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ISSUE 871 // 9 October 2025

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## Cultural burns lower fire risk in NSW

COVER STORY P3



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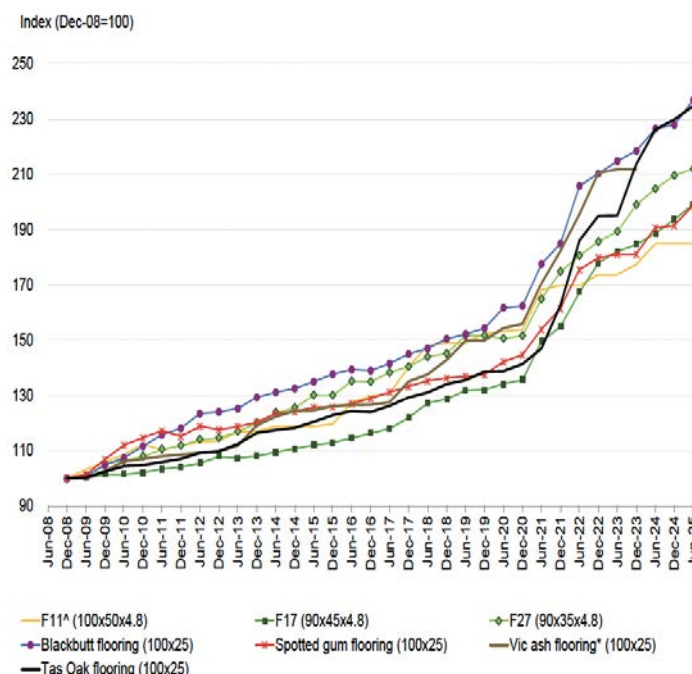
# TMS flags hardwood cost jump

Before the effects of the GKNP moratorium even hit, the June quarter Timber Market Survey shows price increases for structural and flooring hardwood.

THE June Timber Market Survey has been released, and while there is a little good news for buyers on the softwood front, hardwood sales continue to slow, with limited supply and rising costs. It's unlikely the situation will improve over the rest of 2025 with thousands of hectares of NSW state forest locked up under the GKNP moratorium.

The quarterly TMS collates data collected through surveying of a representative range of timber product traders in eastern Australia. Prepared by Indufor with funding provided by Forestry Corporation of New South Wales, the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, HQPlantations, OneFortyOne Plantations, Green Triangle

**“F&T MANUFACTURERS REPORTED THAT QUOTING FOR NEW WORK WAS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE**



**Figure 3 from the TMS shows reported price movements for hardwood products based on weighted price averages.** Source: Timber Market Survey

Forest Products, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, Hancock Victorian Plantations, and Southern Cross Forests, it is an accurate reflection of the recent market. Click here to learn more and access current and past surveys.

Sales for both softwood and hardwood slowed across

the quarter. The softwood market update notes that F&T manufacturers had reported that quoting for new work was highly competitive, with many participant businesses having a lower-than-normal schedule of work in front of them. DIY sales were holding up better than those to builders, but soft

market demand means an expected September quarter increase is less likely than had been predicted.

The hardwood market update says that hardwood sales continue their slowing trend, but prices continue to rise. Here supply is the issue, with reports of Victorian ash timber products becoming hard to source since the closure of Victorian native timber harvesting. Tasmanian oak timber products have continued their price increase, lifting 69.1% over the five years to June 2025.

Engineered wood products have also shown downward price movements from their pandemic peaks. LVL and I-joist indices are down -34.2% and -26.4% respectively since their last price peak in the September quarter 2022, however the prices are still at or above trend when looked at over one or two decades. Plywood, which did not surge as much in the Covid years, has shown a modest increase.

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# Cultural burns lower fire risk

First Nations knowledge is helping FCNSW improve land management.

FIRE, Country and People is a federally funded program designed to strengthen community resilience to major bushfire events and improve land management practices across traditional Aboriginal lands.

As part of this program, Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has formed partnerships with members of the Western Bundjalung, Yaegl and Bunyah and Birpai communities, working with Forestry Corporation to integrate cultural burning into government bushfire management frameworks.

Cultural burning uses small-scale burns that are kept cool and low – out of the canopy. They reduce fuel loads without removing important habitat. Compared to traditional controlled burns done to minimise risks during fire season, they are very unlikely to escape and damage areas outside the ones targeted.

They result in a mosaic of burnt and unburnt areas, creating natural limits that will stop the spread of fires before they can grow too large, while leaving the soil healthy and having minimal impacts on wildlife.

Over the past year, FCNSW has worked with the Western Bundjalung community's Ngullingah Jugun Aboriginal Corporation, the Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Land Council, the Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Bunyah Local



1/ Uncle Ian Brown and Aunty Angela Cowan were key parts of the training at Bom Bom State Forest.

2/ Fire plays important cultural roles in Aboriginal Communities, such as welcoming people to Country with a Smoking.

3/ Education at Bom Bom State Forest went both ways, with the First Nations participants gaining official accreditations and the Forestry Corporation team learning more about traditional practices.

4/ First Nations community members gain accredited firefighting qualifications and spread knowledge of cultural burns in the program.

5/ The training days were a great opportunity for the communities to exchange knowledge and add accreditations to their skill sets. All images: courtesy FCNSW

Aboriginal Land Council to run fire training sessions at Jubullum, Grafton and Port Macquarie.

Delivered by fire training specialists FIREGROUND, the training has provided accredited firefighting qualifications to members of the Northern Rivers, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie/Hastings Aboriginal communities.

The program equips participants with essential firefighting skills and fosters collaboration between Aboriginal communities and government agencies, combining traditional cultural burning methods with modern firefighting techniques.

Forestry Corporation's Aboriginal Heritage and Partnerships Manager, John Shipp spoke with the *National Indigenous Times* earlier this year about one of the sessions, saying: "This program creates an opportunity for the Birpai and Bunyah communities to work with government agencies to develop a path forward for effective and sustainable bushfire management combining traditional cultural burning and modern firefighting techniques.

"This will improve the resilience of the community to major bushfires." (Click here to read the full article.)

The Fire, Country and People project is a three-year

\$3 million program funded by the Australian Government and jointly supported by FCNSW. It will include a research component to build a scientific evidence base around cultural burning, investigating its impact on bushfire intensity and spread.

FCNSW says this approach supports the integration of Indigenous knowledge into broader fire management frameworks, contributing to sustainable and culturally informed land stewardship.

“IMPROVE  
COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE TO  
MAJOR BUSH FIRES

On the cover: Cultural burning practices are suitable for many Australian forests and lower fuel load with significantly less risk of fire escape than many other control burn types.  
Image: courtesy FCNSW

# Ric Sinclair new chair of Forestry SA

June Roache has completed her tenure, leaving the organisation in good hands.

AFTER seven years as chair of the ForestrySA board, June Roache has stepped down and Ric Sinclair has been appointed to the role.

Working closely with chief executive Tim Ryan, Roache has guided the organisation through a notable transition period, where the carbon potential of the 10,888 hectares of pine plantation managed by ForestrySA has become every bit as valuable as its worth as a sustainable building material. While Ryan and his team manage the operations, the board sets the organisation's strategic direction and corporate policy, and supports the chief executive.

Forestry SA wrote

that "June's experience across commercial, statutory and not-for-profit sectors has overseen a strengthening of ForestrySA, including an increase in net assets and a dividend paid to government this year. We appreciate her dedication and support for our team and stakeholders. Although June is stepping down as chair, she will remain involved as board director."



**Ric Sinclair (seated) is the new chair of ForestrySA, succeeding June Roache (right) and working with ForestrySA chief executive Tim Ryan.** Image: supplied

The Ultimate Renewable™. Previous roles held include as director of the Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault, Louise Multicultural Centre and the Gottstein Education Trust. He is currently managing director of CarbonAbility Pty Ltd, which provides advice on the development and implementation of carbon offsetting strategies for large corporations.

Like Roache, Sinclair held the position as chair of the board's audit and risk committee before taking up his new role. He has been a non-executive director since 2023 and brings a wealth of expertise in forestry, communications and strategy. He also has a history of encouraging innovation in the industry.

Starting his career in forest operations, Sinclair soon found his passion in communications, marketing and strategy. For more than 13 years, Mr Sinclair was managing director of Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited, the sector's R&D and marketing organisation, where he delivered world-leading initiatives such as WoodSolutions™ and

corporations.

Sinclair has a Bachelor of Science, Forestry, from the Australian National University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of British Columbia.

ForestrySA said, "We look forward to his leadership as we pursue new opportunities and continue to strengthen South Australia's forestry sector."

Acknowledging the welcome, Sinclair said, "It is a great honour to be appointed Chair of ForestrySA for a 3-year term and my thanks to Minister Clare Scriven for her support."

"I was appointed to the board over two and half years ago and I have learned so much from our chair June Roache, who will continue with the board as a non-executive director. My thanks to Grant Pelton and Hayley Neumann who will also continue as directors."

**“ SINCLAIR DELIVERED WORLD-LEADING INITIATIVES SUCH AS WOODSOLUTIONS**

Australian Forest Products Association

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

# Joe Prevedello farewells AFPA

The popular communications director is wrapping up his time in timber.

If you've noticed that the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) receives regular coverage in this publication (see page 6) and others, there are two good reasons for that.

The first is that the association does tireless work as a national industry body, promoting the interests of timber sector and we are here for that, as the kids say. The second is Joe Prevedello.

For six-and-a-half years (with a little break as a political advisor in the middle), Prevedello has worked hard to get out the news about AFPA, first as communications manager and more recently as communications director.

In addition to championing the work of the sector, Prevedello has been a pivotal figure in the fight against anti-forestry actions, including the shutdowns



**1/ The AFPA team at the National Forestry Day event at Parliament House in 2024. (L-R) Gordon Neil, Candice Haydam, Richard Hyett, Fairlie Pearce, Sandi Grant, Diana Hallam and Joe Prevedello.**

**2/ Joe Prevedello is leaving AFPA to become CEO of Master Plumbers ACT** All images: supplied

of native timber harvesting in Victoria and WA and the current GKNP 'moratorium' in parts of NSW. He was also key in the birth of National Forestry Day, which has grown into an annual celebration of the sector's achievements.

Prevedello, who has taken up a new role as the CEO of Master Plumbers ACT, told *Enews* he would "remain a



friend of industry".

He described his time with AFPA as a fulfilling journey, saying he was particularly proud of his three federal election campaigns where he was able to highlight the importance of the sector

at a national level.

Writing on LinkedIn, Prevedello said "I thank former CEO Ross Hampton GAICD for giving me a go, the current and former leaders of the Association for their support, including Diana Hallam, Richard Hyett, Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon GAICD, Victor Violante, Natasa Sikman, Stephen Dadd, Diana Gibbs and Greg McCormack, as well as all the other staff, board directors, members, contractors and colleagues over the years, many of whom have become friends – and especially Fairlie P. who I've worked alongside for most of my time at AFPA."

Despite shifting his professional focus, Prevedello will always champion forestry, even if his day job has him working for plumbers in the nation's capital. He told *Enews*, "This is a terrific industry. The people are fantastic and the importance of the industry for the country is right up there with food and mineral production."

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# Have your say on bioenergy feedstocks

## The National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy is open for consultation now.

LAST week *Enews* reported on Julie Collins, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, announcing that the National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy would soon open for feedback.

Unusually for a politician in this day and age, she delivered on the promise within the week, and the government’s consultation page for the National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy went live as that issue of *Enews* was hitting your inbox.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has prepared a discussion paper that provides a high-level overview of Australian feedstocks and explores a range of issues for further consideration. Click here to download the paper.

Bioenergy is considered a critical factor in Australia’s net zero transition. It includes renewable or low carbon liquid fuels (LCLF), low carbon gases and solid biofuels. LCLF and low carbon gases are mostly produced using materials from agriculture and forestry, including fats and oils like canola and tallow, carbohydrates such as sugar and cropping and forestry residues.

The paper sets out a series of questions for interested parties to respond to, including looking at where the main barriers are currently to developing bioenergy feedstocks and what government actions could be taken to removing some or all of those barriers.

It notes that timber waste

Table 2 Residue and lignocellulosic feedstock estimates based on CSIRO analysis (2025)

Biomass type	National estimate (low)	National estimate (high)
Crop stubble	7 Mtpa	30 Mtpa
Grasses	13 Mtpa	19.7 Mtpa
Wood (plantation forest)	11 Mtpa	14 Mtpa
Bagasse	5.5 Mtpa	10 Mtpa
Waste	2 Mtpa	11 Mtpa
Short-rotation tree crops	0	29.3 Mtpa
Total (applying constraints)	38.5 Mtpa	114 Mtpa

Source: CSIRO 2025

- 1/ Table 2 from the discussion paper shows assumed quantities of residue feedstock immediately available.
- 2/ The timber sector already makes use of biomass, such as in this industrial pyrolysis system by Crusader Engineering featured in *Enews* 868. Image: supplied

and short-rotation tree crops are currently heavily under-utilised and under-researched resources – so much so that while its estimates of how much plantation residue is currently available are in the reasonable low-high range of 11–14 Mtpa, its guess for short-rotation tree crops is 0–29.3Mtpa.

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) was one of the first industry groups to welcome the call for feedback, with CEO Diana Hallam hailing the “new economic and environmental opportunities it presents for our sector and the country”.

She praised the fact that the discussion paper addresses required infrastructure, supply chain readiness and maturity, social licence and sustainability, as well as biosecurity and traceability issues.

Hallam said, “We welcome progress on the National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy through the release of this discussion paper. AFPA will engage closely with the Government about the sustainable feedstock opportunities that forest industries can provide.

“Through the sustainable harvesting and processing

practices our sector is known for, a considerable amount of timber and wood-fibre residues are produced. Ensuring these residues go to the most productive and sustainable use is a key aspiration of AFPA members and a number of businesses already utilise them to create heat for timber drying or even to produce their own power to supplement operational requirements.”

Currently, timber is a leading bioenergy industry in Australia with boilers producing energy to run kilns and plant at multiple mills. However, we’re not alone. Cape Byron Power operates the Condong Cogeneration Plant using bagasse, a waste product from sugar cane. As well as powering the adjacent sugar mill, it provides power that is sold to the grid. This waste product is only available during the sugar cane crush season being from June to December. The rest of the year, it uses wood waste products to maintain operations.

Hallam wants to see these opportunities spread. “While many in the forest products industry are aware of the bioenergy opportunities for the sector, having a national strategy will seriously maximise the potential for

forest industries to enhance their contribution, grow public awareness of the importance of wood fibre in this area and help Australia achieve net zero,” she said.

“While the opportunities are considerable there are also many considerations that need to be addressed – strategic locations, volumes, feedstock scale and existing industry requirements. These all need consideration in the development of the strategy and its eventual implementation.

“We are committed to making sure the forest products industry is at the forefront of the Government’s planning with this new National Bioenergy Feedstock Strategy.”

Feedback can be uploaded directly to the Consultation Hub, before 5pm AEDT Friday 7 November, 2025. Click here to go directly to the page, where you will also be able to find more information on both the feedstock strategy and its sister strategy, the Feeding Australia: A National Food Security Strategy, which is being developed alongside it.

For further information please contact feedstocks@aff.gov.au.



## OCTOBER

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

**20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Conference and Networking Event – Singapore.** Subjects covered include: global & Asian macro-economic outlook, pulp-woodchip end user, improving chip quality and export yields, carbonised pellets, biomass trends and much more. For full conference details and to register, visit <https://www.danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/home>

**20-23: Forestry Australia 2025 Conference – Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide.** The conference theme is 'Restoring forests and landscapes to secure Australia's future' and aims to develop both local and national collaboration. For more details visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-conference/>

**22-23: Melbourne Build 25 – MCEC, Melbourne.** Victoria's largest construction and design show. For more details visit <https://melbournebuildexpo.com>

**23-24: Conference Field Trip – Perth, WA.** Follows on from the woodchip and biomass conference in Singapore. 2-day trip includes accommodation, breakfast, lunch, dinner and bus transport for site visits. Registrations or full field trip details, visit: [danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/fieldtrip](https://www.danaevents.co.nz/2025singapore/fieldtrip)

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**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](http://www.gttia.com)

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**MAY 20-21: SAVE THE DATE: 5th International Forest Business Conference – Sheraton Sopot Hotel, Poland.** A two-day conference on megatrends that shape

responsible forest and wood industry investments. The conference aims to bring together leading timberland investment management organizations, investors interested in forestry asset class and sustainable wood industry representatives in order to exchange and share experiences and ideas about new forest business frontiers. Register at [www.fba-events.com](http://www.fba-events.com) or contact [rafal@forest-analytics.com](mailto:rafal@forest-analytics.com)

**JUNE 9-11: SAVE THE DATE: Woodex Trade Exhibition – Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.** Africa's premier trade exhibition for timber, woodworking machinery, tools, and forestry. WoodEX for Africa has evolved into a true international event, consistently attracting visitors and exhibitors from more than 20 countries. Visit [www.woodexforafrica.com](http://www.woodexforafrica.com) for more information.

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# GKNP – Not everything is at it seems

## Special *Enews* investigation: Pentarch at the heart of the fallout.

*Enews* has already reported on multiple harvesting businesses stood down without warning on Father's Day – a day many will now remember for all the wrong reasons. Our continuing investigations have taken us deep into the operations of countless forestry and haulage businesses, uncovering a ripple effect that's set to leave a lasting mark on regional economies. Make no mistake – this will hurt, and the impacts will be felt right across New South Wales and beyond.

Over recent weeks, *Enews* has spent many hours consulting with a wide range of industry figures. One name continues to surface repeatedly: Pentarch.

An industry insider told *Enews*: "We know Pentarch was the most heavily impacted sawmill operation. Their log supplies stopped cold on Father's Day. To put it bluntly, the trucks that were due to arrive on Monday morning never arrived."

Our investigations confirm that Pentarch previously processed more than 65% of all hardwood logs on the NSW North Coast. Their Herons Creek sawmill, located just outside Port Macquarie, represents a \$21 million investment and is regarded as one of the most advanced

hardwood sawmills in the Southern Hemisphere. Built in 2004, with a further \$10m upgrade to keep the mill at the pinnacle for safety and efficiency, it employs 82 people.

The Allen Taylor wood supply agreement is the original and dates back over 130 years and was for 165,000 cubic metres per year. In 2016, that allocation was reduced by 35% to 116,000m<sup>3</sup>, a move designed to ensure long-term sustainable yields across NSW. Then-owners Boral restructured its operations accordingly and moved forward for the long term.

However, according to our source, a recent NSW Government ministerial direction ordered that all deliveries to Pentarch cease immediately. Forests both north and south are being harvested within 25kms from the Herons Creek sawmill with logs redirected by road freight up to 150kms away. The source added bluntly: "Their supply agreement appears to have been torn up."

*Enews* understands that force majeure clauses are



**State forest like this in Coffs Harbour has been locked up for the GKNP, leaving sawmills competing for limited private hardwood resource.** Image: Shutterstock

being invoked within existing wood supply agreements, effectively leaving everything up in the air.

Across the North Coast, total wood supply agreements amount to roughly 175,000m<sup>3</sup>, with 69,000m<sup>3</sup> originating from within the so-called Great Koala National Park (GKNP) footprint. That leaves a shortfall of 107,000 cubic metres – around 40% of total supply. The critical question now is: will this loss be shared evenly, and can operators survive such a hit – or will some be selectively left behind?

Our investigations reveal that Pentarch is bearing the brunt. The Herons Creek sawmill – notably not the closest facility to the GKNP – is now fully cut off. Pentarch

supplies a wide range of hardwood products, including structural timber, decking, cladding, solid flooring, lining boards, treated timber, and hardwood pallets (rated to 2 tonnes), all feeding vital links in the broader supply chain.

While other mills have been temporarily

redirected Pentarch's allocations, operators are nervous – and many are staying tight-lipped about what's next.

At Pentarch's Grafton sawmill (43 Mill Road, Koolkhan), the workforce has already dropped from 42 to just 20 employees. When contacted by *Enews*, Pentarch representatives were unable to comment at this stage.

Industry analysts estimate that the additional distances required for redirected harvesting operations could cost the sector \$800,000 per year, driving further upward pressure on timber prices and that is before we talk supply and demand pressures. Pressure is rapidly building on any potential capacity from private plantations.

## SFFP and TFTU slam Labor's koala park

MARK Banasiak MLC, from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party (SFFP), said the Minns Labor Government had sold out regional NSW with its reckless decision to declare the full 476,000-hectare Great Koala National Park, including 176,000-hectares of working

state forests, a move that will hammer jobs, drive up housing costs and undermine Australia's timber supply.

"This is not about conservation; it's about political backroom deals and appeasing city-based activists," Banasiak said. "Labor promised both a

park and a sustainable timber industry, but you cannot have both when 40% of the forest base is locked away.

"This decision will slug taxpayers over \$1.25 billion in creation, destroy 5700 regional jobs and force NSW to import even more timber in the middle

of a housing crisis. Once again, political expediency has trumped science, economics and common sense."

Banasiak said the Government had ignored clear evidence that regulated,

From P 8

sustainable harvesting and modern forestry practices have had no impact on koala numbers in working forests.

"The bush will pay the initial price. Contractors selling machinery, families leaving towns, small businesses shuttering. But all of NSW will feel it when construction slows and new house prices surge further because we've choked off local timber," he said.

"Labor should be upfront: if you cut 40% of the working forest base, you cut the timber that builds homes, schools and hospitals, and you cut the income that keeps regional communities alive."

The Timber, Furnishing & Textiles Union (TFTU) has also condemned the NSW Government's handling of the Great Koala National Park decision, saying workers are being offered redundancy support packages five times worse than their Victorian

counterparts.

TFTU NSW Secretary Alison Rudman said the contrast showed just how little value the NSW Government placed on regional workers.

"Victoria showed how displaced timber workers should be treated: with dignity and proper support," Rudman said. "In NSW, workers are being thrown scraps. This is Labor abandoning its own people in regional communities who have stood by the party for generations."

The union said the NSW Government has also been dragging its heels on giving workers' answers.

"We've asked again and again for information about how their scheme for unemployed workers will actually operate. Instead,

the Government hides behind press releases and spin while workers face unemployment," said Rudman.

"That is not a fair go and it's not what people voted for when they elected Labor."

Workers across the Mid North Coast are already reporting deep anxiety and uncertainty, with many forced

to explain to their families that their jobs may be gone. In towns like Heron's Creek, 85 mill jobs represent one-third of the town's workforce, a blow that would hollow out the entire community.

"When you kill the timber industry, you kill the towns, schools, health services and small businesses – all suffer. The so-called replacement jobs in tourism don't exist. That's the reality this Government is ignoring," Rudman said.

The TFTU is calling on the Government to reverse its decision and commit to a fair deal for timber workers and the communities they sustain.



**Alison Rudman, second from right front row, with other TFTU and AWU workers along with industry delegates taking their case to the NSW Parliament.** Image: courtesy TFTU/Facebook



**Mark Banasiak says the Labor Party's promise to protect both timber jobs and koalas hasn't been delivered.** Image courtesy SFFP

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# Local communities feel GKNP effects

## Enews spoke with Jimmy Angel from Nambucca Valley Council

IN 1998, Midco abattoir closed down in the Nambucca Valley just as Jimmy Angel was coming into the area. "We lost hundreds of jobs, businesses were shutting down; it was a real hit, because it was one of the pillars of the area's economy," he said. "Now I'm watching that repeat with timber."

Angel is Deputy Mayor of Nambucca Valley Council, as well as running two local businesses, one a wedding venue and the other a mechanical workshop. At the time of the GKNP announcement last month, he was Acting Mayor while Gary Lee was on a holiday. It was a rougher job than he was expecting...

"In theory, our job at Council is to be the link between the community and the State Government," said Angel. "But the only people who knew anything about the decision on that Sunday were the koalas. Everything was so well measured for them, but for the employees and the industry and subcontractors, it was almost inhumane how the news was delivered."

"I spoke to Archie Woods from Nambucca sawmill. They had workers that didn't know what was happening with their jobs, and we couldn't tell them what was going on. Matt Dyer from Bowraville Sawmill was the same. He was overseas, I was trying to keep in touch with him the best I could. He



**1/ Jimmy Angel (right) at the 2024 Local Government NSW Annual Conference in Tamworth with fellow councillor Jane MacSmith and Mayor Gary Lee.** Image: courtesy Nambucca Valley Council/Facebook

**2/ Councillor Jimmy Angel fears the loss of timber jobs will have the same impacts on the Nambucca Valley as the abattoir closure nearly 30 years ago.** Image: supplied

said 'What's going on? Are we closed?' I said 'Mate, I can't tell you. I've got no idea.' And that was me being the Mayor at the time."

Timber is central to the region's economic success. "We've got agriculture, horticulture and timber," Angel said. "When they're doing well, the town's doing well. It's a bonus that when the weather is nice, we get tourists. Now the State Government says tourists are suddenly going to make up for all the jobs going in the timber sector."

He is unimpressed by the economic planning behind the decision. "The State Government said they had done so much research and consultation, and that everyone would be looked after," Angel said. "But now all the impacted Councils have been asked to work out the economic impact on their areas and take that back to



the Government. Surely that's putting the cart before the horse? Surely you should have worked that out first and then made a decision based on that knowledge?"

Again, the abattoir closure is echoing for him. "When Midco was here, the median age in the district was 37," said Angel. "In the last two years, that's ticked over to 54. One of the things that has been going well up here is urban growth, as people move here for the affordability. We've got council land and private land available that is zoned for low- and medium-density housing."

"But if we keep getting whacked like this by the State Government, you may as well make that all over-55s residential, because that's who'll be left."

### TAKING THE HEART OUT

"One of the things we know is that the timber industry is a community," Angel said. "Many of these people have been working together for years, they're like family. So deciding they're expendable is poor, very poor."

He emphasised that the whole region is perfect growing territory, "You drop a seed, it comes up. That's why we've got dairy, horticulture and agriculture," he said. "A lot of people up here have small stands of timber on their land; I have one I logged 15 years ago and those grey gums are back up now, you could almost do them again."

"Compare that to our international neighbours who don't have any of the sustainable procedures in place that we're all guided by here. It would be shocking to push our hardwood industry onto those countries where there is clearfelling: we would own that deforestation."

It's not that he or the other councillors who have been backing the local timber industry are against the GKNP as a concept. "But it's like watching someone jump head-first into a rockpool they don't know. You go in feet first! You don't go straight to the biggest option on the table and stop a whole industry instantly without warning, then worry about the economic impacts later."

Already he's seeing fallout from the decision. "There's a café that closed almost immediately," said Angel, "It's quieter. The workers aren't

Cont P 11

From P 10

stopping at the pub for a beer on Friday on the way home, because they don't know what the future is.

"The problem is that the people most impacted, the sawmills, don't yet know the full impact, which is a hard thing for their employees. But this moratorium has hit all of them, their contractors and businesses who do work for them. My workshop is in Bowraville and I've certainly seen a decline already."

It's baffling to him that the State Government didn't start with one of the smaller proposals on the table for the GKNP and then extend it if required.

"They could have said 'let's start with the small one. Let's not have the mass impact straight up. Let's take our time and be measured, we can see what the economic



**Angel's popular wedding venue, River View Island, celebrates the area's natural beauty, which has remained intact through a century of active forestry.** Image: supplied

impact is on the Councils for the smaller one and work out a better package going forward."

Beyond jobs, Angel can see other losses for the area: "Matt Dyer is a major sponsor of ShoreTrack, which invests in young people who aren't doing well in high school and teaches them skills. He's supported them with \$30 grand in the past year. And I know that's on top of \$10,000 to Nambucca Athletics. So they're little waves that are

not going to happen."

At the most recent Council meeting in mid-September, he was dismayed to see a resolution moved by Labor and Greens members pass, rescinding the council's previous position opposing the GKNP.

"We should have been stronger as a Council and agreed to not talk about it now until our economic team could show fully what the State Government has

just done," Angel said. "It's so ill-considered. I think they're offering 300 jobs with NPWS; we'd have 300 timber employees in Nambucca alone."

Right now, there are some jobs available in the area, mostly doing earthworks. "But

that's only because we've had a natural disaster. Without that, we would be in our own dire local recession here in the Valley. Aside from that, if you look on Seek.com, it's just social workers and aged care.

"Meanwhile, we've got a housing crisis and we're taking a massive percentage of material off the plate that could potentially build those houses. If you ran your business like this government, you'd be broke!"

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# What every business should know about safety

THINK of it as just a normal day in a busy hardware store – until it wasn't.

An extreme safety incident that suddenly unfolded in a hardware store recently not only caught staff off guard, but customers as well. While no one expects chaos to erupt in a familiar retail environment, this recent event has raised serious questions about how well-prepared businesses are for unexpected emergencies.

At the same time as the hardware store incident, a wave of violent armed robberies took place across Melbourne, including 11 hold-ups in a single night. The incidents have highlighted a confronting reality: retail workplaces have become increasingly vulnerable, and not just to slips, trips, and falls, but to unpredictable and dangerous behaviour.

These recent events share a powerful message to all businesses in the industry: it is time to rethink your WHS systems and what they mean to you.

## PREPAREDNESS SAVES LIVES

Traditional WHS plans tend to focus on physical hazards, wet floors, faulty ladders, and manual handling injuries. But in today's world, this is no longer enough.

Businesses need a broader approach that:

- Equips staff to respond to aggression.
- Protects them during critical incidents.
- Supports them after a distressing event.

Safety skills should now include de-escalation techniques, evacuation protocols, and how to call for help safely. Physical security, such as CCTV and panic buttons, should be regularly reviewed and tested. Vehicle safety, especially in open-access areas, must be tightly controlled, with strict rules around key management and lockout procedures.

Above all, staff should know that their wellbeing is the number one priority in any emergency.

Remember that prevention remains the best defence and small preventive steps now, can make a big difference in the long run.

- Keep cash holdings to a minimum.
- Use drop safes and signage to deter offenders.
- Secure staff-only areas and back rooms.
- Ensure shopfronts are well-lit with clear street visibility.



**The biggest problem in hardware stores should be finding the right screw fitting, but recent violent crimes have made work-places risky for employees.** Image: Donyale Harrison

If a robbery occurs, the golden rule is safety. Staff should remain calm, avoid confrontation, and comply with demands. Goods, cash, or vehicles can be replaced – lives cannot.

After the event, preserving the scene, securing CCTV footage and completing detailed incident reports are critical, but the work does not end there.

## ONGOING STAFF SUPPORT

The impact of these incidents does not end when the offender leaves. Staff may experience shock, stress, or longer-term mental health challenges. Ignoring these psychosocial hazards is just as risky as overlooking a physical hazard.

Businesses should provide

immediate and ongoing support – counselling, team debriefs, and mental health check-ins. Consider investing in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for leaders and reviewing your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Being prepared does not mean operating in fear – it means having confident staff, clear systems,

and leaders who take safety seriously.

- Review and update your emergency plans with all potential hazards/risks
- Conduct regular training and practice emergency drills so your team knows how to protect themselves and bystanders.
- Ask staff where they feel vulnerable and act on their feedback.

Remember: you cannot predict every incident, but you can control how ready your workplace is to respond.

**Need help reviewing your WHS systems or Mental Health First Aid training?**

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# Revolutionary housing centre opens

## The Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence.

LATE last year, the Federal Government and Victorian State Government announced a new initiative: the Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence, designed to address critical challenges faces by Australia's construction industry.

Last week, politicians and construction and education leaders gathered at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg campus to celebrate the first students starting their training and officially inaugurate the Centre.

The Centre is a national hub for industry collaboration, innovation and training in modern methods of construction (MMC) to address Australia's housing challenges and the need for more affordable, sustainable homes built at speed. It is being developed and delivered by Melbourne Polytechnic in close collaboration with industry, with \$50 million in funding from the Federal and Victorian State Governments.

The initial short course – 'Rethinking Construction – Introduction to Modern Methods of Construction' – has been developed with industry partners to introduce workers, trainees and students to prefabrication, modular, and volumetric construction principles and techniques. It will act as a gateway into a suite of new, targeted training and development initiatives, including potential formal qualifications or apprenticeships, to build a skilled workforce ready for modern construction challenges.

"The activation of the Centre is an exciting milestone,



**The Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence has taken on its first students at Melbourne Polytechnic, Heidelberg campus, ahead of a purpose-built facility beginning construction next year.** Image: supplied

and is the culmination of an enormous effort by the Melbourne Polytechnic team in collaboration with industry partners," said CEO of Melbourne Polytechnic, Frances Coppolillo.

"By working with partners to drive innovation and address skills gaps, the Centre will help industry to evolve and embrace modern construction methods, making a huge difference as it wrestles with the challenges of how to build more affordable homes for our growing population."

The Centre will deliver a suite of short courses, micro-credentials and full qualifications, embedding modern methods of construction into both new offerings and existing training pathways. As it evolves, its reach and impacts will extend nationally, providing training and development programs that can be offered by TAFEs and other training and education providers across Australia.

Federal Minister for Skills and Training, Hon Andrew Giles MP, said: "The Albanese

and Allan Labor Governments are ensuring that Victorians can access opportunities to train and learn new skills – including to build the homes Victorians and Australians need.

"We're investing in TAFEs so they can be at the forefront of this work, including through the TAFE Centre of Excellence at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg campus."

The event also marked the current work being done to design and build a new, purpose-built showcase facility at the Heidelberg campus, which will serve as a national exemplar of modern methods of construction.

The new facility will include a hands-on demonstration and learning hub, with state-of-the-art spaces for training, applied research, and collaboration between students, educators, and industry partners. Construction will commence in 2026.

"We're backing this cutting-edge facility which will not only help build the Victoria of the future but also help students develop vital skills, create jobs

and provide new opportunities for more Victorians," said the Hon Gayle Tierney MP, Victorian Minister for Skills and TAFE.

"We're building a future workforce that is ready for modern construction challenges, ensuring our future homes are smart and sustainable."

Damien Crough, Co-founder and Executive Chairman of prefabAUS, concurred, saying: "We have a lot of houses to build across Australia to meet our housing targets. The Centre is an important integrator and aggregator that brings industry together with the vocational education and training sector. It will support industry as we transition towards more advanced manufacturing and industrialised construction, providing the skills we need to do so."

Building the workforce with skills in modern methods of construction will help the nation deliver affordable housing more quickly, while producing homes that are better equipped to withstand extreme weather and aligned with Australia's emissions reduction, sustainability and waste minimisation targets.

Shaped by industry, for industry, the Centre is supported by key partnerships across the construction sector including prefabAUS, MBAV, Building 4.0 CRC, BuildSkills Australia, VSA, HIA, Tradeswomen Australia and Empowered Women in Trades that will also help encourage diversity in the MMC sector. More industry partnership opportunities will emerge as the Centre grows and evolves.

# US giant snaps up plantations

The Weekly Times reports that Manulife Investment Management has acquired a 7325ha four-property aggregation located between Albury and Tumbarumba in southern NSW, purchasing the plantations from New Forests.

Of the lot, 4816ha is radiata pine and the properties include two registered forest carbon projects under the ACCU program on properties situated at Coppabella and Woomargama in NSW.

The report says the transaction was worth about \$130 million, and brings



1/ The parcel includes 4816ha of radiata pine plantation. Image: Shutterstock

2/ Manulife's Tom Sarno. Image: supplied



close to well-established timber markets and leading Australian producers of forest products. We look forward to managing the property to generate timber, forest carbon and other natural capital values."

Manulife's Forest Climate Fund has already acquired some 61,000ha of forests and is near 50% deployment. In total, Manulife manages about 2.266 million hectares of timberland across the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, and Chile, representing US\$11.7bn in assets under management.

As a forest manager, it has a reputation of successful mixed-use strategies for economic benefit, meaning that income is not likely to be solely dependent on carbon credits.

the amount of Australian timber under Manulife's management to about 550,000ha.

The purchase is part of the investment manager's near half-billion US dollar Forest Climate Fund, and is the first international purchase for that fund.

To read the full *Weekly Times* story, click here.

In a statement, Manulife

IM Global head of timberland investments Tom Sarno said, "Our team has 27 years of experience managing timberland investments in Australia on behalf of clients.

"The assets, which are Manulife Forest Climate Fund's first international timberland investment, are attractively stocked with a mix of mature and young radiata pine plantations, and

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# Sycamore Gap Tree finds new life

It was a senseless act of vandalism that sparked outrage around the world, but now the felled Sycamore Gap tree is finding new life – twice.

Just over two years since it was cut down by vandals (who are serving jail terms of over four years), the National Trust has asked artists and other creatives for ideas to create a “nationally important” work from the wood of the illegally felled tree.

Around half of the tree’s timber will be made available for the project, and proposals should explore themes such as our collective relationship with nature; memory and place; and community and belonging.

Final concepts should also engage target audiences and



**The Sycamore Gap Tree before its felling in September 2023.** Image: Gordon Leggett / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0

reflect the National Trust’s wider goals: restoring nature, tackling unequal access to green spaces and heritage and inspiring millions to care for the environment.

Expressions of interest open on Monday 13 October, 2025 and close Monday 17 November.

Five shortlisted artists

or collaborations will each receive £5000 to develop their proposals. These will be judged by sector experts, with a public vote helping to determine the final selection. The winning proposal, with a budget of up to £200,000, will be announced in February 2026.

For more on the commission and its two

online information sessions, and to download the information pack, [click here](#).

The tree itself lives on, too. The National Trust has grown 49 saplings that are being given to recipients from around the UK, including The Rob Burrow Centre for Motor Neurone Disease in Leeds, Holly’s Hope in conjunction with Hexham Abbey in Northumberland and The Tree Sanctuary and Tree Amigos in Coventry. These will all be planted in publicly accessible spaces as part of the Trees of Hope program.

Back in Northumberland, 25 new shoots have sprouted from the base of the stump. It is hoped that if left to grow, these could one day form a new tree or trees in the place of the original.

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# Built by Nature Prize: Maryborough

## Hyne's timbers let the design sing.

Last week, *Enews* began sharing some of our favourites from the 2025 Built By Nature Prize. This week, our pick is close to home, the prosaically named but visually delightful Queensland Fire and Emergency Services North Coast Regional Headquarters and Maryborough Fire and Rescue Station.

The building added three new timber buildings to the existing 1950s Art Deco fire station, providing a home for the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service as well as the regional QFES outpost.

Designed by Baber Studio and built by Hutchinson Builders in active partnership with Hyne Timber and the Queensland Government, the refurbishment uses locally produced glulam (GLT) from Hyne and CLT from sister company XLam.

The judging notes say: "The retained heritage bays provide a public museum and community venue, while new CLT and GLT structures host regional operations, training, and response facilities.

"Locally sourced, certified timber, processed and manufactured by Hyne and XLAM, was central to the design, reducing embodied carbon by over 500 tonnes compared to concrete. Prefabricated panels cut waste, improved efficiency, and enabled rapid erection in



**1/ Some traditional fire station features remain: here a slide for getting between floors quickly.**

**2/ The new centre, which houses the operational areas, backs onto the old fire station.**

**3/ The Fire and Rescue Station was assembled in just two weeks after fabrication.** All images: copyright Christopher Frederick Jones, used with permission. [www.cfjphoto.com.au](http://www.cfjphoto.com.au)

minutes on Hyne's plantations.

Because so much of the build was prefabricated offsite, the disruption of the build was minimised and the speed of the build maximised: both vital for important urban services.

But, as you can see from the images, the end result is every bit as beautiful as the original building, while being highly practical and – as you would expect for a home for our treasured fireys – extremely fire resistant.

To learn more about the Maryborough build, [click here](#), and for the full shortlist, [click here](#).

just two weeks. The project stores carbon, supports Queensland's timber economy, and shows that mass timber can effectively deliver complex public infrastructure initiatives."

As well as the embodied carbon, the choice of construction materials and methods saved 1742 tonnes of carbon on the project in total. It used 500m<sup>3</sup> of locally grown pine, which was regrown in 38

**“IT SHOWS THAT MASS TIMBER CAN EFFECTIVELY DELIVER COMPLEX PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**



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