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Timber legends honoured at GTTIA ceremony

COVER STORY P 5

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Forestry contributions honoured

Forestry Australia's conference concluded with recognition of sector greats.

ONE of the final acts of last week's Forestry Australia Conference was to honour the remarkable contributions of Robert (Bob) Gordon, Dr Peter Stanton PSM, and Dr Tom Fairman.

Robert (Bob) Gordon received one of two N.W. Jolly Medals, Forestry Australia's highest honour. Bob, a nationally respected forestry leader with over 40 years of service, was acknowledged for his transformative contributions to sustainable forest management, policy reform, and Indigenous inclusion.

Beginning his career with the Forestry Commission in Tasmania in 1978, Bob held leadership roles, including CEO of Forestry Tasmania (2006–2013), where he navigated the Tasmanian forest peace negotiations. As National President of Forestry Australia, he spearheaded the merger with Australian Forest Growers, modernised governance, and championed diversity and mentoring.

Currently, as inaugural Chair of Australian Forest and Wood Innovations (AFWI), Bob drives national research initiatives.

His advocacy for First Nations communities, international market development, and community roles, including Honorary Consul of Finland for Tasmania, have left a lasting legacy in forest governance and professional leadership.

Dr James 'Peter' Stanton PSM was the other N.W. Jolly Medal recipient. Peter was recognised for his 50+ year career advancing forest conservation, particularly in Queensland's tropical forests and the Wet Tropics World Heritage area.

A professional forester and expert in landscape and fire ecology, Peter's scientific assessments expanded national parks and protected areas across Queensland and the Kimberley. His work with the Queensland Forestry Department, Queensland National Parks Service, and Australian Wildlife Conservancy shaped conservation policy. Peter's legacy includes millions of hectares of conserved forests.

Dr Tom Fairman received



1/ Forestry Australia president Dr Michelle Freeman presents the N.W. Jolly Medal to Robert (Bob) Gordon.

2/ Dr Peter Stanton's N.W. Jolly Medal was accepted by his son, Matthew.

3/ Dr Tom Fairman received the Prince of Wales Award. All photos: supplied

the Prince of Wales Award. A Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne's FLARE Wildfire Research Centre, Tom was awarded for his outstanding contributions as a young forest professional. His leadership in recovering alpine ash forests after the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires, including reseeded over 11,000 hectares and co-developing a \$7.7 million seed stock initiative, showcases

scientific and operational excellence. Tom's research, including contributions to the 2025 Alpine Ash Silvicultural Reference Manual, and his roles as Vice President of the Gippsland Forest Dialogue and committee member of the Corner Inlet Landcare Group, reflect his commitment to sustainable forest management. A passionate mentor and science communicator, Tom collaborates with Traditional Owners and has secured over \$400,000 in research funding since 2020.

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WoodSolutions launches WA partnership

A WEIRD thing happens when you cross the Nullarbor. The timber-based housing that dominates Australia's east is replaced by double brick-based architecture in cities like Perth.

The sandy soils of much of the region are a better option for brick than the reactive clays of, say, Sydney, making it cheaper to use brick there than in most other parts of Australia, so builders are used to it as a material. But brick's poor thermal performance is a costly trade-off.

For years, housing specialists have been calling for a rethink. Now, WoodSolutions has entered into a partnership with Timber Insight, launching an 18-month program to strengthen Western Australia's timber industry and support the state's rapidly growing housing sector.

The initiative will bring architects, engineers, builders, and designers together through a mix of seminars, design tours, and casual meet-ups, providing opportunities to share insights, foster collaboration, and showcase timber's potential – from sustainably managed forests to engineered products and finished homes.

WoodSolutions is committing significant resources to strengthen WA's timber industry by developing skills, increasing capability and accelerating the adoption of timber solutions. Highlighting sustainability, innovation and local industry development, the partnership demonstrates how timber can contribute to



WA-based Timber Insight and WoodSolutions aim to change the local dominance of brick-based housing with a combination of training, education and advocacy, alongside connecting builders and suppliers. Image: Timber Insight

meeting the state's housing needs while supporting both the economy and the environment.

"Timber is a vital resource for the future of Western Australia's housing," said Kevin Peachey, Head of Built Environment Programs at FWPA.

"Through this partnership

with Timber Insight, we are equipping the industry with practical knowledge, inspiration, and collaboration opportunities, ensuring timber continues to play a leading role in the homes and communities of tomorrow."

The program will highlight WA's forestry and timber production capabilities, including innovations in engineered wood, prefabrication, and sustainable building systems. By showcasing local expertise and resources, WoodSolutions and Timber Insight aim to position Western Australia as a hub for timber innovation and sustainable housing solutions.

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Industry support for Queensland plan

The new Queensland Future Timber Industry Plan has been welcomed.

LAST week's launch of the *Queensland Future Timber Plan* has been widely welcomed by industry bodies.

Timber Queensland, the peak body for the forest and timber industry, described it as a balanced and forward-looking strategy that provides long-overdue certainty for the sector and regional communities.

"This plan is a major step forward for Queensland's forest and timber industry," said Timber Queensland Acting CEO, Clarissa Brandt.

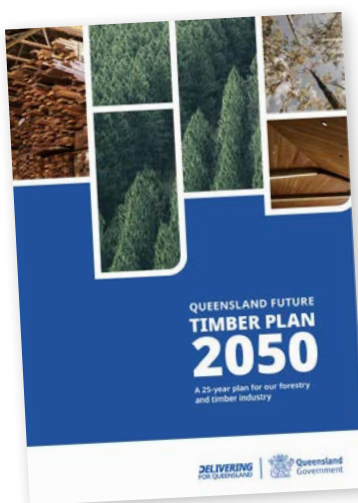
"For the first time in decades we have a long-term strategy that recognises the essential role our industry plays in housing, construction, regional jobs

and environmental outcomes, setting a clear direction for growth and sustainability."

The plan outlines a whole-of-supply-chain approach, developed in collaboration with industry, First Nations, forest science and building sector representatives and through extensive public consultation (See Enews 868, p2-3).

"The *Queensland Future Timber Plan* is structured around five-year action plans that will evolve with emerging needs, driven by key challenges such as housing shortages, market access, and the demand for lower-carbon materials," said Brandt.

"We are pleased to see the



The Queensland Future Timber Plan emphasises the importance of timber for meeting housing and climate goals. Image: supplied

Plan's five core focus areas of supply, supply chain and market, workforce, regulatory framework, and research, development and extension reflect many of the priorities we raised during consultation."

The Hyne Group also welcomed the plan. CEO Jim Bindon was one of several industry leaders who were consulted as part of the plan's co-design,

"Our industry and its products are not only essential for building family homes and much needed infrastructure, but also for their by-products used in the manufacture of pallets, particle board, packaging, commercial scale potting mix to grow fresh food – to name a few," Bindon said.

"The Government is acutely aware that, as the population increases, demand for these products is only increasing, as is the need to provide employment amidst thriving, regional communities such as the Wide Bay.

"The need for secure, plantation pine volumes goes hand-in-hand to meet this demand which needs to be planned for now. As stated in the report, 'The decisions we make today will shape timber supply well beyond 2050'."

Australian Forest Contractors Association CEO Tim Lester said the Future Timber Plan was a positive example of government and industry coming together to identify a strategic direction and lay the groundwork for future success for all.

"The Queensland Government has a plan for one million new homes by 2044. The *Queensland Future Timber Plan* recognises the opportunities that come with having these homes built using sustainably sourced and locally produced timber," Lester said.

"This industry has long lead times, high capital requirements and specialist skills, knowledge and equipment. Stability and certainty are essential conditions for investment, and the plan highlights confidence in the industry and its potential.

"We commend the Queensland Government for leading the development of this 25-year strategy. We look forward to the release of the first 5-year action plan and will continue to work with our government and industry colleagues to realise the shared vision of an industry that is thriving for future generations," Lester concluded.

[Click here to download the Queensland Future Timber Industry Plan.](#)

Australian Forest Products Association

AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

GTTIA excellence honoured

Industry legends and top achievers were recognised at the recent awards.

LAST Friday night was a special one in Mt Gambier as more than 520 guests from across the Green Triangle came together to celebrate the people, businesses, and innovations that make our timber industry so remarkable.

Hosted by Australian comedian and television personality Pete Helliard, the event was the largest celebration of the industry since the awards began. Guests included The Hon. Clare Scriven, Minister for Forestry, and The Hon. Ben Hood, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure & Transport.

The evening began with laughter and ended in applause as stories of innovation, resilience, and community pride were shared from across every corner of the sector.

Each award winner spoke with heartfelt gratitude – thanking mentors, employers, and peers who have supported their careers and contributed to the success of an industry that remains one of the Green Triangle's most



1/ Stephen Van Schaik was one of two heroes awarded Timber Legend Award (see cover). His work at Van Schaik's Bio Gro has pioneered sustainability, turning industry waste into high-quality products.

2/ Steve Allen of OneFortyOne took home the Safety Excellence – Individual award. All images: by Georgia Page, courtesy GTTIA

important economic and social foundations.

The highlight of the evening

was the presentation of the Timber Legend Awards, marking the first time in GTTIA history that two

recipients were honoured in the same year.

Through short films and personal reflections, guests were given a glimpse into the careers of Mr Laurie Hein and Mr Stephen Van Schaik, two leaders whose contributions, leadership, and integrity have shaped the industry for decades.

GTTIA Chair Adrian Flowers said both legends represent the best of what the industry stands for: "Laurie and Stephen come from very different parts of the timber supply chain, but what they share is a lifetime of dedication and a genuine passion for people. They've each played an important role in shaping the professionalism and unity our industry is known for today."

Flowers said this year's event reflected the continued growth and strength of the timber sector.

"The 2025 GTTIA has been our most successful event to date. We received the highest

Cont P 6

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- 1/ Noel Bull of SFM Agribusiness, winner of Operations – Silviculture & Plantation Management.
- 2/ Kessah Moore of Merrett Logging (right) took the gong for Logistics Excellence, with Hannah Witherow from Tabeel Trading Nominees Highly Commended.
- 3/ The Sawmilling & Processing Excellence category had dual winners, Edwina Vulcz of Warrnambool Timber Industries and Andrew Hoath from OneFortyOne.
- 4/ Adam Jennings of LV Dohnt & Company was a deserving winner for Operations – Harvesting & In-Field Chipping Excellence.
- 5/ Nathan Thompson of Van Schaik's Bio Gro was Highly Commended in Environment & Sustainability Excellence, with Tara Bonney from Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation taking the win.
- 6/ Safety Excellence Award – Less than 30 Staff was a hotly contested category, with the gong going to Hazelwood Forestry (right) and Highly Commended to DTE Consultants. All images: by Georgia Page, courtesy GTTIA

From P 5

number of nominations in the history of the awards, saw a strong increase in female representation, and welcomed a record number of guests. It's a clear sign of the pride people have in the work they do and the value of recognising that publicly."

He also acknowledged the vital role of sponsors in making the celebration possible:

"Our sponsors make this event what it is. Their support allows us to celebrate the achievements of our people and create an evening that our industry genuinely looks forward to each year."

From harvesting and haulage to sawmilling, training, safety, and sustainability – the awards recognised excellence across all areas of the timber supply

chain. Together, the winners represent the skill, innovation, and community spirit that continue to drive the Green Triangle's timber industry forward.

Here are the night's winners in order of the presentation:

Safety Excellence – Individual, Sponsored by HVP Plantations: Steve Allen – OneFortyOne

Trainee/Apprentice of the Year, Sponsored by Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA: Hayley Grigg – Van Schaik's BioGro

Logistics Excellence, Sponsored by Matthews Petroleum: Kessah Moore – Merrett Logging; Highly Commended: Hannah Witherow – Tabeel Trading Nominees

Timber Legend Award, Sponsored by PF Olsen:

Stephen Van Schaik and Laurie Hein

Sawmilling & Processing Excellence, Sponsored by Timberlink Australia & New Zealand: Dual Winners Edwina Vulcz – Warrnambool Timber Industries and Andrew Hoath – OneFortyOne

Operations – Harvesting & In-Field Chipping Excellence, Sponsored by Timberlands Pacific: Adam Jennings – LV Dohnt & Company

Operations – Silviculture & Plantation Management, Sponsored by AAM Timber & K&S Corporation: Noel Bull – SFM Agribusiness

Environment & Sustainability Excellence, Sponsored by Van Schaik's Bio Gro: Tara Bonney – Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation; Highly Commended: Nathan Thompson – Van Schaik's Bio Gro

Timber Industry Support Services, Sponsored by CSE Crosscom & Noel Barr Toyota: LITA Training

Safety Excellence Award – Less than 30 Staff, Sponsored by OneFortyOne: Hazelwood Forestry; Highly Commended: DTE Consultants

Safety Excellence – More than 30 Staff, Sponsored by South West Fibre: Merrett Logging

For more and to view the Timber Legend films, visit www.gttia.com.

On the cover: One of this year's Timber Legends, Laurie Hein has been a key player in building Australia's plantation industry, championing safety and sustainability and mentoring new generations of foresters across his career, particularly in his role as managing director of Green Triangle Forest Products. Image: by Georgia Page, courtesy GTTIA

NOVEMBER

4 - 13: TTIA member meetings – various locations.

4-7 Tasmania;
11 – Mt Gambier;
13 – Melbourne. Contact Judith by email – ttia@ttia.asn.au if you would like to attend.

5: WoodSolutions Webinar – ONLINE. 11.00am – 12:00pm (AEDT). Biophilic design is no longer just a trend - it's shaping the future of how we build and work. Discover the results of a groundbreaking Sumitomo Forestry Australia study that measured stress levels in office workers surrounded by timber. The findings? Significantly lower stress, proving the measurable benefits of biophilic design. More information email: info@woodsolutions.com.au Click here to join.

6: Tector Aps Webinar – ONLINE. 11.00pm – (AEDT). Guest speaker, Nick Lawson, a recognised leader in timber engineering and construction in Australia, with hands-on experience in landmark projects and a

practical eye for data-driven solutions that improve long-term building performance. Nick is a regular keynote speaker at Wood Solutions International and prefabAUS and a committee member of the International Mass Timber Conference, he'll be joining Tector ApS live to share: • Lessons from landmark Australian projects • Common risks at the construction and in-service stages • Why data-driven monitoring is becoming essential. Click here to register.

19: Webinar – ONLINE. 1:30pm – 3:00pm (AEDT). Navigating Australia's illegal logging laws - For Importers and Processors. Click here to join.

DECEMBER

2-4: FSC Forest Management Expert Course – Bali, Indonesia. The course gives you the mindset and knowledge of an FSC auditor. Join the ASI-accredited Forest Management (FM) course to meet formal training requirements and gain valuable insight into the FSC FM system. For more

information and to register, click here.

2026

MARCH 23-24: SAVE THE DATE: DANA – 2026 Special event. Global Natural Capital Investment Conference – Melbourne. Topic: *Why Oceania so popular with investors.*

25: Conference Field Trip – Perth, WA. Follows on from the 'Global Natural Capital Investment Conference' in Melbourne. More information and special early bird rates to come soon for both events.

MAY 17-19: SAVE THE DATE: Professional Woodworking Expo – NEC, Birmingham, UK. Dedicated event for woodworking professionals, the Professional Woodworking Expo is the essential platform for joinery and installation businesses. For more information, contact Jess Hardisty: jess.hardisty@montgomerygroup.com

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 or contact 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 for more information.

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GNKP costs families and communities

We spoke with Herons Creek timber worker Jake Pinkerton about his concerns for his workplace's future.

"It was about midday on Father's Day when I got a call. It was Alison Rudman from TFTU wanting to give me a quick heads up, check in to see how it was. I hadn't actually seen the news yet, it was the first I heard of it.

"I was in the garden with my wife, we were planning to do something fun that afternoon with the kids. And then I got that news, and I was just shell shocked. I spent the rest of Father's Day in denial and isolated."

Jake Pinkerton is just one of the hundreds of workers directly impacted by September's announcement of the proposed Great Koala National Park boundaries and the immediate moratorium on timber harvesting within them. Pinkerton works at a sawmill that he has asked us not to name in Herons Creek. He's also a union delegate for the new Timber, Furnishing and Textiles Union (TFTU) and, along with his own shock at the announcement, he realised the implications for his colleagues, which his employers were sensitive to the following day.

"We had our usual meeting in the morning, and they said for safety reasons they were going to send us home for the day to process the information," Pinkerton says. "We pretty much went back to

work the day after that, aiming for business as normal."

But it has been far from normal. While the dry mill side of the operation, where Pinkerton works, has been able to continue using stockpiled timbers, the green operation has been heavily affected without timber coming in.

"We've had that little buffer in the dry mill, but it's running out," says Pinkerton. "By the end of summer, there won't be much left and, without material coming in, I don't know what we'll do.

"Even if the government changed course tomorrow, that would be great for the green mill operations, they could just start back up within weeks, but on my side, because of this period without supply, we will be feeling the effects in a few months regardless of what happens."



1/ The Pinkerton family are fully embedded in the local community, with both kids at the local school. The mill closing will force them to leave.

2/ Jake Pinkerton's work kit is still needed, but as the supply of timber fibre runs out, he doesn't know how much longer he will have work. All images: supplied

from school, so they don't have a lot of a financial buffer. Then you've got the older gentlemen, and some of them have been here since they left school, this is the only job they know and they're deeply rooted into the community and the area. They were expecting to be putting aside as much money as they could until they retire in a few years.

"In between, you've got the people like me.

We're paying mortgages on our houses, our kids are at the local school, our wives work in the area. None of these groups are going to find it easy to pack up and move away for work."

The mill is the major employer in the area. At the last census, there were 246 people living in Herons Creek, with 85 jobs at the mill, all at risk under the current GNKP proposal.

"It's basically the mill, the school and a pie shop," says Pinkerton. "So there aren't jobs we can go to. The nearest town is 20 minutes away, and there aren't jobs going there, either. I've got people asking me 'What do I do? I can't afford not to be in work.' A lot of them are scared and worried, though they don't want to admit it."

Sadly, the NSW Government won't be changing course tomorrow.

WORKER IMPACTS

As a union delegate, Pinkerton has become a focal point for his colleagues, who are looking for information and guidance. His job has been made more difficult by the NSW Government's poor communication of its proposed worker support program.

"We've got three main groups of employees here," Pinkerton says. "The mill's put on a lot of young guys in recent years and many of them have come straight

"NONE OF US ARE GOING TO FIND IT EASY TO PACK UP AND MOVE AWAY FOR WORK"

From P 8

Acting in his union role, Pinkerton has tried to source information about the NSW Government's worker support offerings and received very little detail in return. With 25 direct colleagues looking to him for news and information, he's only been able to offer vague reassurances that the union is fighting for a good deal.

"We've had quite a few people call up Penny Sharpe's office trying to get information around it," he says, "and she wasn't available. The poor receptionist just ended up giving us a number we had to call. But there was no information on the site it

went to, and I still don't believe you can get the information easily. I only know what Alison Rudman has passed along, but there's no information on how to access the proposed package or anything like that that I'm aware of yet. It's definitely made my days harder and more stressful."

He takes a breath here, because it's not just his colleagues that are affected; his own future is on the line.

"It's bit of a shock, and I'm still not entirely sure what I'm going to do when it all comes to a head," Pinkerton says. "I've been here



Alison Rudman at an event held at NSW Parliament House to educate members on the importance of timber jobs. Photo: supplied

11 years, so everything I've learned before then, I've pretty much forgotten. I'm going to have to reskill, but I've got

mortgages and kids and... what's on offer, doesn't exactly get me far. But I'm still better off than the older guys – the chances of them finding another job, just age wise, are going to be small, let alone reskilling.

"And what they were offered isn't enough to get them through to find something else."

LACK OF SUPPORT

The proposed worker support/transition packages from the NSW Government have been a major bone of contention over the weeks since Father's Day. Not only have they been poorly communicated with little detail, the initial JobKeeper-style support was scheduled for only 10 weeks, of which nearly eight have passed already.

Cont P 10

“BY THE END OF SUMMER, THERE WON'T BE MUCH LEFT

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From P 9

Multiple businesses whose fibre supply was partially or entirely lost were left paying out of their own pockets while they waited to hear from the government, and several have since been instructed not to talk about the support packages being offered.

For workers, it has been an entirely disheartening experience.

"When we heard about the payout that was offered by the government originally, we were all 'is that all we're worth to you?'" says Pinkerton.

"With the way it was communicated to us, I wanted to say to Penny Sharpe, 'Where's your moral compass?' It felt so offhand: 'Take this and shut up.'

"A lot of these people will have to leave their communities to find work, there's just not enough work in the region, and there's not going to be, despite what the government says.

"I know that during the consultation period about the GKNP the government were shown all this evidence that they could have a smaller park and sustain both koalas and the timber business, but it feels like they've just ignored that completely and then announced the biggest park possible," he adds.

Alison Rudman is the NSW Secretary of the TFTU and has been a major figure in the fight to improve the support offer.

"There's no reason why New South Wales workers should get less than Victorian workers who similarly suffered after a bad government decision," she says.



Rudman was one of the TFTU organisers of a recent vigil for timber jobs lost to the GKNP (See story p 13). Image: supplied

"The Victorian package had a number of parts: training money, relocation money, redundancy pay, extra redundancy pay for people who were over 45, payout of entitlement and a support service. The big issue still remaining in negotiations is pay for people who are over 45. We know that people over 45 are more likely to struggle to get re-employed and face additional barriers if they are re-employed.

"If you're a 60 year old, like some of our members in Herons Creek, you're not getting up at 5am to drive 45 minutes to the next nearest mill in hopes of being able to work a bit longer. So it's critical that Minister Sharpe and the NSW Government come to the table with a meaningful support package that provides that extra support for vulnerable older workers."

TOURISM DREAM

The trade-off promise from the government has been that the GKNP will create jobs in the regions, but Pinkerton and Rudman can't see where those jobs will be. While the estimated 100

new National Parks and Wildlife Service roles to help manage the GKNP will be available for younger workers, the estimated 'thousands' of tourism jobs seem an ambitious dream.

"Tourists go to the beach or a bigger town," Pinkerton says. "You won't go out in the middle of a forest where it's hot, unless you want to go camping. But even then, I don't believe there's enough jobs in tourism to cover everybody that's affected."

Rudman is blunter: "The government's own research shows both that koalas are thriving in harvested state forests and that there's a lack of interest from ecotourism operators.

"If there was a market there, that market would already be thriving, because it is much easier to run a

tourism business in a state forest park than in a national park.

"Nobody should celebrate permanent, well-paid jobs being replaced with insecure, seasonal or casual work," she adds.

"The government's own research shows that timber jobs pay, on average, twice what tourism

jobs do in the area, and no one can afford a 50% pay cut in a cost of living crisis. These claims that tourism jobs will magically replace timber jobs are quite simply jobswashing. Koalas have always lived in these forests, a new name won't suddenly fill hotels, pay mortgages or keep the school in Herons Creek afloat.

"Our communities deserve better than the idea that there's this false choice, because we can have both koalas and secure jobs."

Pinkerton would rather be focused on work and his family, but instead is looking at the next few months as a battle he never asked for. He wishes that there was a better understanding in NSW of what the real impacts of the GKNP will be.

"I'd just like politicians and voters to remember these are real people," he says.

"They're the traditional hardworking Australians with lives, jobs and families tied to those areas. This park is going to uproot all of that and the benefits that we're told it will bring are a lovely green dream, but they're not real."

“THERE'S NO REASON WHY NSW WORKERS SHOULD GET LESS THAN VICTORIAN WORKERS



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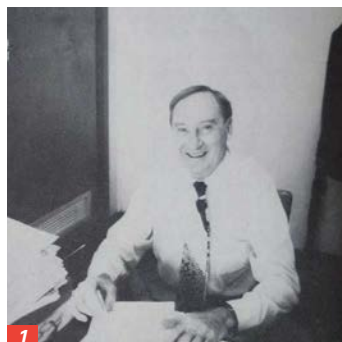
Some history of Herons Creek sawmill

Following up on our recent story regarding Herons Creek's supply being cut, former employee Evan Shield shares details of the historic mill.

Enews would like to thank Evan Shield who prepared information and images for this article. Evan is based overseas and, despite no working computer, drove a significant distance to an internet café to provide the transfer of files.

His sources include personal information, firsthand experience at the mill and the *Australian Forest Industries Journal* from 1980.

Back in issue #871 *Enews* investigations discovered the Herons Creek sawmill log supplies had been completely stopped following the announcement of the not-so-great GKNP. This mill is the largest and most modern



1/ Bill Rutter was the manager at Heron's Creek Timber Mill through the 1970s into the '80s. Described as "extremely enthusiastic" and a "hardworking industry supporter" in the *Australian Forest Industries Journal*, he foresaw the need for the timber sector to gain social license.



2/ Some of the 1980 team at the mill. From left, production superintendent John Hallinan, forest superintendent Doug Elliott and assistant production superintendent Kevin Neal.



3/ Blackbutt was the mill's most important timber, used in trusses and wall framing. All images: Evan Shield

plant and current owners Pentarch employ 82 people at the site.

Evan reports that Heron's Creek Timber Mill Pty Ltd traces its origins back to

1915, when it was first established by Alf Noone. Noone later sold the business to CRA, a subsidiary of Zinc Corporation Ltd, and this is where the real story begins.

In 1948, Zinc Corporation Ltd acquired Heron's Creek Timber Mill to secure a reliable supply of timber

Cont P 12



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From P 11

for its mines in Broken Hill. Until then, the company had relied on imported Oregon for its mining support structures. The switch to local hardwoods proved a game-changer: stronger, more durable and locally sourced hardwood reduced the size of timber needed, while supporting the regional economy.

At the time, the company operated several small mills across Herons Creek, Kendall, Lorne, and Comboyne – all within reach of Port Macquarie. However, it soon became clear that greater efficiency could be achieved by consolidating operations. In 1960, a new, state-of-the-art sawmill was constructed on the original Herons Creek site, designed to handle a wide range of log sizes and qualities. The mill produced a diverse mix of timber products, including heavy sections, and was equipped with some of the most advanced machinery of its time.

Imported from the US, the Kalmath log-haul, log-deck, log-carriage and multi-saw edger set new standards in mechanisation. An AE Gibson twin-saw edger formed the second log line, cutting smaller logs primarily for mining use. At its peak, the Herons Creek sawmill employed over 300 people, processing 69,000m³ of logs annually to produce 33,000m³ of sawn timber – an impressive recovery rate for the era.

Records show logs were sourced from four main suppliers: Forestry Corporation of NSW, a subsidiary forestry company, timber rights leases and private properties. The timber mix was approximately 65%



Blackbutt, 15% Turpentine/Brush Box, 10% mixed hardwoods and 10% Flooded Gum (Australian Rose Gum).

Each forestry area operated under sustainable management principles, aiming to ensure a continuous timber supply. Replanting programs averaged 10,000 Blackbutt seedlings per year, supporting long-term forest regeneration.

Over time, log diameters decreased from the old-growth average of 60cm to around 47cm, though second-generation forests – aged between 80 and 100 years – were expected to contribute larger logs as selective harvesting continued.

The mill's product range was extensive: mining



1/ Australian Rose Gum became a specialty timber for the mill. It was dried longer to gain stability.

2/ The 6-saw Kalmath edger with hydraulic control saw movement was industry-leading at the time.

3/ The small-diameter sorting table took production from the recovery mill, including lengths down to 600mm. "This indicates the need to recover every last stick of usable timber" wrote the mill in 1980.

4/ Rose gum, which had previously been bypassed by the timber industry, was an exclusive product for the mill. Its strength as a scaffolding plank was shown off by this worker.

5/ Rose gum was also cut into panelling, shown here as boards cut, stripped and ready for drying. All images: Evan Shield

timber, pre-cut house frames, scantlings, fencing, kiln-dried decking, flooring, wall panelling, scaffold planking, fascia boards, mouldings, truss timbers, pallets, railway sleepers and even charcoal for barbecues.

While Australian Rose Gum was often dismissed as undesirable due to its high moisture content – up to 78% – Herons Creek saw an opportunity where others saw waste. After two months of air drying, the moisture content dropped to around 20%, and with expanded kiln-drying capacity operating two shifts a day, the mill successfully turned a problematic species into a profitable one.

Evan Shield first visited the Herons Creek sawmill in 1961, when Mark Edgerley served as General Manager, and later returned to work there in 1984–85.

By 1970, the mill was managed by Bill Rutter, an influential figure in the industry. Rutter was a member of the Associated Country Sawmillers of NSW, President of the Manning/Hastings and Macleay Branch and a Councillor of the Timber Development Association. Historical records show that under his leadership, the mill adapted to process smaller logs, explored new commercial uses for Australian Rose Gum, and became increasingly involved in local and state-wide conservation efforts.

Bill Rutter said at the time: "Looking at conservation and resource issues, the sawmillers have to realise that we will not win the fight to save our resource until the community is made fully aware of the socio-economic contribution of the industry to their communities and style of living whatever it may be; whilst at the same time emphasising we are utilising, not exploiting, a renewal resource to satisfy society's needs."

Sound familiar?

“EACH FORESTRY AREA OPERATED UNDER SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Workers mourn timber jobs

NSW timber workers hold vigil for jobs lost to Great Koala National Park.

TIMBER workers, associated contractors and community members gathered last week outside Janelle Saffin MP's Lismore office to mourn the jobs lost following the NSW Government's decision to expand the Great Koala National Park.

The Timber, Furnishing & Textiles Union (TFTU) organised the vigil to honour affected workers and demand urgent government action to protect remaining timber jobs

“THIS IS LABOR ABANDONING ITS OWN PEOPLE IN REGIONAL COMMUNITIES



Work boots were lined up outside the local MP's office, each pair representing 10 affected workers. Image: courtesy TFTU

and ensure fair treatment for older workers.

Pairs of work boots were laid at the office entrance,

each representing 10 families whose lives have been forever changed by the decision and black balloons were held in

remembrance of affected communities.

TFTU NSW Secretary Alison Rudman said the vigil was both a moment of mourning and a call for accountability.

"We gathered today for an incredibly serious purpose, to mourn the timber jobs lost and to show our respect for the workers whose livelihoods have been destroyed by this decision," Rudman said.

"The Government's own research shows timber jobs are better paid jobs, with timber workers earning on average double what tourism workers do. Yet those jobs are being wiped out with no fair

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plan for those left behind.

"It's time for the politicisation of timber jobs to end. These are not abstract numbers, they're families, communities and local businesses that have sustained our regions for decades.

"The Government must now act to protect older timber workers and everyone who relies on timber jobs in timber towns."

TFTU delegate and Industry Advisory Panel member John Gunst, who spoke at the vigil, said the human toll of the decision was already visible in timber towns across the north coast.

"I've stood beside workers who told me how they spent Father's Day wondering how they'd feed their kids or stay in their towns.

"In places like Herons



1/ TFTA NSW Secretary Alison Rudman (in black) addressing the crowd.
2/ Local timber workers and associated contractors made up a large percentage of the crowd. Fears for their future in the region are causing many considerable anxiety. All images: courtesy TFTU

Creek, where 85 jobs out of 246 people are at stake,

the loss of even one mill is devastating. I'm 66 years old

I can't imagine having to start over at my age.

"We're here today to say to those workers: you're not alone. Every person here will stand with you until the Government finalises a fair deal."

The TFTU says the NSW Government's response still falls far short of the support offered to displaced timber workers in Victoria, where redundancy packages and transition programs were five times higher.

"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."

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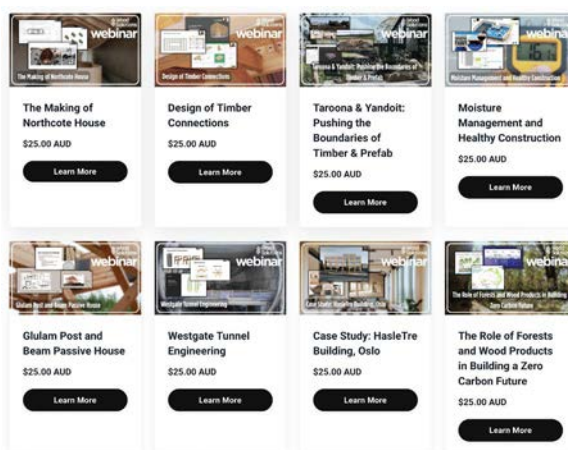
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"Our new CPD Platform ensures professionals can access trusted, evidence-based timber education when it suits them, helping them stay at the forefront of sustainable design and construction practices."

The platform features a wide range of content on timber design, construction



A selection of the webinars available. Image: supplied

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Implementing log haulage safety

THE Log Haulage Code of Practice (LHC) released earlier this year was informed by experts across the forest supply chain. Now, input is sought again to support the development of an online tool and guidance for its implementation.

"Consultation sessions are underway, which have highlighted how collaborative discussions across the supply chain about how the LHC is interpreted and integrated into safety management systems also contributes to more effective commercial management," said Dionne Olsen, project manager.

"The development of these resources aims to provide practical support for businesses, helping them to manage their responsibilities

and operations more efficiently."

Tim Lester, CEO, Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) noted the project is funded by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) through their Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative (HVSII) program and supported by the Australian Government. "We are developing an online tool and guidance materials to support businesses to maintain compliance with work health and safety regulations of the LHC and the Master Code," he said.

"Along the Chain of Responsibility from forest to the mill, each party must take appropriate steps to manage risks and ensure the safety of the driver, the truck, the load and the public. It's a



Accomplished change management specialist Dionne Olsen is managing the devilment of the compliance tool.
Image: courtesy Dionne Olsen

partnership across the supply chain which works best with good communication and a collaborative approach."

NHVR CEO Nicole Rosie said, "The NHVR was pleased to release the LHC after working closely with the AFCA and other critical stakeholders. AFCA's online tool and guidance materials will support

industry in implementing the guidance outlined in the LHC, maximising compliance and reducing transport risk.

"The NHVR is proud to continue investing in innovative projects through our HVSII program that are making a tangible improvement to safety."

AFCA is delivering national in-person and online consultation sessions to ensure everyone across the supply chain has an opportunity to participate and provide input. This is part of AFCA's commitment to developing practical tools and guidance that meet industry needs and promote safe forestry operations for its members and industry.

For more information or to provide input, email AFCA on office@afca.asn.au

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Timber businesses recognised for disability commitment

Kennedy's Timbers and Maryborough Cross Arm Mill say their businesses are the better for inclusive workforces.

ENDEAVOUR Foundation recently held its first Business Excellence and Impact Awards in Brisbane. The leading disability service provider hosted around 300 industry innovators, along with disability advocates, visionaries and entrepreneurs. The winners of five awards were decided by an independent panel and announced at the event.

The awards recognise businesses and individuals for their commitment in helping people with disability to live their best lives.

Narangba's Kennedy's Timbers and Wide Bay-Burnett's Maryborough Cross Arm Mill each took out a top gong.

"We certainly didn't expect to be a finalist, and now a winner," said Michael Kennedy, CEO of Kennedy's Timbers, winner of the Partnership Excellence Award.

Kennedy's Timbers has been a leader in sustainable timber for over 30 years, partnering with Endeavour Foundation to employ a team of people with disability and integrating the team into production for nationwide architectural projects. Kennedy's Timbers were also recognised for promoting disability awareness and inclusion through the Employer Ready Program.

"Initially we didn't know how to navigate the partnership or what was involved in hosting people with disability at our site, but we were shown the ropes and now wouldn't work without our Endeavour crew," Kennedy said. "They do such



From left, Russell Shipp, Maryborough Cross Arm Mill site manager; Elizabeth Jameson AM and Sharon Wood of the Endeavour Foundation; and Michael Kennedy, CEO Kennedy's Timbers. Image: courtesy Endeavour Foundation

great work with us. We now know what's possible and we can't wait to continue this partnership.

"In our case, we've also found people really enjoy working with timber because it's an organic material, and it's creating products that are so magnificent; they gain a real sense of achievement from turning a lump of wood into a piece of timber that will go into an architectural home.

"We would encourage other employers to take our experience onboard and partner with Endeavour Foundation because great things can come out of it."

Maryborough Cross Arm Mill site manager, Russell Shipp knows well the positive impact employing people with disability can deliver.

"This win is not only about our team, but everything we achieve together," said Shipp, winner of the Results that Shine Award.

The Cross Arm Mill produces around 47,000 timber

crossarms annually, totalling over 5.8 million kilograms of timber, with offcuts repurposed into products like stakes and pallets. Employees gain valuable skills, preparing for mainstream employment while benefiting from the Endeavour Foundation's support framework.

"In terms of providing support for people with disability, we are passionate about the pathways our employees take when with us from supported to mainstream employment; and I'm happy to say the employees with us now, are excited for that next step," said Shipp.

"Timber work is hands on and with that comes a great opportunity for employees to create, replicate and build strong elements to aid even bigger works. It's physical, it's exciting and we are just so honoured to have achieved this award."

Endeavour Foundation's Head of Philanthropy, Sharon Wood, says the Business

Excellence and Impact Awards were created to celebrate industry contributions.

The five Business Excellence and Impact Awards winners were:

- CBC Group Partnership Excellence Award: Kennedy's Timbers (Narangba);
- Glencore Queensland Metals Results That Shine Award: Maryborough Cross Arm Mill (Maryborough);
- Charity Champion Award: Shamrock Civil (Ipswich);
- Advocacy in Action Award: Chloe Haidenhofer (Brisbane);
- McCormack's 4WD Community Leadership Award: Komatsu Australia (Brisbane).

The event also acknowledged Woolworths, Henkel, Payne Print, Clorox, Podravka and Mackay Sugars, who each have supported Endeavour Foundation for more than 25 years, offering employment opportunities for people with disability:

"Across the five awards categories and the 'Enduring Excellence' business acknowledgements, all nominees and winners have made possibilities a reality for people with disability through employment, sponsorship, inclusion and fundraising," said Wood.

"Each person or business is helping to create meaningful jobs for people with disability, and they all deserve congratulations for their contributions."

For more on employing workers with disability, visit endeavour.com.au

New national research projects funded

AFWI's new round of research investments greeted by industry.

THE latest round projects to be funded by Australian Forest and Wood Innovations was announced last week and has been warmly welcomed by industry groups. Each AFWI investment is co-funded by industry and research partners, with the current round worth some \$30 million in co-investment.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Diana Hallam said, "Growing and processing timber here in Australia is delivering better outcomes for Australia's productivity, employment, housing, regional communities and is better for the environment than sourcing it from overseas. Projects like those being supported by AFWI are vital if we are to retain the sovereign capability of growing and processing our own timber for the next century and meet our decarbonisation goals."

The Victorian Forest Products Association (VFPA) noted the announced projects include millions of dollars in investments across Victoria's plantation, wood-fibre and engineered wood manufacturing sectors – supporting jobs, housing supply and greater sovereign manufacturing capability.

VFPA Chief Executive Officer Andrew White said, "Victoria is the home of plantation forestry – and this new wave of AFWI investment will help unlock the next generation of engineered wood products, advanced manufacturing and potential for biofuels development," Mr White said.

"These projects will deliver long-term benefits for housing,



Prefabricated timber housing allows for faster, more efficient construction in offsite facilities that lower risks to workers and to weather exposure. Image: Shutterstock/stockfour

jobs and regional innovation right across the state."

Both groups identified a number of projects of significant benefit to resilience and innovation, including:

- Developing a Sustainable, Long-Term Management Program for Giant Pine Scale (GPS) in Australia and Sustainable Management of Plantation Forest Pests Under Changing Climates. GPS threatens the productivity of Australia's vital softwood industry and treatments for it and other biothreats will be critical to manage disease risks in the plantations that underpin the construction sector.
- Fibre to Fuels: Linking Australia's Sustainable Forestry and Renewable Energy Sectors. This project is designed to link Australia's sustainable forestry sector with the fast-growing renewable energy market. It will utilise what are often waste products and will help the decarbonise the economy and improve a sector already critical in managing climate risks.
- Advanced Manufacturing

Innovation Strategy and Feasibility to Catalyse Large-Scale Prefabricated Dwelling Adoption. Both these projects will build capacity of the construction sector using low-emissions building materials and help build more houses sooner

"Timber is essential to tackling Australia's housing shortage," White said.

"By developing new approaches for advanced engineered wood products and prefabrication, these AFWI projects will help make more sustainable, locally produced timber available for home construction – reducing our reliance on imports and keeping jobs, skills and investment in Victoria."

White said the funding highlights the power of collaboration between industry, researchers and government.

"These projects show what's possible when science, industry expertise and innovation come together – from tackling emerging biosecurity threats to creating the next generation of prefabricated and engineered timber housing.

"AFWI's investment will help transform research into real-world solutions – strengthening regional communities, supporting local manufacturing and ensuring more Australians can build homes with Victorian timber."

According to the recent BDO economic impact study commissioned by Forest & Wood Products Australia, every direct job in Victoria's wood-fibre and timber manufacturing sector supports around 1.7 additional jobs across the wider economy – a figure reflected nationally.

This means investments like these AFWI projects not only have the potential to create direct employment in research, forestry and manufacturing, but will also drive future job creation through transport, trades, and regional service industries.

The AFWI investment program is funded through the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), with co-investment from industry, universities, stakeholders and state agencies. The suite of high-impact projects has been endorsed, subject to final contracting with host institutions.

"The announcement is another important milestone in the delivery of the Albanese Government's \$100 million election commitment to support Australia's forest industries," said Hallam.

"I thank Minister Julie Collins for her continued support of this great Australian industry through this important initiative."

To see the full list of funded projects, click here.

Accoya wood helps fight homelessness

ACCYSYS is best known for its Accoya wood, treated with a proprietary acetylation process that leaves it so durable it carries a 50-year warranty. The company may soon be at least as well known for its philanthropy, having recently announced its Accoya Gives Back program, which will donate up to 10m³ of Accoya wood each year to projects that deliver lasting social and environmental benefits.

Each year, Accoya Gives Back will support projects in Accsys' communities that align with Accsys' values and support its ESG goals and accreditations. In particular, it will focus on projects that promote environmental stewardship, social equity, and community resilience.

The first initiative under the scheme will provide Accoya for the windows of an innovative project tackling homelessness in Scotland. Partnering with long-standing Scottish customer Treecraft Woodwork and charity Social Bite, Accsys is donating Accoya for the windows of sustainable 'nest houses'. The houses offer safe, supportive accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

Built off-site by Ecosystems, the nest houses are designed to be highly durable to ensure long-term use. Accoya's 50-year warranty and low maintenance requirements will help ensure that hundreds of people affected by homelessness will benefit from the houses for



A render of the new nest houses with Accoya windows. Image: supplied

decades to come.

Social Bite began in 2012 with a single coffee shop that both raised funds to tackle local homelessness and dealt with the problem directly, giving work to homeless people and providing food support. Now, the group has a network of coffee shops throughout the UK that have formed the basis of its fundraising program. Ever practical, it also runs a Jobs First program supporting people who have experienced homelessness into employment and Scotland's Housing First program, which has so far housed more than 1333 people.

Social Bite Villages are an evolution of this, with each consisting of 10-15 modern, sustainable houses, as well as a vibrant community hub for communal activities. They provide a safe space and teach the skills for people to transition into permanent accommodation.

Construction on the nest houses is underway, with six new homes in progress at the existing Edinburgh village and 15 more, plus a community hub, planned for Lanarkshire. Beyond temporary shelter, the villages offer tailored support, skills training, and pathways

to employment, helping residents rebuild their lives in a dignified, sustainable environment.

Gillian Edwards, Head of ESG and Communications at Accsys, said, "At Accsys, we are driven by our purpose of Changing Wood to Change the World. With Accoya

Gives Back, we're proud to use our products to make a real difference in people's lives, starting with homes that give hope and security to those affected by homelessness."

"As a Scottish joinery business, Treecraft is proud to have played a part in this project," said Alvin Wood, Managing Director at Treecraft. "Using Accoya wood allowed the team to deliver durable, sustainable windows that will serve residents for decades to come and help rebuild lives."

Josh Littlejohn, co-founder of Social Bite added, "Our vision has always been to create innovative solutions to homelessness. Our village projects provide safe, supportive communities that give people experiencing homelessness the best chance to rebuild their lives.

"The support of partners like Accsys and Treecraft enables us to realise tangible benefits for people who are vulnerable. These new village projects not only offer sustainable housing but also build confidence, skills, and a sense of belonging, creating real pathways out of homelessness."

For more on Social Bite villages, click here.



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HEAD OFFICE

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd
PO Box 3001
Maraylya NSW 2765

PUBLISHER

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd

EDITORS

Donyale Harrison
Jess Hockridge
Nicky Ainley
editors@timberandforestryenews.com

ADVERTISING

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

ACCOUNTS

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

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CONTACTS

Media releases and editorial:

Donyale Harrison // Jessica Hockridge // Nicky Ainley

e: editors@timberandforestryenews.com

Display ad bookings:

Campbell McInnes // e: campbellm@timberandforestryenews.com

Accounts:

Chris Parker // e: cparker@ttnews.com.au

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