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FSC Forest Walk highlights responsible forestry

COVER STORY P10



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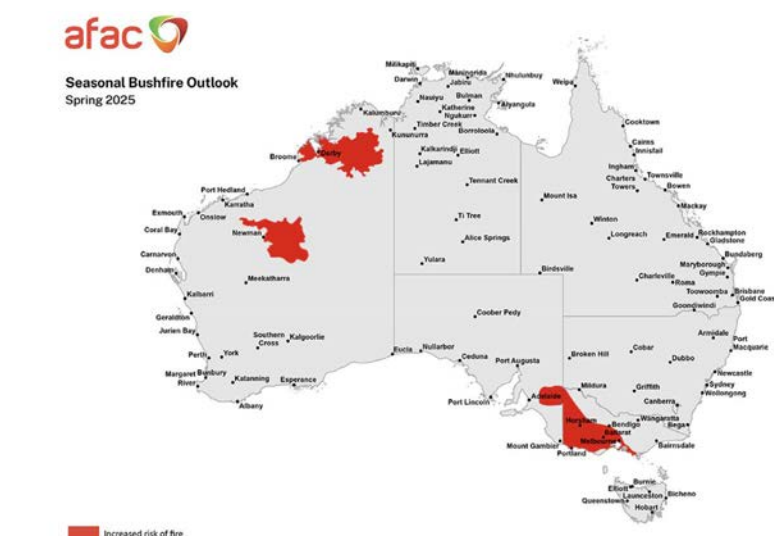
Spring fire risk ratings released

The Green Triangle is among the areas with elevated risk.

WITH the change in seasons, Fire Commissioners and Chiefs have released AFAC's Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for spring. It's a mixed bag, with some parts of the country in significant drought, while others look to be continuing with the wetter than usual conditions that have seen widespread floods already this year.

The AFAC Outlook for spring 2025 identifies a heightened risk of fire for the Dampier Peninsula, Derby Coast and the Central Kimberley, Little Sandy Desert, and south-eastern Pilbara in Western Australia, the south-eastern agricultural areas of the Murraylands in South Australia, and the south, southwest, central and southwest Gippsland regions in Victoria.

The higher risk of fire in WA follows increased fuel growth following seasonal rains, coupled with the predicted warmer than normal temperatures and higher likelihood of below average rainfall through spring.



Map of increased fire risk areas for spring 2025. Image: courtesy AFAC

Towards the southeast of Australia, surface moisture hides deeper drying that has resulted from long term rainfall deficiencies that have built over the last 12–18 months. Some places have reported their lowest ever rainfall during this period. If spring rainfall doesn't eventuate, the conditions will rapidly switch to an increased risk of fire.

AFAC CEO Rob Webb said: "No matter where you live or travel this season, everyone can play an important role in

bushfire safety this spring by being prepared and staying alert to warnings and advice. Having a plan doesn't take long and might just make the difference.

"Local fire authorities will be monitoring bushfire risk this season so you can stay up to date and ready to act if there is an emergency."

“STAY UP TO DATE AND READY TO ACT”




Many of the areas facing increased risk have received higher than usual rainfall levels in recent years and so have significant fuel loads in place. While a negative Indian Ocean Dipole is expected to increase rain in the southeast, this may not be enough to compensate for current dryness, so risks may

increase as spring moves into summer.

Recent wet years across much of the Eastern States region, including Tasmania, means there has been a lot of vegetation growth. While soil moisture levels currently indicate normal fire risk, this could change quickly if there is a period of dry, hot weather.

AFAC reminds everyone that 'normal' risk does not equal no risk and encourages business and residents to update their fire plans at the start of the season.

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Planting season ends in the Green Triangle

ONEFORTYONE has wrapped up its annual planting season, establishing another generation of forests throughout the Green Triangle.

Despite a dry few months, millions of healthy seedlings were dispatched from the OneFortyOne Glencoe Nursery to forest growers across the region, including OneFortyOne's own estate and a range of other forestry operations.

Nursery manager Craig Torney said thanks to a new shed and infrastructure improvements, most operations are now undercover, reducing the impact of weather and creating a more comfortable working environment for the nursery team.

"The nursery was buzzing during what was another busy season," Torney said.

"It was great to see our upgraded facility in full operation."

The nursery supplies seedlings not only for OneFortyOne's forests but also for a range of forest growers across the Green Triangle.

The OneFortyOne estate team works together closely to coordinate the complex delivery program, ensuring each planting crew receives the right trees at the right time.

"We know what trees need to go where and to which planting crew at what time," said Torney.

"This good management means the program is spread out over eight or nine weeks,

rather than being compressed into a shorter, more intense period.

"Combined with our upgraded systems, it made the season far less hectic and we've definitely seen and heard that feedback from our nursery team."

OneFortyOne Estate Manager Marcel Griffiths said the planting program covered 1826 hectares, supported by three dedicated planting crews working tirelessly over

51 workdays.

"The Nursery and silviculture teams delivered an outstanding performance this season," Griffiths said.

"Their coordination and professionalism ensured the program ran smoothly and efficiently."

With planting complete, focus now shifts to ensuring these seedlings establish well and grow into healthy, productive forests.



1/ Seedlings lined up at Glencoe Nursery ready to be dispatched to their planting locations.

Photo: Ockert Le Roux, courtesy OneFortyOne



2/ Craig Torney working at the OneFortyOne nursery. Photo: Kate Hill, courtesy OneFortyOne

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Calls for diesel reduction

Australia's leading tech academy has released a report on the need to decarbonise.

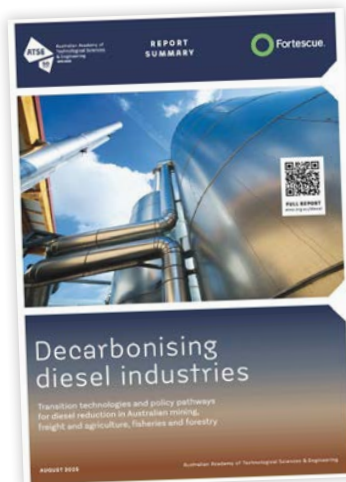
A NEW report from the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) in partnership with Fortescue sets out the need to reduce reliance on diesel in Australian industries, including forestry.

The report calls for an independent review that should consider a range of reforms, including to the Fuel Tax Credits Scheme (FTCS), which it describes as a major barrier to the transition away from diesel.

By subsidising diesel use, the FTCS currently protects high-emitting sectors from the true cost of fossil fuel consumption and undermines national emissions reduction goals.

ATSE Fellow, Fortescue Board Member and former CSIRO Chief Executive, Dr Larry Marshall said, "Heavy Industry wants to transition to cleaner fuels, but the current policy settings make it harder than it should be. Right now, the Fuel Tax Credit scheme effectively subsidises burning diesel, while companies that invest in clean alternatives face higher costs especially in this transition period. That imbalance holds back innovation and locks in emissions.

"The Federal Government has a critical role to play in fixing those settings and creating incentives that accelerate the adoption of clean technologies. At the



The new report calls for an end to diesel incentives and new incentives to transition to cleaner fuels.

Image: supplied

same time, Industry must step up and co-invest in the solutions that will cut emissions and deliver new green industries for Australia."

The report also calls for some type of carbon price or similar mechanism that accurately reflects the genuine cost of fuels such as diesel, as well as incentives for industry transition.

Compared to other major industries discussed in the report (including mining, freight and agriculture), forestry has been making significant efforts to decarbonise. Many kilns are now run on waste biofuels burned in high-efficiency, low-emissions boilers and other systems, while *Enews* has previously covered electric logging truck trials.

To download the full report, [click here](#). For the summary report, [click here](#).

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New NZ forest safety plan

Too many forester deaths have led to updated guidance and resources.

IN 2024, Aotearoa New Zealand's forestry workers had the highest fatality rate of any industry in the country at 16.58 deaths per 100,000 workers. This rate was 20 times higher than the average for all industries.

In response, WorkSafe New Zealand has issued new guidance that simplifies safety practices. The Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) for forestry and harvesting operations was designed in collaboration with leaders in the forestry industry and launched last week by the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Brooke van Velden.

The guidance outlines the responsibilities and legal expectations for operators, and helps workers know what good looks like. An update to the good practice guide for small forestry operations has also been published, along with educational resources to aid understanding. New information is included on machine safety, planting and pruning (silviculture), managing work-related



Speakers at the ACOP launch including Joe Akari (second from left) and Sharon Thompson (right). Image: Sharon Thompson/LinkedIn

health, and manual tree felling.

"The guidance blends technical expertise with hands-on knowledge from the sector, and uses shared language between the two," said WorkSafe's chief executive Sharon Thompson.

"Reducing deaths and injuries in forestry requires everyone in the sector to properly plan for and practise safe harvesting."

The updated ACOP is the first key deliverable from WorkSafe's priority plan for forestry. The organisation

will be undertaking targeted assessments to help embed the guidance in the coming months.

"Huge strides have been made to improve work health and safety in the forestry industry, but there's plenty of work to be done. We want

“REDUCING DEATHS AND INJURIES IN FORESTRY REQUIRES EVERYONE IN THE SECTOR TO PROPERLY PLAN

the same thing – for our people to be safe on the job, and to come home from work safely every day," said Joe Akari, chief executive of the Forest Industry Safety Council and Safetree New Zealand, who was part of the industry consultation behind the ACOP.

Learning modules designed

for workers, managers and owners have been released by WorkSafe, along with information sheets and alerts. Whether foresters are managing or working for small family companies or large multinationals, there is targeted advice on the website, all written in accessible plain English and with easy-to-follow links to other parts of the ACOP and associated references

To read the ACOP and find learning models and other implementation guidance, click here.

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Mining threatens jarrah forests

WHILE The Greens focus on ending sustainable native timber harvesting Australia-wide, Noongar Elders are struggling to deal with the impacts of bauxite mining.

The *National Indigenous Times* reports that less than two years after Western Australia's sudden ban on native timber harvesting, the jarrah forests of Noongar Boodja, especially in the Mundaring Weir drinking water catchment, are under threat from mining companies including US-owned Alcoa.

"Our forest is the only jarrah forest in the world," Bibbul Ngarma Aboriginal Association told the *NIT*. "We have already lost over 50% of it in less than 200 years, and the remainder is under enormous pressure from a drying climate, low rainfall, dieback and disease,

polyphagous shot-hole borer, tree canopy death, increased bushfire risk, feral species, and land clearing for development.

"We know that in 2023-2024, Alcoa contributed 0.4% of WA's government revenue and 0.3% of WA jobs. However, we cannot find any independent cost benefit analysis that properly considers all of the environmental, cultural and social losses as well as the economic gains of Alcoa's continued expansion."

Not only is the community bearing the brunt of mining activity that affects its water supply and land, as well as



King Jarrah is on a safe part of Noongar land in Wellington National Park, but much jarrah forest is threatened by mining.
Image: CC Wikimedia/berichard

archaeological and cultural heritage sites, the companies have not consulted with community members and other local stakeholders. To read the full story, click here.

The state's advertising watchdog this week deemed ads from Alcoa in the state's daily newspaper, praising its

forest rehabilitation, to be "inaccurate and likely to mislead or deceive target customers".

WA Today, which has previously uncovered Alcoa's lack of completed rehabilitation on its cleared land, covered this story in full (click here). The article notes that Alcoa recently had an application to clear another 114 square kilometres

of jarrah forest over the next 20 years released to the public for comment, receiving a record 59,000 public submissions.

Maybe it's time some of the anti-forestry campaigners looked at the bigger problems?

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SEPTEMBER

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://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.

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/>

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://www.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



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Doors for defence

WITH Australia tipped to increase spending on defence, manufacturers are tooling up to supply projects nationally. Australian door manufacturer Specialty Doors is developing high-performance acoustic and security door products to meet growing demand.

Marcus Bastiaan, director of Specialty Doors, believes defence projects represent an opportunity for local manufacturers to develop category leading products.

"Defence requires highly specified product, with a strong focus on performance. Manufacturers must test and prove their products, which leads to innovation with new materials and production processes," he said.

Specialty Doors is currently involved in supplying defence projects in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Each project requires a range of products to fulfil acoustic,

security and fire rating standards, which according to Bastiaan will provide ongoing benefit to manufacturing businesses and the construction industry.

"Learning more about the practical strength and limitations of materials creates new knowledge, which in turn improves the product offering for the domestic construction industry."

Bastiaan links an increase in global insecurity with a growing demand for greater security features in residential projects.

"We have made more internal steel plate doors in the last twelve months, than we have made in the past four years. Demand is coming from defence and the residential sector."

Secure entry systems are built to Australian standards



1/ CNC routing is used to ensure precision construction for each door.



2/ The fire-rated security door in this facility is designed to keep workers safe
Images: supplied

governed by the Security Construction and Equipment Committee, a standing inter-departmental committee within the Australian Government. The standard provides a framework for materials and performance criteria required for products to qualify for tenders.

These doors can be designed to withstand bullets and blasts, but while the doors' internal construction is a mix of steel and dampening materials, the exterior is often timber or veneer. Bastiaan says this unassuming exterior lends itself

to domestic settings.

"Our customers want to know they are safe behind their front door, but they don't necessarily want to tell the whole street about it."

Bastiaan says Australia's high standard of building products is a competitive advantage for manufactures looking to export: "Australian products are recognised as class leaders; the more domestic manufactures innovate to meet standards the greater our chances of finding markets in the US and Europe."



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AI planning approvals sought

AT the recent Productivity Roundtable, some held up AI as the great hope for the future. Amid all the flannel were several workable proposals.

Planning approvals are one area where AI could add speed and increase productivity with little risk. This type of process uses Extractive AI (E AI) which focuses on finding specific, relevant information within a large set of data. It is able to process large data sets, format the relevant information as required and verify that information.

This is the same type of AI that is used in technology that finds pests in tree canopies, or evaluates cancer scans, for example. Comparatively, assessing whether a planning application meets the clear

existing criteria is a simple task.

Unlike Generative AI (Gen AI, the type that powers Chat GPT), E AI is not prone to hallucinations, because it is analysing actual data, not creating probabilistic assumptions and generating new 'facts' from the source data. E AI also uses a fraction of the power and water resources of Gen AI.

NSW has already been trialling AI approvals and it is expected systems will be up and running by the end of the year.

NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Paul Scully said, "This is a gamechanger – maintaining the quality of assessment but continuing to speed things up to get more housing projects underway more quickly allowing



Paul Scully MP, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, is expected to deliver an AI planning system by the end of this year.
Image: supplied

construction to get underway and new keys into new doors."

HIA is now calling for it to be a nation-wide change. "Harnessing AI to drive a once in a generation overhaul of planning systems across the country could be the circuit breaker Australia needs to

deliver 1.2 million homes over next five years" said Sam Heckel, HIA executive director, planning & environment.

"Putting AI to work in planning will help clear the biggest bottlenecks in housing delivery, freeing up planning resources to focus on the complex assessments that need more detailed professional involvement.

"AI can help review documentation, assess state significant development applications and complete post-submission checks, providing a recommendation all before a human needs to get involved."

One caveat: planners say they are seeing Gen AI planning reports and applications being rejected, so stick to E AI for now!

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New Zealand's first FSC Forest Walk

FSC partnerships help visitors experience responsible forestry firsthand.

IN Aotearoa New Zealand's Woodhill Forest, just 50km northwest of Auckland, the FSC® Forest Walk brought together retailers, manufacturers and supply chain leaders from across the local FSC network to see responsible

forestry in practice. Hosted by FSC-certified forest managers Manulife Investment Management and Matariki Forests, together with landowners Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara, the event highlighted how FSC certification safeguards biodiversity, upholds Indigenous Peoples rights and cultural values, supports workers and local communities and delivers certified materials to local and international markets.

Attendees represented a cross-section of New Zealand's FSC community, from chain of custody certificate holders such as Opal ANZ, Visy, Abodo Wood and OfficeMax to Promotional Licence Holders including Mitre 10 NZ, The Warehouse, Bunnings NZ, NXP Limited and Woolworths Group (Countdown), with the New Zealand Green Building Council also in attendance. Bringing these organisations together for the first FSC Forest Walk in New Zealand created a unique forum for connection across the supply chain and underscored the growing momentum behind FSC in the region.

The day began with a pōwhiri led by Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara. Guests



1/ Two of the attendees (from The Warehouse) who spent the day learning about renewable harvesting and environmental practices.

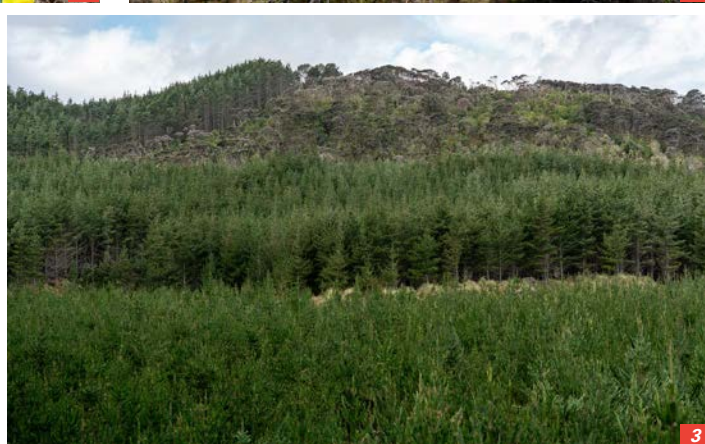
2/ The sand dunes are subject to huge wind and wave forces, with only vegetation holding them back.

3/ Woodhill Forest began as a reserve to help stabilise sand dunes and is now an active multi-use forest.

4/ Harvesting operations stop before a tree-filled boundary that protects the coastline.

All photos: Angelo Giannoutsos, courtesy FSC ANZ.

were welcomed with waiata (song) and the sharing of kai (food), an expression of manaakitanga, the Māori value of hospitality and care. Malcom Paterson, Chief Executive of Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara, then spoke about the land and his people's enduring relationship with it, emphasising its deep and longstanding place within the cultural landscape of Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara. He explained that under Crown ownership, Woodhill Forest was established to stabilise the vast drifting sand dunes which were encroaching on agricultural land, with planting beginning in the 1930s continuing through to the 1980s. Following the 2013 Treaty of Waitangi settlement, the land was returned to Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara, who retain ownership today and



have partnered with Manulife Investment Management and Matariki Forests to manage the plantations.

Integral to the management of Woodhill Forest is its function as a multi-use landscape, where recreation and community use coexist with forestry operations. Horse riding, mountain biking, tree

climbing and paintball take place among the plantation trees, while its forest scenery has provided striking settings for major films and television series including *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*. Attendees were

From P 10

introduced to the recreational side of the forest at Tree Adventures and Woodhill Mountain Bike Park, where the forest managers outlined how they support public access and community use of the forest. They explained the importance of responsible forest management in balancing recreation and safety while maintaining social licence and engaging with stakeholders.

Reflecting on the day, Simon Rice, product risk and compliance coordinator at Bunnings NZ said, "It was a fantastic experience to learn about the history of the forest block and how it's managed, and to see FSC principles in action. It was also great to see how the forest is open to other commercial ventures, and how the forest management company works collaboratively with each entity to ensure the forest flourishes as a shared resource. That level of coordination was really impressive and added another layer of insight to the day."

The group also travelled to a coastal restoration project, where a protective strip of trees has been retained

“THE WALK REINFORCED THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING RESPONSIBLY SOURCED FIBRE



1/ Attendees listened to talks from forest managers, as well as receiving a welcome from Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara.

2/ Watching a forest harvesting operation informed the group as to how harvesting areas are chosen.

3/ Small machinery minimises the impacts on the soil and surrounding vegetation.

All photos: Angelo Giannoutsos, courtesy FSC ANZ.

between the shoreline and the plantation forest. This buffer plays an important role in protecting the forest from the salty coastal winds. The forest managers explained how the site is managed to maintain High Conservation Values, with a focus on environmental resilience and cultural values.

"The FSC forest walk was an eye-opening way to see how certification standards are implemented in practice," said Minja Podvorac, sustainability relationship manager at Opal. "Our team learned not only about sustainable plantation management, but also about the broader principles that guide FSC, including social responsibility, environmental protection, and economic balance."

The FSC Forest Walk concluded at an active harvesting site, where attendees observed a harvester in operation and learned how the plantation life cycle is managed. The group

also heard from the harvesting contractors, a multi-generational family-run business with many years of experience and a deep understanding of forestry.

The FSC Forest Walk at Woodhill Forest brought FSC's requirements to life. Held in the lead-up to FSC Forest Week (20–26 September), the event provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the role of forests in our everyday lives and the importance of supporting sustainable forestry. FSC ANZ extends its thanks to our hosts, Manulife Investment Management, Matariki Forests and Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara, for welcoming participants to Woodhill Forest and sharing their knowledge and expertise into responsible forest management.

For attendees, it was also a confirmation of the value



of their relationships with FSC and FSC-certified forest managers. "One of Opal's Sustainability Pillars focusses on Responsible Sourcing of Wood Fibre," said Lauren Wood, Sustainability & Environment Manager at Opal.

"The walk reinforced the importance of choosing responsibly sourced fibre and highlighted how certification provides assurance to organisations such as ours and our customers that plantations are being managed in a way that benefits both people and the environment for generations to come."

On the cover: The teams from Manulife Investment Management and Matariki Forests, along with many of their Forest Walk guests.
Photo: Angelo Giannoutsos, courtesy FSC ANZ



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New Komatsu 895 Firefighter impresses at live demonstration

KOMATSU Forest recently hosted a demonstration of the new Komatsu 895 Firefighter, a forwarder equipped with the RL21 firefighting kit, developed by Rodwell Logging of Bombala, NSW. The event, held at the HVP headquarters in Rennick, Victoria, drew strong interest from across the local forestry and fire management sectors, with nearly 50 attendees present.

The demonstration began with a general introduction, followed by a key presentation from Peter Rodwell, the principal designer of the RL21. Peter provided an insightful overview of the development, design, and practical application of the RL21 system, drawing on Rodwell Logging's firsthand experience using the equipment in wildfire response.

A standout feature of the RL21 is its quick-mount design, which allows it to be easily installed or removed from a standard Komatsu 895 forwarder. This flexibility enables the machine to be quickly converted between fire response and

conventional forwarding operations.

The RL21 is equipped with a custom-designed 20,000-litre water tank integrated into the forwarder's log bunk. A high-pressure pump powers dual water cannons mounted on either side of the headgate, capable of delivering up to 450 litres per minute with a range of up to 40m. For added safety, a 3000-litre emergency reserve tank can be activated from the cabin to douse the engine and cab, giving the operator a critical window to retreat from danger if required.

Following the presentation, the machine was started up by Steve Witherow MD of Tabeel Trading and driven along a fire break near the HVP facility, where the water cannons were demonstrated in various configurations. Afterwards, the machine was parked and its access panels opened, giving attendees the chance to inspect the inner workings and system components up close. Garry

Kennedy from Kennedy Trailers was on hand to answer any queries on the RL21 water tank fabrication process.

The demonstration was well received by the diverse audience, which included forest owners and managers, fire department personnel and resource management professionals from companies such as HVP, OneFortyOne, PF Olsen, AKD, CFA Victoria and Green Triangle Fire Alliance.

Brett Jones, Managing Director of Komatsu Forest, took a keen interest in the RL21's development, visiting Rodwell's to inspect the prototype and finalised a marketing agreement with Rodwell Logging in late

2024. Since then, momentum has accelerated. Komatsu Forest delivered its first RL21 Fire Tanker in Dec 2024 and a second unit on a Komatsu 895.3 Speed Shift was delivered in June this year. Komatsu Forest currently have a third RL21 in stock with two more units in production for

future sales.

Jones said, "The RL21 Fire Tanker will be a game changer in Australia for fire prevention and fire management. The key is the machine's versatility to access a fire at ground level, which has not been possible with conventional road vehicles."

Rodwell Logging's innovation highlights the vital role of local expertise in addressing complex environmental challenges. Their commitment to community safety, practical engineering, and resilience sets a benchmark for bushfire preparedness in Australia.



1 & 2/ Attendees were able to watch a demonstration, then take an up-close look at the machine.
3/ The audience at the demo included forest owners and fire department personnel. Images: Komatsu Forest

“THE RL21 FIRE TANKER WILL BE A GAME CHANGER IN AUSTRALIA FOR FIRE PREVENTION

KOMATSU

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Blackberry funding secured

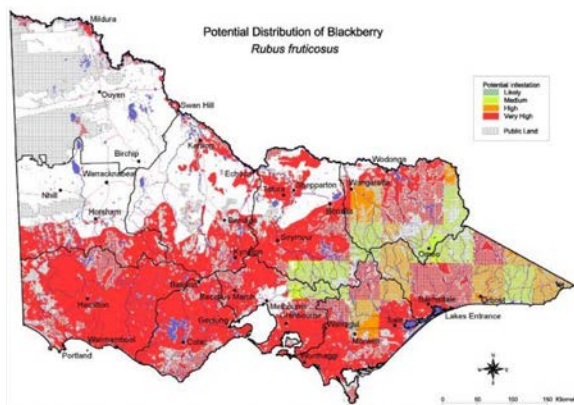
THE Murray Region Forestry Hub (MRFH) has been waging a war against blackberries for some time now. Listed as a Weed of National Significance, there are few concerted campaigns to eradicate this highly invasive species and it is often dropped into the too-hard basket. Yet it not only is a literal pain to work through, it restricts access to productive land and out-competes both plantation and native species.

Now, the MRFH has secured funding from Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA), with support from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), for a critical research project aimed at tackling blackberry.

The project, 'Novel and Targeted Biological Control of Blackberry Invasions in Forest and Tree Plantations',

will be led by Dr Rae Kwong in collaboration with the University of Melbourne and the University of the Sunshine Coast. The research will focus on blackberry genomic mapping, a vital step toward the development of an effective and targeted biological control.

Blackberry causes millions of dollars in lost productivity and management costs annually. The MRFH has been instrumental in preparing the advice to government which led to multi-organisation collaboration supporting research to deliver long-term, landscape-scale solutions for



A map of potential Victorian blackberry infestation risk from the MRFH Blackberry Project Report. Image: supplied

forestry, plantations, and the wider community.

Dean Anderson, chair of the MRFH, welcomed the announcement, saying, "This funding represents a significant step forward in our fight against Blackberry. The genomic mapping research led by Dr Kwong will provide the foundations

for developing a targeted biological control that can be deployed across landscapes for long-term impact. It's a prime example of how the Hubs can connect industry needs with innovative science."

Carlie Porteous, Hub Manager of the MRFH, added: "The approval of

this funding highlights the power of collaboration – between research institutions, government, industry, and the Hubs – to tackle persistent challenges. We're proud to have played a key role in bringing together the right people and expertise to make this project a reality."

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Image: AKD

Fire ants stopped in Sydney

AMONG the main pest problems Australians are fighting, fire ants are near the top of the list. These vicious invaders have established a foothold in Queensland, and the known infestation has been moving both inland and north and south of its original Brisbane focus, with billions of dollars of productivity thought to be at risk.

In a spot of good news, DAFF has released a report saying that quick-thinking staff at a Sydney importer recently stopped a potential Sydney outbreak. They sprang into action after spotting ants inside a 40-foot container of vehicle radiators from overseas.

The report says the warehouse team immediately stopped the unpacking process, sprayed the ants

with insecticide, and reported the incident to the department. Officers from Sydney's Post-biosecurity Response team (CER PBR) responded swiftly, collecting samples, and inspecting the container and surrounding area.

Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA) – one of the world's most aggressive and invasive pests – were detected.

Thanks to the importer's quick response, the container was repacked, sealed, and treated with an insecticidal barrier spray. Further inspections and treatments were carried out under the



DAFF's information package includes Teams Backgrounds with QR codes for resources and pest ID photos. Image: supplied

supervision of CER PBR and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) officers before the container was safely transported to an Approved Arrangement (AA) site for fumigation.

The importer coordinated after-hours treatment and transport, working closely with authorities to ensure the risk was fully contained. Their

actions may have prevented a serious outbreak of RIFA in New South Wales.

DAFF notes that in recognition of their exemplary biosecurity practices, the importer will be nominated for a Biosecurity Commendation Award.

It's at least the second time fire ants have been imported into Sydney, with a nest discovered in Port Botany in 2014, happily this was contained and destroyed.

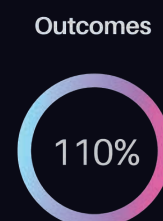
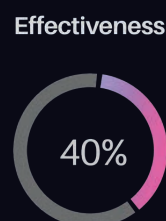
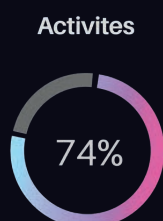
If you're importing, DAFF has great resources on looking for hitchhiker pests. Click here to learn what to hunt and how to report it.

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Queensland dumps forest wind farm

The move is popular with some locals but risks renewables.

QUEENSLAND'S Forest Wind project, first proposed in 2016 and approved by the previous Labor Government in 2020, has been axed by the Crisafulli Government. The government noted that "wide-spread concerns were raised by the local community and years old approvals weren't acted on".

The wind farm was to have been built in state forests in Gympie, Maryborough and the Fraser Coast and delivered 1200 megawatts into the grid – enough to power 500,000 homes (nearly a quarter of the states roughly 2.2 million dwellings).

The press release from Jarrod Bleijie, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations, identified a lack of consultation with the community as a major problem with the proposal, with some key information such as tower height also not made public.



An image of what the proposed wind farm would have looked like. Image: Forest Wind

The ABC reports that local community group Wide Bay Residents Against the Forest Wind Farm Project has 2000 members, many of whom were concerned about the region's thriving bird population and the effect the wind farm would have on them (click here for the full story). However, wind farm managers have been investigating methods such as painted blades to lower bird strikes and, at worst, bird deaths from unmodified wind farms have been measured at 0.269 birds per gigawatt-hour of electricity produced, compared to 5.18 birds killed

per gigawatt-hour of electricity from fossil fuel projects.

Minister Bleijie is repealing a law allowing wind farms to be built in state-owned plantations, a move that has attracted serious concern from the renewables sector.

Renew Economy spoke with Forest Wind project director James Pennay, who said the decision came as a shock and denied there was widespread community opposition.

"We've had ongoing conversations around the land tenure and government process but it is a surprise that they are planning to

repeal the legislation," he told *Renew Economy*.

He said there had been little community opposition and a lot of interest from farmers and landowners who wanted to enter agreements, as well as support from environmental groups (click here to read the full story).

The move has disappointed many as these state forests are well located for the wind farm project, with existing roads, distanced from residents and lower conservation values than most alternative sites. While the process has been slow, much of this has been due to delays in Federal and State approvals.

Climate Energy Finance director Tim Buckley told *Renew Economy* that the decision will create "massive sovereign risk" for investors. "This is a horrible precedent that undermines the bankability of contracts and approvals in Queensland," he said.

Deadline extended for FSC feedback

FSC ANZ has extended the public consultation on the first draft of the revised FSC Forest Stewardship Standard (FSS) for Australia. The new deadline for submitting feedback is 30 September 2025.

As *Enews* has covered previously, FSC is looking for input from a wide spectrum of stakeholders. After hearing that some were having difficulty meeting the original

deadline, the Standards Development Group has pushed it back by a month.

The revised FSS includes proposed changes relating to issues like:

- The use of highly hazardous pesticides;
- Intact Forest Landscapes and Indigenous Cultural Landscapes;
- Salvage logging in the wake of disturbance events; and
- Workers' rights.



Stefan Jensen, FSC senior policy manager, is available to answer consultation enquiries. Image: supplied

To learn more about the revision process, click here.

If you have any questions, please contact Stefan Jensen, Senior Policy Manager at FSC ANZ and SDG facilitator: s.jensen@au.fsc.org

To participate in the consultation, log in via the FSC Forest Stewardship section found by clicking here.

NYC Trees Count 2025

Once a decade, the city that never sleeps counts its trees.

JUST as the US Census provides important information for planners, Trees Count 2025 is an invaluable tool for New York City Parks who want to understand their urban forest. Held every 10 years since 1995, the project enlists New Yorkers to both count and assess their trees.

In previous counts, the work focused on street trees but, from this census on, participants will count trees in city parks, as well as take measurements and give basic health assessments, while NYC Parks will use ground-based light detection and ranging (LiDAR) scans, captured on devices mounted on cars, to create three dimensional 'digital twins' for each tree.

Trees Count participants receive a tote bag containing all the equipment they will need, along with a 20-minute training session. They then split up into groups to cover the key zones of the city's major parks. The training gives them skills to help identify the tree species, plus record in an app basic information about its health, such as what they can observe of its roots and canopy, any obvious pruning and its trunk diameter.

There are about 150,000 park trees in NYC (excluding Central Park and official forest, which are outside NYC Parks' authority, plus the millions of privately owned trees), along with over 666,000 street trees, so it's definitely a job that needs to outsource some of the work. After the initial training, volunteers are welcome to continue measuring trees in their small local parks and logging their data with the NYC Parks app.

Julia Carrie Wong wrote about her experience at Trees Count for *The Guardian* (click

here to read the full story), noting that some volunteers had logged 3000 trees apiece in the last count.

She described the unexpected challenges of the job, writing: "But now we were tasked with assigning the tree an overall grade – on a scale of 'poor' to 'excellent' – and no one seemed to want to say."

After reassurance from the trainer that their assessment would be helpful to the tree and not any sort of judgement, and that this particular tree was "trying its best", the verdict was ultimately 'good'.

The project provides vital data to NYC Parks. Not only can they track the growth and health of existing trees, they can find areas where more trees can be planted: an important goal in the city that aims to lift its canopy cover to 30% by 2035.

Pests and other problems can be spotted early – and may continue to be spotted early after the count as engaged participants keep an eye on 'their' trees – helping to improve the overall health of the urban forest. Species that are struggling to cope with climate change can be identified and more robust replacements planned for when they reach their natural or accelerated senescence.



1/ The first count was held in 1995–96.

2/ Measuring a tree's trunk at this year's Trees Count.

3/ Street trees were still the focus in 2015, but now LiDAR systems will count them. All images: courtesy NYC Parks

New trees for the city's Great Trees register can also be found, and those already listed checked to make sure increased visitor traffic is having no harmful side effects. Some Trees Count participants go on to do more work with NYC Parks, including as Volunteer Stewards.

Visit the Trees Count site at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/reg/trees-count> to learn more about this project and see the results from previous tree censuses.



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