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Pandering to activists will not save a single koala

COVER STORY P2



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Not a single koala will be saved

By **TIM LESTER, CEO, AFCA**

THE NSW Government is set to announce the formation of the Great Koala National Park on the Mid North Coast of NSW in order to save the koala population. The new park will surely gladden the hearts of activists everywhere and justify the millions of dollars generated by the outrage factory over many years.

And not a single koala will be saved.

The study conducted by NSW National Parks as part of the assessment for the park showed that the koala habitation in the state forest is the same as the national park next door. The regulations, management and controls mean harvesting crews spot and avoid koalas, protect and preserve important trees, enhance forest health and make space for habitat



and production trees of the future.

Condemning a forest to a future of benign neglect is the worst possible outcome but the most likely one.

Consider the case of the Pilliga Forest in north west NSW. In 2005 a productive

“AND NOT A SINGLE KOALA WILL BE SAVED”



1/ The forest sector provides invasive weed and pest control and ensures the availability of mixed aged trees. The Pilliga Forest saw these services disappear under the conservationist approach to the detriment of the koalas.

2/ Bushfires are an ongoing threat in Australia. The summer heat has seen some terrible fire damage occur in our forests. Forestry workers provide firefighting expertise, equipment and prevention to the forests they manage, which when removed leaves the forests far more vulnerable to wildfires.

Images: Shutterstock

industry in that area was scaled back to set aside forest for environmental conservation. The population of koalas at the time was 30,000 across 500,000 hectares, at the time the only known population in all of NSW to be increasing. Industry must have been the problem.

Today the population of koalas, in an area 187 times the size of Greater Sydney, is

50. Clearly, industry was the problem.

Under a conservationist approach, management for forest health stopped. We stopped maintaining mixed species and having multiple aged trees. Food for koalas disappeared.

We stopped investing in invasive weed and pest control, not because we

Cont P 3

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From P 2

wanted to but because it is too big a job for too few people over too large an area and that is much too expensive. So, it became harder for koalas to move through the forest, and they were more likely to be dinner for a fox or cat.

But the real kicker is the struggle to effectively control the now inevitable fires that rage through unmanaged scrub. More than two thirds of the Pilliga Forest burnt in 2019-20 and about a quarter this last summer. In part because we had lost the skilled, experienced and

capable people and their equipment who knew the bush and were on hand to step in when needed. But industry was the problem!

This is not just an issue affecting the forest, but it also affects the towns. Places you've probably never heard of like Barradine and Gwabegar. Soon to be places like Dorrigo, Bellingen and Bowraville. Because a forestry job is stable and secure, with an earning capacity two and a half times the average of hospitality.

With a forestry job you can work hard and earn good money in rural areas, be home with your family every night and available to volunteer in your community. You can't do that with a job that has you working nights and weekends, or one that is fly-in fly-out for weeks at a time.

The new area of park is

rumoured to be 176,000 hectares (66 times the size of Greater Sydney, estimated koala population between 12,111 and 14,541) of which 100,000 hectares is already protected for conservation. Industry, the extreme pro-forestry activists that we are, suggested to government that a medium-sized park would deliver the government's commitment and balance important conservation with sustainable production.

But industry with its stable jobs, support for communities, more than a century of real-world forest management experience and 2.5 times multiplier on economic activity, must be the problem.

Instead of the win-win that we could have had the state of NSW is going to lose about a third of its native timber production capacity and hundreds of millions

of dollars of income. It will lose the ability to produce power poles, timber wharves, high value feature timbers, decking and more. It will export jobs and carbon and sovereignty capacity.

The uncertainty and reduced activity will affect the rest of the forest products sector at the very time we need more timber and wood fibre of all kinds for sustainability, renewability and climate sensitivity. It will also put more pressure in the international market which is already awash with illegal timber, threatening Sumatran tigers, Congolese gorillas and Amazonian tamarins.

And not a single koala will be saved.

“THE UNCERTAINTY AND REDUCED ACTIVITY WILL AFFECT THE REST OF THE FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

On the cover: Industry is often blamed when wildlife populations decline. However, the Pilliga Forest shows that the ongoing maintenance provided by the forestry industry actually benefits wildlife and the forest overall.
Image: Shutterstock

Invest in your team with the right tools

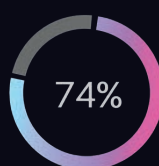
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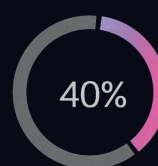
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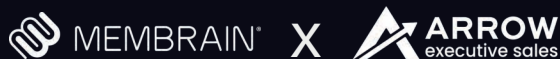
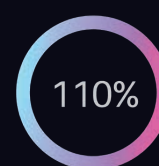
Activities



Effectiveness



Outcomes



The ethical imperative of certified timber in Australia

THE recent discovery of illegally sourced Russian timber infiltrating the UK housing supply chain has sounded alarm bells for the global construction industry. Despite a UK 2022 ban on Russian timber imports, illicit wood, falsely labelled as originating from the Baltic States, has undermined ethical suppliers and exposed vulnerabilities in supply chain transparency. This scandal highlights a critical responsibility for all stakeholders—builders, suppliers, and consumers—to ensure timber is legally and sustainably sourced by verifying certifications.

In Australia, where sustainable forestry is a cornerstone of environmental stewardship, the integrity

of timber sourcing is paramount. Ethical suppliers invest heavily in compliance with certification schemes like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). These standards guarantee that timber is harvested responsibly, respecting environmental, social, and economic considerations. However, when illegally sourced materials slip into markets undetected, they erode trust and disadvantage businesses that prioritise compliance, as these firms face higher costs to maintain ethical practices.

The responsibility to



From Amazon boxes to Woolworths grocery bags, the FSC tick is easy to spot around the home, proof that sustainable forestry is part of everyday life. All photos: Jessica Hockridge

uphold sustainable sourcing extends beyond suppliers. In Europe housebuilders and consumers can actively check timber certifications to ensure legality and traceability. Think Timber – Europe have

developed a QR code to help consumers identify where timber has come from and if it is sustainable, offering transparency and peace of mind. In Australia, consumers can keep an eye out for the FSC or PEFC logos to know that the timber, wood products and even packing are created through sustainable practices and are traceable to their origin.

Stricter regulations and enforcement are already in place in Australia. We are now six months into Australia's reformed illegal logging laws (Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012 (Act) and the Illegal Logging Prohibition Rules 2024 (Rules)) that came into effect on March 3 this year.

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Celebrating sustainable forestry excellence

2025 Richard Stanton Award judging underway.

THE 2025 Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award has drawn an exceptional pool of nominees, showcasing remarkable contributions to sustainable forest management and chain of custody certification. Announced by Responsible Wood, the award celebrates innovation, excellence, and commitment to sustainability in Australia's forestry sector. With judging underway, the winner, set to receive a \$2,000 professional development bursary, will be revealed in September.

This year's diverse nominees reflect a broad spectrum of achievements in sustainable forest management and the promotion of Responsible Wood and PEFC-certified products. Their work highlights significant contributions to environmental stewardship, innovative practices, and the advancement of certified forest products. "The quality and diversity of this year's nominations are truly inspiring," said Simon Dorries, CEO of Responsible Wood, echoing sentiments from last



Left to right: Monique Blason, Simon Dorries and Dr Tony Bartlett with the award and gift given to Monique as the 2024 winner of the Richard Stanton Award. Photo: Responsible Wood

year's award presentation.

In 2024, as reported in Timber & Forestry Enews (issue #820), Monique Blason of ForestrySA set a high benchmark. Dorries praised her, stating, "Monique and her team set a new standard for sustainable forest management in Australia." Blason's leadership in managing 16,000 hectares of native forest reserves and 10,000 hectares of commercial pine plantations balanced ecological, social, and economic values. Her innovative Mt Crawford

mountain bike park integrated biodiversity conservation with recreation, earning acclaim. Dr Tony Bartlett noted, "Monique's work is an inspiring example," highlighting her advocacy for Responsible Wood certification through public

“THE AWARD CELEBRATES INNOVATION, EXCELLENCE, AND COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY”

engagement initiatives like the Wilampa Trail's educational signage.

This year's nominees continue this legacy, showcasing advancements in sustainable forestry practices. From pioneering certified product supply chains to community-driven conservation efforts, their contributions align with the award's mission to honour Richard Stanton's vision for responsible forest management. The 2025 field stands out for its innovative approaches, including new technologies and community partnerships that enhance sustainability.

The award, established in 2015, commemorates Stanton's dedication to world-class forestry standards. This year's winner will join a prestigious list of recipients, including Blason, whose cultural heritage initiatives with First Nations groups exemplified the award's values. Responsible Wood extends gratitude to all nominators for recognising outstanding leaders in the field.

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A blow to the Nelson-Tasman region

The planned closure of Eves Valley Sawmill will deeply impact the local communities.

THE timber industry in New Zealand is facing mounting pressures, with Carter Holt Harvey announcing plans to close its Eves Valley Sawmill near Nelson. This move could result in the loss of 142 jobs, sending shockwaves through the local economy and communities. The facility, located about 21 kilometres from Nelson and operational since the 1980s, processes around 250,000 tonnes of timber annually, much of it sourced from nearby forests. Company management cited the need to consolidate operations at its Kawerau plant in the Bay of Plenty as the primary reason, aiming to enhance efficiency amid challenging market conditions.

Tasman Mayor, Tim King, expressed profound disappointment over the proposal, describing it as a significant shock despite longstanding rumours about the mill's future. Having lived adjacent to the site for most of his life, King highlighted its integral role in the region's economy over the past four decades. "The implications are very significant for us as a region," he stated, emphasising the impact on the 142 affected workers, many of whom have dedicated years to the mill. He noted a pattern of rationalisation in the sawmilling sector nationwide, driven by investments in technology and efficiency elsewhere. King pointed out that Carter Holt Harvey believes it can meet the country's sawn timber demands entirely from the North Island, rendering the Eves Valley operation redundant.



The proposed closure of the Eves Valley Sawmill will affect the jobs of 142 workers and greatly impact the local communities and region. Image: Shutterstock

The closure's ripple effects would extend to nearby towns such as Brightwater, Wakefield, and Richmond. Employees seeking new work opportunities could strain local job markets, while reduced wages might hurt supporting businesses. The forestry sector, a cornerstone of the Tasman region, would face disruptions as logs previously processed locally are redirected elsewhere. King acknowledged the proposal's rationale and expressed doubt that interventions could reverse the decision.

Nelson Mayor Nick Smith echoed these concerns, revealing that consultations with company management left him pessimistic about saving the jobs. After inquiring whether local council or government actions could alter the outcome, Smith reported a firm response indicating consolidation was the driving force. He briefed Regional Development Minister Shane Jones and South Island Minister James Meager on the issue. Both ministers voiced disappointment but committed to supporting

affected workers through agencies like the Ministry of Social Development. Meager highlighted the unfortunate timing, given the abundance of windfall timber from recent flood emergencies—estimated at 3500 to 6000 hectares—that requires processing. He suggested other companies might step in to handle this resource, and he plans to explore regional development options with Jones. Dismissing suggestions of a lack of confidence in the South Island, Meager noted positive growth trends in southern regions over recent months.

Opposition voices have been vocal in their criticism. Labour MP Damien O'Connor labelled the potential closure a major setback, attributing it partly to the government's pause on large construction projects, which he claims has reduced timber demand. He pointed to broader job losses, including 18,000 in construction and over 11,000 in manufacturing since December 2023, warning that such trends could drive Kiwis abroad for better prospects. Nelson MP Rachel Boyack added that the region needs

expanded onshore wood processing to support housing and infrastructure, not reductions.

Union representatives from E tū described workers as devastated, with many having served at the mill since its inception. Team leader Finn O'Dwyer-Cunliffe stressed the proposal's detrimental effects on families and the community, pledging to advocate for members during consultations. Smith shared anecdotes from speaking with affected staff, some of whom fear meeting mortgage repayments after recent home purchases.

In the wider timber industry context, challenges abound. Timber Industry Federation executive director Jeff Illott explained that building consents have plummeted from 51,000 in 2022 to 34,000 in the year to June, exacerbating low demand. Coupled with rising costs for electricity, compliance, and insurance, plus international instability from conflicts and tariffs, sawmills are under severe strain. Illott described the situation as one of "batten down the hatches," noting that while small-town mills are vital employers, family-owned operations endure through generations. Despite the gloom, he hopes for recovery.

The proposal remains under consultation until 1 September, with a final decision expected on 4 September. As the Nelson-Tasman region braces for potential upheaval, stakeholders call for collaborative solutions to mitigate the fallout and bolster local resilience.

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

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 three types of end products. For further information and registration details visit [https://](https://gottsteintrust.org/grants-courses/understanding-wood-science-course)

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

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/>

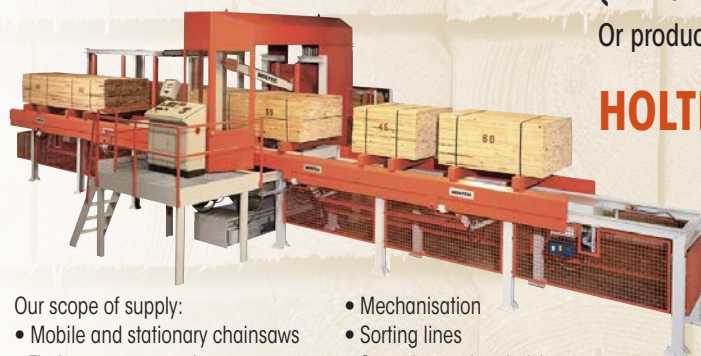
22-23: Melbourne Build 25 – MCEC, Melbourne.

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

24: GTTIA – The Barn, Mt Gambier, SA. Gala dinner and awards ceremony. 6pm - pre event cocktails and 7.00pm - awards ceremony. Tickets available via the website: www.gttia.com and go on sale 3 September.

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NTHA shines at HBT 2025: championing workplace safety

THE HBT National Buying Group National Conference 2025, held at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, was a triumph for the National Timber & Hardware Association (NTHA), who captivated attendees with their focus on workplace safety. The NTHA's Stand C1 buzzed with excitement as members explored the newly launched, free WHS Safety App, a game-changer designed to simplify safety management with ready-to-use resources. Reflecting on the event, the NTHA team expressed gratitude: "A big thank you to everyone who stopped by the NTHA stand... to check out our brand-new FREE WHS Safety App—making safety simpler and more effective."

The conference's highlight was the Safety Roadshow session on 20 August 2025, where NTHA delivered a powerful presentation. Attendees were moved by a real-life story from the frame and truss industry, shared practical risk-spotting tips, and marvelled at Forklift AI safety technology aimed at reducing workplace incidents. "We loved connecting with HBT members during the Safety Roadshow, sharing a real-life story... and showcasing Forklift AI safety tech," the NTHA team noted. Participants left equipped with actionable tools,



Workplace safety is essential! It is a non-negotiable priority that all businesses must have. NTHA is making safety easier to understand and more accessible than ever with their roadshow and new app. Image: Shutterstock

including the WHS Toolkit App, packed with templates, checklists, and training modules.

This focus on safety echoes NTHA's ongoing commitment, showcased at their Free Safety Roadshows, as reported in *Timber & Forestry Enews* (issue #862). At a session on 4 August 2025, Vicki Stableford introduced Michael Dryburgh of ITI Australia, who recounted a tragic 2021 forklift accident at John Cook & Sons. Michael stated, "On Feb 1st, 2021, John Cook & Sons had a workplace accident that changed a lot of lives forever, as the forklift accident resulted in a fatality." He added, "What started out as a very normal day, suddenly changed the lives of many - forever!" The session featured a poignant video, concluding with a tribute: "In memory of Baljinder Singh, 1 Feb 2021." ITI's CEO, Germano Tomassetti, reflected, "We thought we had everything covered... When this happened, the a-ha moment was, we need to do more."

Keenan Smith from Hamilton Locke provided legal insights, emphasising that "Due diligence is a personal responsibility and a non-delegable duty." He outlined six due diligence elements—Know, Understand, Resource, Monitor, Comply, Verify—and highlighted severe penalties under NSW law, including fines up to AUD \$11,150,183 for corporations. The session sparked lively discussion, with one attendee noting, "I am really glad I came," reflecting the impact of NTHA's approach. The WHS Safety App, launched to meet SafeWork requirements, was a focal point, offering tools like WHS report forms, gap analysis templates, and a forklift safety training module, accessible to all, not just NTHA members.

At the HBT conference,

“WHS SAFETY APP, A GAME-CHANGER DESIGNED TO SIMPLIFY SAFETY MANAGEMENT

NTHA's stand drew crowds eager to explore these tools. A highlight was the prize draw, with Anna from Lancelin Hardware winning a free workplace safety review. For those who missed the event, NTHA extended an open invitation: "Just reach out to Vicki at vicki.s@ntha.com.au for details to download the FREE Safety App." The team's

enthusiasm was palpable, reinforcing their mission to make safety accessible and practical.

NTHA's upcoming Free Safety Roadshows continue this momentum, with the final three sessions scheduled across NSW and Canberra:

- 2 September 2025 – Dee Why RSL (Dee Why)
- 4 September 2025 – Canberra Labor Club (Belconnen)
- 9 September 2025 – Ettalong Beach Diggers (Ettalong Beach)

Interested parties can register at NTHA's events page for these free, informative sessions. As NTHA thanked HBT, they added, "We look forward to seeing you all next year!" Their commitment to safety, exemplified by the WHS Safety App and impactful Roadshows, ensures workplaces are safer, one step at a time.



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Remembering Graham Harris: a timeless legacy of stewardship at AKD

IN the wake of Graham Harris's recent passing, the AKD community pauses to honour a man whose life was intertwined with the timber industry's evolution for nearly five decades. Just months ago, as Graham stepped into retirement on 30 June, 2025, AKD CEO Shane Vicary penned a heartfelt tribute in the company's Splinter newsletter, capturing Graham's reflections and achievements. Tragically, Graham's death followed soon after, transforming that celebration into a poignant eulogy. As AKD noted in an editor's update to the piece, "We feel fortunate that Graham's reflections and achievements were captured in this piece, which now serves as both a celebration of his retirement and a tribute to his extraordinary contribution to AKD over nearly 50 years. Our thoughts are with Graham's family, friends, and all who had the privilege of working alongside him."

Graham's journey with AKD was rooted in family heritage, spanning generations in the timber sector. His involvement began in 1973 as a director of Kilmour Investments Pty Ltd, one of AKD's four family shareholder companies. By 1990, he had joined the AKD Board directly, serving until his retirement. Shane Vicary highlighted this lineage in his article: "Graham's family has been involved in the timber industry for generations, originally as part of W.J. Inglis, one of AKD's founding shareholders in 1955. The Inglis family business name was changed to Kilmour



Graham Harris, a dedicated, resilient champion in the industry for nearly five decades. Image: AKD

– a name inspired by their ancestral Scottish village of Kilmaurs." Graham's grandfather, William John Inglis, laid early foundations, while his uncle Stan was among AKD's seven founding directors. Graham's father, Hector Harris, succeeded Stan in 1973, and Graham followed in 1990. This familial commitment endures, with Graham's son Andrew assuming the role on 1 July, 2025, marking 70 years of Harris family dedication.

Throughout his tenure, Graham championed strategic initiatives that propelled AKD's growth. Shane recounted key milestones: "Graham from the start of his tenure on the

Board supported strategic decisions that enabled multiple phases of growth, evolution and change. The decisions that stand out for Graham include the launch of SPE in the mid 1990's, building a new Sawmill in Colac in 1997, acquiring the Irrewarra Sawmill in 1999, the land acquisitions in the 2000's, and the Colac Log Sorter in 2011." As Board Chair from 2015 to 2023, Graham navigated AKD through challenges and expansions. Post a tough

2011-2014 period, the company invested heavily, including upgrades at Irrewarra in 2015, the 2016 CDK project, and a new Colac Sawline in 2017. The 2018 acquisition of four sawmills in Queensland and New South Wales was, as Shane described, "the 'opportunity of a lifetime'" that broadened AKD's footprint.

Graham's pride in AKD's resilience shone through in his own words, as quoted by Shane: "Not all decisions have been perfect – but those who never make mistakes are those who never make decisions." He emphasised direction over perfection, crediting AKD's success to "courage, sound leadership, strong values, and a willingness to adapt and improve." Shane also praised Graham's focus on governance, including a new Shareholders Agreement, recruitment of independent directors like Pat Jones and Peter Boyd, an independent Company Secretary Sam Butcher, and grooming successors through alternative directors. This forward-thinking approach ensured the Board's future strength.

Safety emerged as a cornerstone under Graham's influence. Shane wrote, "Graham is extremely proud of the focus on safety that has become embedded in every part of the business. From Board-level decision-making to frontline operations, safety is now a non-negotiable priority – and that shift, he believes, is one of AKD's most meaningful

“FOR GRAHAM,
AKD'S TRUE
ESSENCE LAY IN
ITS PEOPLE

From P 10

achievements of the past 20 years." Yet, for Graham, AKD's true essence lay in its people. Shane captured this sentiment: "While growth and investment were key themes of Graham's time on the Board, what stands out most in his reflections is the people. He consistently emphasises that AKD's strength lies in its people – their knowledge, energy, passion and pride in their work. He believes that although the shareholders may own the assets, it is the employees who truly own

and drive the AKD story and its brand."

Graham's personal investment extended to AKD's 13,000-hectare estate, symbolising long-term vision. Shane noted, "Graham also has a deep sense of pride in the development of AKD's 13,000-hectare estate – built from the ground up over decades. For Graham, this represents more than just asset growth; it's a symbol of AKD's long-term thinking and for Graham its personal." Friendships among directors, forged over years, added a layer of warmth to his experience.

Looking ahead, Graham's optimism endured. Shane relayed his hopes: "When asked what he hopes for AKD's future, Graham doesn't hesitate. He wants to see continued reinvestment and AKD to have the courage to continue to grow. Graham



Shane Vicary has been the CEO at AKD since 2011 and the Director since 2020. Image: AKD

is particularly excited about the Oberon acquisition, and he has been encouraged by the resilience shown by the business during the difficult times of reduced volumes." He urged not letting market downturns define the company, pointing out that AKD's greatest growth often followed hardships.

Graham's philosophy encapsulated his ethos, as

immortalised by Shane: "His parting message is simple but powerful and it's for all of us: it's all about stewardship. 'You don't own the jersey,' he says. 'You're just looking after it – and your job is to hand it over in a better condition than when you got it.'"




Shane Vicary concluded by sharing his gratitude: "On behalf of the entire AKD team – past and present – we thank Graham Harris for his remarkable contribution, his considered approach, his desire for growth and investment and his unwavering belief in the future of our business.

"Graham's passing leaves a void for those who knew him, but his legacy of stewardship inspires them to carry the jersey forward, stronger than before. Our deepest condolences to his loved ones."

“IT IS THE EMPLOYEES WHO TRULY OWN AND DRIVE THE AKD STORY AND ITS BRAND

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FFI's goal is to ensure that modern methods of construction with lightweight timber framing are captured by regulations so that builders, designers, and manufacturers can deliver faster, high-quality, low-carbon buildings across housing and low-rise projects (3-4 storeys) without the need for project specific engineering. A further aim is to ensure timber framing expertise is passed on to the next generation. The program unites major timber framing suppliers, researchers, fixings suppliers, fabricators, and educators across Australia to align design guidance, research, and skills with the needs of construction.

What the program is delivering

The FFI aims to harnesses Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to revolutionise how we build, combining off-site precision manufacturing with enhanced on-site productivity to deliver buildings faster, smarter, and more sustainably.

Work has already begun



The Future Framing Initiative looks to boost the demand for lightweight timber framing to help deliver faster and better housing construction. Photo: FWPA

on an Industry Standard for Lightweight Timber Framing. This will support low-rise applications and provide common rules and performance expectations. The aim is for the Standard to be referenced in the 2028 National Construction Code or by state building regulations.

Why this matters for industry

National Housing Accord has set a target to deliver 1.2 million homes over five years from mid-2024. Meeting that goal requires productivity gains and reliable framing systems. Lightweight timber framing already dominates detached housing. Updated standards will extend its use in low-rise projects across a range of building types, while keeping practices familiar for trades.

The initiative also supports Modern Methods of Construction. Off-site precision

manufacturing with efficient on-site assembly allows projects to be delivered faster and with more predictability.

Program structure

The Initiative is guided by the FFI Project Management Committee chaired by Ian Tyson, former Timberlink Australia Chief Executive Officer. Its work is organised into four pillars:

- Development of a new Industry Standard.
- Research to underpin the development of the Standard.
- Extension of the scope of the Industry Standard with further research.
- Building technical capacity.

How FFI complements FWPA's Codes and Standards program

FFI is part of FWPA's broader support of codes and standards development but has a specific focus on modernising

lightweight timber framing construction to improve build times, lower costs and reduce red tape, while ensuring timber framing remains the low-carbon, high-performance material of choice.

The FWPA Codes and Standards program has a broader scope of developing standards, guidelines, and handbooks across a range of applications. Most recently publishing two industry standards on the use of recycled timber for structural and decorative applications, as well as supporting the development of Building Code change proposals with research and testing, including full-scale fire testing for mid-rise timber buildings.

Together, the two programs reinforce one another to increase the use of wood-based products across the built environment.

Staying connected

The FFI webpage, hosted by FWPA, provides project updates, research outputs and event information in one place. It is the best way for stakeholders to stay informed and contribute to the work.

"[The webpage will] provide timely updates and offer direct links to events and research activities critical for modernising timber construction."

Learn more and subscribe for updates here.

Enhancing workplace safety in Australia's timber industry

IN Australia's timber industry, where sawmilling and wood processing are vital to the economy, workplace health and safety remain paramount. The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), through its Softwood Manufacturing Chamber's Workplace Health and Safety Subcommittee, has developed comprehensive guidance documents to address critical risks. These guides offer practical strategies to identify, assess, and manage dangers, helping businesses comply with health and safety laws while fostering safer environments. By prioritising risk management, the industry can reduce incidents of injury, fatality, and operational disruptions.

MOBILE PLANT AND PEDESTRIAN INTERACTIONS

The movement of mobile plant, such as forklifts, loaders, trucks, and mobile cranes, around timber sites often intersects with pedestrian pathways, creating high-risk scenarios. Reversing vehicles, loading, and unloading activities amplify these dangers, potentially leading to serious injuries or fatalities. The AFPA's Mobile Plant & Pedestrian Interaction Guidance Document emphasises a structured risk management approach, starting with 'safety by design'. This involves planning site layouts to minimise interactions, such as designating separate entry and exit points for vehicles and pedestrians and



Wood dust is a major risk in the timber industry as cutting and processing timber creates wood dust at a rapid rate. Image: Shutterstock

incorporating features like overhead walkways or high-impact barriers.

Hazard identification is foundational. Businesses should create visual site maps highlighting traffic flows, blind spots, speed limits, and exclusion zones—areas restricted to mobile plant or designated for safe pedestrian movement. For instance, loading zones might include driver safe exclusion zones to prevent pedestrians from entering during operations. Risk assessment considers factors like vehicle types, environmental conditions (e.g., night work), and worker activities, including temporary tasks like stocktakes that might expose pedestrians to plant.

Controlling risks follows the hierarchy of controls: elimination (e.g., removing the need for reversing by using drive-through systems), substitution (e.g., replacing poor-visibility plant with better models), isolation (e.g., barriers and detours), engineering (e.g., reversing cameras and speed humps), administrative (e.g., speed limits, signage, and training),

and personal protective equipment (PPE) like high-visibility clothing.

Traffic management plans are essential and regular reviews ensure plans adapt to site changes. Training is crucial and ongoing maintenance and reviews of controls, using tools like SafeWork Australia's checklists, help sustain safety.

MANAGING DUST FIRE AND EXPLOSION RISKS IN WOOD PROCESSING

While fires in wood processing plants are evident hazards, dust explosions are subtler yet devastating. Sawdust from milling isn't inherently explosive, but when suspended in air under confined conditions, it can ignite into flash fires or explosions, causing catastrophic injuries, deaths, and property damage. The AFPA's Managing Dust and Fire Explosion Risk Guidance Document, with its companion risk assessment tool, focuses on wood dust in manufacturing sites, excluding general dust suppression for health or

environmental reasons.

Understanding the hazard involves the fire triangle (fuel, heat, oxygen) and explosion pentagon (adding dispersion and confinement). Finer, drier dust—common in planer mills and kiln-dried areas—increases ignition ease and explosive force. Facility assessments identify combustible materials, processes producing dust, accumulation areas, dispersion means, and ignition sources.

Risk control mirrors the hierarchy: elimination (e.g., designing infrastructure to prevent dust buildup via extraction systems), substitution and isolation (e.g., enclosing equipment), engineering (e.g., spark-extinguishing systems), administrative (e.g., housekeeping with vacuums or wet methods to avoid dust clouds), and PPE. Ignition controls target sources like naked flames, electrical faults, hot work, and spontaneous combustion in stockpiles. Measures include using explosion-rated equipment, permit systems for hot work, proper earthing, and stockpile monitoring with thermal imaging to prevent heat buildup.

A SAFER FUTURE FOR THE TIMBER SECTOR

By implementing these AFPA guides, timber businesses can proactively manage risks, ensuring compliance and worker wellbeing. Regular reviews and worker consultations are key to evolving safety practices. For more details, contact AFPA at enquiries@ausfpa.com.au.

Rethinking engineered panels

Harnessing plant-based residues for next-generation sustainable materials.

By DR JOHANNES FEHRMANN & DR BENOIT BELLEVILLE. Part two.

CITRIC ACID: A BIO-BASED BINDER WITH PROMISE

One promising option in the search for sustainable, non-toxic, and formaldehyde-free binders for biomass is the use of organic acids. Among these, citric acid is emerging as a particularly effective choice. In Dr Fehrmann's research, citric acid performed surprisingly well in hemp-based panels, meeting strength requirements for non-structural, indoor use.

However, long-term durability is still a challenge. Because citric acid is highly acidic, it can weaken the bonds between particles over time, especially in humid environments. To solve this, the UoM team is developing a buffered version of the adhesive that stabilises the pH during curing without reducing its strength. While further testing is needed, early results are encouraging.

The key takeaway: citric acid may not yet be suitable for structural-grade panels, but it shows strong promise for interior and low-stress applications. As an eco-friendly binder, it's especially valuable for settings where indoor air quality and material safety matter.

Importantly, citric acid doesn't just work with hemp. It has also been effective in



1



2

1/ Lamination adds protection, strength, and broadens application potential of hemp hurd particleboard.

2/ Corn stalk particleboard bonded with a bio-based adhesive.

3/ Dynamic fire testing of experimental panels, with an infrared camera monitoring heat distribution. All photos: Dr Johannes Fehrmann and Dr Benoit Belleville

various agricultural by-products including bagasse, corn, rice and even recycled wood. This points to a much wider potential for developing the

next generation of sustainable materials using a broad range of biomass sources.

HYBRID SYSTEMS: ENHANCING STRENGTH AND FUNCTIONALITY

Even the best panel core can benefit from added surface protection. Dr Fehrmann's research showed that adding a laminate layer – whether 3 mm natural timber veneer, thin Masonite hardboard, or finer coverings like 0.6 mm aluminium or 0.35 mm kraft liner – greatly improved the stiffness and bending strength of the hemp-core panels.

Lamination also enhances other key performance features, including resistance to impact and moisture, and improves how well screws hold. At the same time, it allows for changes in appearance and broadens the potential uses of the panels. These qualities are particularly important for applications such as furniture, cabinetry, and internal partitions. Laminated panels remain lightweight, easy to handle, and quick to install, making them a practical choice for interior linings, modular construction, temporary fit-outs, and flat-pack furniture.

FIRE PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES: A CORN STALK CASE STUDY

In parallel with work on industrial hemp, the group has also investigated corn stalk as a renewable feedstock



3

“WHILE FURTHER TESTING IS NEEDED, EARLY RESULTS ARE ENCOURAGING”

Cont P 15

From P 14

for engineered panels. Corn stalk is one of the most abundant agricultural by-products globally, including in Australia, where it is generated seasonally in large volumes. Redirecting this underutilised biomass into value-added products offers both environmental and economic benefits. A series of lab-based experiments explored the fabrication of particleboard using bio-based adhesive. "This work allowed us to understand the complex interplay between natural binders and biomass chemistry," explains Dr Benoit Belleville, research group leader of the Sustainable and Renewable Products Group at UoM. "Our aim was not only to improve performance metrics but to do so in ways that align with low toxicity and climate-conscious manufacturing." Physical and mechanical testing showed that panels bonded with citric acid achieved competitive internal bond strength, screw withdrawal resistance, and bending properties, alongside improved dimensional stability in the presence of moisture.

The group also examined fire performance and environmental impacts, comparing different fire-retardant additives and evaluating life cycle outcomes under both Australian and international production scenarios. Testing under simulated fire exposure revealed key trade-offs between density, thermal stability, and moisture content depending on the fire retardant used.



1/ Dr Benoit Belleville.

2/ Dr Johannes Fehrmann.



Life cycle assessment was conducted to evaluate the environmental impacts of the process and identified key manufacturing steps that contribute significantly to overall energy use. The findings highlight opportunities for drying and further optimisation of binder systems to reduce environmental impacts.

THE BIGGER PICTURE: WHAT'S NEXT?

While commercial adoption remains on the horizon, the research at the UoM sets out a clear and practical path for integrating plant-based residues into engineered panel

manufacturing. This work comes at a critical time, as the industry faces increasing pressure to reduce its reliance on native forest timber and lower the carbon footprint of construction materials.

Hemp, corn stalk and or similar by-products are unlikely to replace structural-grade plywood or laminated veneer lumber in the near term. However, for non-load-bearing panels where light weight, thermal performance, and sustainability are key considerations, they emerge as strong compelling alternatives.

Combined with renewable

or low-toxicity adhesives, these underused residues offer a promising pathway to rethink panel production. As Australia's industrial hemp sector grows and regional supply chains for agricultural by-products strengthen, these once-overlooked materials are becoming viable foundations for lightweight, climate-friendly building products. This could help reduce pressure on virgin timber and support a transition toward circular, climate-positive construction.

If you're curious and want to learn more, please explore the research or get in touch to connect directly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information on the authors:

Expert Profile – Dr Benoit Belleville.

Expert Profile – Dr Johannes Fehrmann.

For more information on Dr Fehrmann's thesis: Fehrmann PhD Thesis.

For more information on the plant materials: hemp (1, 2, 3, 4) and corn (1, 2).

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Image: AKD

Timber trusses: the secret to ageless roofs

By PAUL DAVIS

I'M hitting the big 6-0 this year, and the cheeky young man with the grin you see on this page is from almost half a lifetime ago. Not that I've changed that much—I'm still a bit cheeky! Sure, my hair has thinned out a bit and I'm clearly older, but in my mind, I'm still twenty!

When it comes to ageing roof trusses, they're not much different from humans. They start off perfect, doing their job like they should, and depending on their constitution and how they're treated in life, they either go downhill or stand the test of time. Some go quickly, while others will last for ages.

It's not really clear how long we should expect a house structure to last. There's a figure of 50 years floating around in people's minds, but I don't believe it's codified in the Building Code Australia. Interestingly, it's about 50 years ago that timber trusses were first introduced in Australia, so are we about to start seeing a rush of failures?

If trusses are well-built, in a stable, dry environment, and somewhat lucky, there's no reason why they couldn't last 500 years. There are many timber buildings around the world that are older than this—albeit not nail-plated trusses.

But some trusses also die young. We don't want that with our trusses, so you might ask, what are some of the most common causes of plate failure and how can we avoid them? Well, here's my list:



A large plate failure caused by incomplete pressing. All photos: Paul Davis

- **Small plates:** Even if a plate is big enough to carry the design forces, a small plate has a small bite on the timber and is particularly vulnerable to misplacement. A small misplacement in a small plate results in large percentage changes of tooth bite, leading to reductions in strength compared with the same misplacement of a larger plate.
- **Large plates:** The only reason I can think of is that large plates can be poorly pressed. The image in this article is a case in point from last year.
- **Handling damage:** Whether during fabrication, transport, or on site.
- **Exposure to cycling moisture (rain events) during erection:** Moisture cycles progressively eject nail plates as the timber shrinks and swells. The damage is not so much a function of the time exposed, but rather the number of moisture cycles. If your trusses happen to be out in an unusually wet period, they may become damaged quite quickly. Of all the truss plate failures I've seen, this is the most common cause.
- **Poor truss erection practices:** When trusses are out of plumb or bowed, the weird forces built up as the truss bends tend to fail plates. I would say this is probably the second most common cause of premature truss failure.
- **Exposure to moisture in service causing plate ejection:** Basically, you can't have nail plates out in the weather unless they're separately held onto the timber by some additional restraint, like an over-plate or screwing.

You might note that I haven't listed overload of the nail plates as a cause. That's because, in all my years, I can't recall any case of plate failure where a plate was shown to be too small for the loads—it was never under-designed.

As time goes on, we'll see more and more problematic roofs as we all get older, including those trusses. None of the issues I've listed above cost much to avoid, but they could cost an awful lot to fix. Ensuring your trusses have a good, long lifespan can be pretty much summarised as attention to quality during fabrication and erection. I've seen countless roofs with major problems that cost tens of thousands of dollars to resolve—problems that could've been avoided by the fabricator or carpenter for mere cents.

Hopefully, you and your businesses have been or want to be around for as long as I have, and for plenty more years. A good starting point is to fix those problems during fabrication for cents and help train or assist your builders to avoid their issues similarly.

As for me, I'm going to stay a little bit cheeky and hopefully not fall apart too soon. After all, growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional.

Source: Timber Trader News



Paul Davis is an independent structural engineer managing his own consulting firm Project X

Solutions Pty Ltd. The views in this column are Paul's professional opinion and may not necessarily reflect the opinion of Timber Trader News.

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Housing progress seen at roundtable

The progress made is important but there is more work to do.

"THE Housing Industry Association (HIA) is pleased to see housing feature prominently at [the] Economic Reform Roundtable particularly on cutting excessive red tape and streamlining environmental approvals, but as Treasurer Jim Chalmers has indicated more work is needed on easing housing construction," said HIA Managing Director, Jocelyn Martin.

"Australia is in a housing crisis and all solutions to solving this critical once in a generation issue, must be on the agenda. Out of all these discussions we need a recommitment to the Housing Accord at the highest level. This provides a framework under which to have a national discussion about the number of homes we need and the barriers preventing us from building them.

"It has been encouraging to see both major parties at their respective meetings... talking about the need for targeted actions to boost housing supply but goodwill and commitments to do more does not get keys in doors, we need firm action.

"A pause on further major changes to the National Construction Code (NCC) and reviewing the role and



HIA is consistently calling for the government to take practical and necessary steps to solve the housing crisis. Building more houses is great news for the timber and forestry industry.
Image: supplied



function of the ABCB who develops the code is an important first step, as the NCC has grown exponentially in volume and complexity over the past decade. A reset on the way the NCC is developed and implemented is critically needed.

"The Government has committed to reforming the EPBC Act as a priority policy item which industry broadly welcomes.

"Clearing the significant backlog of projects stuck awaiting environmental approvals must be first order business and this could unlock hundreds of thousands of homes and needs bi-partisan support.

"Another critical area that need targeted attention is investment for 'last mile' infrastructure to build the

roads, sewers, energy supply and water infrastructure, getting shovel ready land to market faster.

"Skills shortages continue to be one of if not the most pressing issue faced by builders. The aspiration of the Government's housing target will only be achieved if we have all hands on deck.

"HIA has been encouraged by the level and depth of engagement the Government has had with industry in the lead up to the Economic Reform Roundtable which clearly demonstrates a desire to place housing high on the agenda. But we will need to see real action out of these discussions.

"Industry is now demanding that real and meaningful reform actions on the well-established issues facing our sector are committed to with bipartisan support and clear timelines are agreed to and developed with industry and for industry," concluded Ms Martin.

"ALL SOLUTIONS TO SOLVING THIS CRITICAL ONCE IN A GENERATION ISSUE, MUST BE ON THE AGENDA"



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