)

**Accounts:**

Chris Parker // e: [cparker@ttnews.com.au](mailto:cparker@ttnews.com.au)

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