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COVER STORY P3



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Thank you, Tony

FWPA acknowledges the contribution of Deputy Chair Professor Tony Arnel as his term concludes.

FOREST & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) is celebrating the outstanding contribution of Professor Tony Arnel, who completed his final term as Deputy Chair last week, after serving on the FWPA Board since October 2016.

For over nine years, Arnel has brought deep expertise in sustainable construction, policy, and industry transformation. As both a leader and a guide, his governance and insight have helped steer FWPA's work to strengthen codes and standards, advance Australia's mass-timber capability, and improve public understanding of timber's climate credentials.

Arnel is widely regarded as a pioneer in sustainable architecture and the built environment. He is a founding director and former Chair of the Green Building Council of Australia (2007–2012) and a former Chair of the World Green Building Council (2008–2011). His distinguished career has included senior

roles such as Victorian Building Commissioner and Plumbing Industry Commissioner, and global director of sustainability at Norman, Disney & Young. He is currently a Professor at Deakin University.

FWPA Chair Craig Taylor said Arnel's contribution has been significant. "Over the last nine years Tony has shared his knowledge and perspective with care and clarity. He is committed to sustainability and carried that commitment to the FWPA Board table, and his governance and financial skills provided stability and guidance to the board and the company," Taylor said.

"His ability to provide input from a perspective outside the mainstream forest and wood products industry provided important balance to the FWPA board.



Professor Arnel has productively shared his experience in the built environment with the FWPA board. Image: courtesy Tony Arnel

"Tony's experience in the built environment has been a major factor in FWPA's work and success in this important area, and his retirement leaves a skills gap on the board

makeup which, although difficult, must be filled."

FWPA CEO Andrew Leighton acknowledged Arnel's long-term commitment to evidence-based progress. "Tony has championed the role of timber in lowering construction emissions and has consistently elevated the importance

of research and practical solutions," Leighton said. "We are grateful for his service and the significant impact he has made."

Reflecting on his time with FWPA, Arnel said: "FWPA is an organisation that takes its responsibility to industry seriously. It has been a privilege to contribute to work that is grounded in evidence and directed at strengthening Australia's future timber capability."

“TONY HAS CHAMPIONED THE ROLE OF TIMBER IN LOWERING CONSTRUCTION EMISSIONS

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One step to trainee success

NTHA's training programs take the stress out of traineeships and apprenticeships for employers and trainees.

By **DONYALE HARRISON**

AUSTRALIA'S workplaces are hungry for skilled staff, but supply isn't keeping up with demand – especially in industries like timber and hardware. While businesses can choose to find and train apprentices on their own, many are turning to Group Training Organisations (GTOs) like the National Timber and Hardware Association (NTHA) to simplify the process.

"A lot of businesses in the timber sector are small or medium-sized," says Melissa Clark, General Manager of GTO and RTO services at NTHA. "They often see the barriers to hiring a trainee and wonder if the benefits are worth the effort. That's where we come in – NTHA takes on the difficult parts of managing trainees and apprentices, making the process far more accessible for those companies."

We spoke with Melissa about how GTOs operate, how NTHA supports both trainees

“WE MANAGE PAYROLL AND TAXES, COVER LEAVE, SUPER AND OTHER ENTITLEMENTS, ALL THE PAPERWORK...”



Few students know that many hands-on timber jobs are now performed entirely or mostly indoors.
All photos: supplied

bring decades of experience in the sector, which means we can give focused advice when it comes to finding the best registered training organisation (RTO) and the best host employer fit for our trainees."

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

NTHA's specialist recruiter goes out to schools and community groups looking for would-be trainees and apprentices. "Some of them have

already been working in wood at school, while for others it's the first time they're hearing about jobs like frame and truss manufacture, wood machining or timber systems design," says Melissa.

"We'll look at anyone with an interest in working with their hands, who wants a career path and is reliable. We just make sure they're prepared to put in the hard yards, because we can train the skills, but we can't train the behaviour."

NTHA then enters into a contract with them directly and effectively hires them out to the host companies. As the legal employer, NTHA manages payroll and taxes, covers leave, super and other entitlements, deals with WHS and workers compensation and, if a placement isn't



Many young people don't know about jobs in frame and truss fabrication. Matt Hojem is building a timber career as an NTHA trainee.

and host employers, and also two inspiring stories of former apprentices who have built successful careers in the timber industry.

"The feedback we get says there are three main reasons employers use a GTO like NTHA," Melissa says. "They're the same for both traineeships and apprenticeships, even though there are differences between the two.

"The first is we handle the whole recruitment and onboarding process; the second is we're the legal employer of the trainee – so the host company can offload most of the responsibility and risk onto us; and the third is that an organisation like NTHA brings expertise to the relationship in terms of mentoring and support.

"In our case, we also

Cont P 4

From P 3

working out, can intervene to solve the problems or, if needed, find a new trainee and a new host.

While this service comes with a cost, it is less in both monetary terms and in added time than what taking on a trainee or apprentice directly would be for the host company.

"We know all the awards, all the requirements, how to fill out all the forms, so we can do all that admin side far more efficiently," says Melissa. "I've had prospective host employers come to me after having had a go at employing trainees and apprentices directly and they say: 'I haven't got time for all that; we've got a business to run!'"

With decades of experience (NTHA was formerly known as TABMA), the organisation is deeply connected across the sector, unlike other GTOs.



Trainees are an important investment for Williams Group Australia, who find many of their future employees and leaders in the programs.

It's not just the advantage of a familiar name: the team is also familiar with the entirety of the timber industry, so when talking with prospective candidates, they can answer all their questions on different types of jobs, say who'd be best suited to an apprenticeship or traineeship, and help to find

the best training organisation, taking into account their work, location and what they need to meet their requirements.

Melissa says, "Young people think carpentry and joinery when you say timber, but they don't know there's a huge prefab and F&T sector where you're working indoors.

"We tell them about computer jobs designing the frames and trusses for a house, and they don't even know that job exists, let alone that you can be on \$100,000 five years after you've qualified if you're good, because it's a skill shortage, and that some jobs can be done remotely."

One major advantage of a GTO becomes apparent when problems arise with trainees or apprentices. NTHA has seen placements fail for reasons as basic as an apprentice losing access to their car, while in some cases the match simply isn't a good fit.

"I've found that 95% of the time in those cases, host employers will say 'that's okay, we want someone else.' And we can place another trainee

with them," says Melissa.

Every trainee and apprentice comes with a dedicated NTHA field officer who works with both them and the host company. They are an integral part of the placement's success.

"That intermediary position means that both parties can trust the field officer has their best interests at heart," Melissa says. "A trainee might have a question they think is too silly for their supervisor, like how to fill out a timesheet, but they're happy to ask the field officer to help. Similarly, the employer might ask the field officer – in their mentor role – to be the one to say, 'so a 7am start means boots on, ready to work, not just rocking up at site.'"

Feedback flows in both directions and the field officers are also in touch with the RTO to keep tabs on progress. In some cases, the work placement is going so well the host company would like to finish an apprenticeship early and offer a job. Thanks to these close relationships, NTHA can reach out to the RTO and see if they can also get the theory side signed off – a task much harder to manage without a GTO.

“EVERY TRAINEE AND APPRENTICE COMES WITH A DEDICATED NTHA FIELD OFFICER

Australian Forest Products Association

AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

From P 4

TRAINEE SUCCESS STORY 1

Aiman Merchant, now the successful and respected Branch Manager of Dahlsens in Kirrawee, NSW, began her remarkable career in the timber industry through an NTHA apprenticeship in Timber Retail.

"When I came across the course, I was a single parent looking for a job," Aiman recalls. "I'd always wanted to be part of the timber industry – my father ran a similar business back in India. I knew it was something I could handle and thrive in."

Despite finishing her two-year course in just 13 months, Aiman missed out on the first role she

applied for, before she met a TABMA/NTHA specialist who went to bat for her.

"He asked me if I was okay working alongside 17-year-old male apprentices," she laughs. "I said, absolutely – I was just grateful for the opportunity."

That turned into a hands-on, full-spectrum role where she immersed herself in counter sales, special orders, restocking, and learning the full range of hardware operations. Her versatility soon saw her move into the plumbing section, working across roofing, flashings, and fittings.

In 2021, she took a major step by joining Dahlsens and quickly rose through the ranks. Her apprenticeship taught her vital skills and



Aiman Merchant began her career as an apprentice and is now leading one of Dahlsens' key branches.

knowledge, especially about Australian industry standards and timber regulations.

"Every country has different laws. Learning about timber accreditation, species, production methods, all of that fascinated me. But one of the most valuable things I learned was how

to truly interact with customers," Aiman says.

In a male-dominated industry, Aiman has her share of challenges: "You do get customers who look right through you, questioning your knowledge just because you're a woman. But I've got a beautiful team behind me who supports and respects me."

Aiman now works to uplift other workers, particularly women, mentoring and nurturing new talent. "Our job is not just about selling – customers expect real specialist advice," she says. "I want to teach the right way from the ground up because this industry needs people with deep knowledge and hands-on experience."

APPRENTICE OR TRAINEE?

One of the first decisions made in the process is whether a traineeship or apprenticeship is most appropriate. The length or term is the major difference, which has a notable impact. As Melissa says, young people who live at home find it much easier to be on a reduced rate for the four-year

apprenticeship, while 'mature age' candidates – anyone over 21 – are more likely to take up a two-year traineeship, unless they are looking for a position with a mandated apprenticeship.

"It's all certificates, but there is usually more flexibility in terms of being able to mix up some courses in a traineeship, while the course of study for an apprenticeship is often fixed," Melissa adds.

NTHA also runs an RTO – FITEC Australia Pty Ltd, trading as NTHA Training – which delivers nationally recognised vocational qualifications across all sectors of the forest and timber industry.

"Our training organisation is focused on quality training outcomes that lead to career pathways for our learners and a skilled and capable workforce for our customers

across Australia," says Melissa.

"Because we know what timber businesses need, we know how important it is to be adaptable. Say we have someone who is working mostly in a warehouse, but the host employer runs a sawmill on the side. We might be able to add some sawmilling units to their

Cont P 6

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From P 5

certificate in warehousing operations, adding another string to their bow."

NTHA is also able to show from experience the worth of the skills trainees and apprentices will learn. "We've had people succeed in the timber industry and then go out and take on management roles in other fields, because the skills they learn are so transferable," says Melissa. "Timber jobs are effectively all customer-facing, and that customer service experience is invaluable in the job market."

WHY GO WITH A GTO?

Retention rates for companies that take on trainees and apprentices through a GTO are roughly 19% higher than those that employ directly, and Melissa believes that the positive impact of field officer mentoring is a key reason for this.

She says, "The field officer is that person that can be there for them, that can provide them with advice, provide them with information, and improve their confidence as well, which is really important. And every boost to retention is a boost to productivity for the host business."

NTHA has identified three main reasons behind trainees and apprentices who do not complete their study. The first is that the reality of living on a low training pay is harder than their expectations. "I've raised that with the government as a systemic problem we should be trying to address," Melissa says.

The second is simple change of mind. NTHA has had success moving trainees and apprentices from, say, carpentry to timber systems design, but some young people realise they want a

TRAINEE SUCCESS STORY 2:

A TABMA traineeship gave Stephen Fife the foundation for his successful sales career.

"I started my traineeship back in 1988/89 after I had just finished school and decided to take up a Timber & Building materials/retail traineeship with TABMA. Back in those days I was in one of the first classes that TABMA ever had."

The program gave Stephen hands-on experience across multiple areas of the timber and building materials business, from grading and estimating to sales.

"We would spend most of our time working in the business we were in, then come down to Sydney once a month and do the theory side of things," he says.

Stephen finished top of his



Stephen Fife's successful career has its foundations in a timber traineeship with NTHA's predecessor TABMA.

class and was soon offered a full-time job based on TABMA's recommendation.

For the next 14 years he had a successful career in timber sales, moving into leadership roles, before taking a 20-year detour from the timber industry.

"I used my skills to run a few businesses of my own across multiple sites. After I sold them, I spent some time

finance broking and then I got back into the timber industry with Meyer Timber, and I have loved every minute ever since," Stephen says.

Now branch manager at Big River's Albion Park site, Stephen leads a team of over 30 people and contributes to the growth of the business across the region. He is a strong advocate for investing in trainees and sees it as essential to the future of the industry.

"If you invest in your training, it pays off. And it not only pays off for the individuals, it pays off for the industry as well," he says.

"We have to invest in our staff by training and getting people on who are interested in having lifelong careers, not changing every couple of years. NTHA is a conduit that makes that happen."



1/ Blake Clayton got his start as an NTHA apprentice at Gold Coast Doorland, where he was an Apprentice of the Year finalist in 2018.



2/ Zac Butler completed a Certificate III in Timber Systems Design in just 12 months with the support of NTHA after a career change and was a finalist in this year's NSW Training Awards.

wholly different career.

Finally, mental health issue can arise. "We have a lot of programs to help accommodate those issues, from well-trained field officers to the Employee Assistance Program," says Melissa. "In some cases, we can also

work with their job providers to get them into counselling. But while some of those kids thrive in the workplace, others don't work out."

As much as is possible, NTHA will support young people through the process, whether changing placements

or specialties. Melissa says: "We all want them to succeed. Our workforce is ageing, and we need trainees and apprentices to guarantee our future."

"Ultimately, we want them working in the sector, and we want the host businesses to get the greatest benefit of taking on trainees and apprentices with the least cost. When we see someone come on board and find their feet in year one, then qualify in year two or four and go on to ultimately move into leadership roles – that's why we do what we do."

To learn more, visit www.ntha.com.au/For-the-Employer/group-training/

On the cover: The next generation of timber workers is being delivered through trainees and apprentices supported by NTHA as both a GTO and RTO
Image: supplied

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.* For full details of keynote addresss and speaker topics, visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2026melbourne/>

[co.nz/2026melbourne/](https://danaevents.co.nz/2026melbourne/) programme

25: Conference Field Trip – Melbourne.

Follows on from the 'Global Natural Capital Investment Conference' in Melbourne. Includes visits to Eucalyptus and Pine Nursery, Pine Sawmill Log Yard/mill, Pine Plantation/ Harvesting, Eucalyptus Plantation/Harvesting, Mature Redwood Plantation, Midway Wood chipping and Export Operation followed by dinner @ 3030 Restaurant - Werribee South. For more information, visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2026melbourne/fieldtrip>

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.

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Native forests used as bargaining chip

The government is courting the Greens in a bid to pass environment laws.

FEDERAL Environment Minister Murray Watt has spent months horse trading to get Labor's overhaul of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act through before the end of the year. At the time of writing, debate is ongoing, with Parliament set to rise at the end of the day this newsletter goes out.

Watt needs an agreement with either the Greens or the Coalition, and with the Coalition looking to strip back powers central to the proposed legislation, discussions are looking distinctly more lawn-coloured.

However, the Greens have come with their own list of demands. These include an end to native timber forestry, which Minister Watt has left very much on the table.

The ABC reported on Sunday that the government is willing to trade away regional forestry agreements' (RFA's) exemptions from the EPBC legislation within three years. The story, by David Speers, said "Under the new amendment, RFAs would be



1/ FTMA CEO Kersten Gentle has spent years promoting the carbon benefits of timber in construction: an argument ignored by the Greens in their demands.
2/ Minister Murray Watt is busy making deals to get the reforms through this year. Images: supplied



required to meet National Environmental Standards 'over a transition period of three years', according to the government spokesperson, 'with the environment minister able to sunset the exemption after that time if they fail to do so.' (Click here for the full story.)

At worst, this could lead to the end of native timber harvesting in states such as NSW, Queensland and Tasmania, while at best it will leave the sector even more exposed to the environmental

lawfare that has cost it millions.

The potential shift has not been welcomed by timber and related industry leaders. FTMA's CEO Kersten Gentle shared her response on LinkedIn, writing: "I'm sure I've been at events where the Prime Minister confirmed his commitment to native forestry. Similar when Minister Watt looked after forestry portfolio.

"Outrageous decision, which once again highlights the lack of care given to

Australian rural jobs.

"Weak political decision done through grubby deals by inner city greens."

In a doorstep presser in Brisbane on Sunday, Minister Watt said, "I've made very clear to the Greens that we won't be ending native forestry altogether and we won't be ending Regional Forestry Agreements but we are prepared to adopt that recommendation from Graeme Samuel which would see the national environment standards applied to regional forestry agreements in the same way that they do to mining, to housing development and every other industry."

Once upon a time, that might have carried some reassurance. But in the wake of Watt's abandonment of the positions he espoused while in his old Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry role, and the NSW ALP Government's betrayal of native forestry, it's hard to have any confidence our industry won't once more be sacrificed as a pawn on a wider political chessboard.

FWPA reports on a positive year of growth and collaboration

FOREST & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) last week published its 2024/25 annual report, showcasing a year of progress, innovation and strong partnerships across Australia's forest and wood products sector.

Released ahead of the 2025 Annual General Meeting on 19 November, the report highlighted FWPA's continued commitment

to driving a sustainable, competitive, and future-focused industry through research, development and engagement.

Collaboration was a defining theme of the 2024/25 financial year. The Annual Report highlighted the many ways FWPA has worked with industry, government, and research partners to deliver tangible outcomes.

As a full value-chain industry services company, FWPA is uniquely positioned to facilitate collaboration across the sector for shared benefit.

Through formal advisory committees, working groups, and direct engagement with members, FWPA ensures that industry priorities are reflected in research and development, as well as marketing services. This collaborative approach

underpins the improvement in member-perceived value for money and will remain central to FWPA's work in the years ahead.

Key highlights from the past financial year include:

- Signing of a new 10-year Statutory Funding Agreement with the

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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, securing a decade of certainty for industry-backed and government-supported RD&E investment.

- +6% increase in member perceived value for money of FWPA membership - a significant increase on last year.
- \$8.75 million approved for seven new grower research projects guided by the Growers' Research Advisory Committee.
- Establishment of the Softwood Manufacturers Advisory Committee to represent processor interests and guide RD&E investment priorities.
- Two new industry standards published to increase the breadth of applications for timber in the built environment, with a focus on grading recycled timber for visual and structural applications.
- 96 million impressions of The Ultimate Renewable consumer campaign – an 80% increase on the previous year. This is the first year of the always-on multi-channel campaign, which extracts better value from our marketing spend through more specific targeting of influential consumer segments.
- Delivered a modest financial surplus reflecting prudent management of member levy funds and other revenue sources.
- Launched the enhanced FWPA Data Dashboard, including aggregated data from 122 industry contributors. The new platform brings together key industry and market data in one place to assist strategic investment decision-making.



The annual report highlights the importance of industry engagement and collaboration. Image: courtesy FWPA

FWPA chair, Craig Taylor wrote: "FWPA continues to focus on identifying and supporting research that delivers clear benefits to industry. Strengthening the connection between research activity and on-the-ground outcomes remains a key priority, with an emphasis

on collaboration, practical application and alignment with the sector's evolving needs."

Our funding partnership with the Commonwealth Government and their ongoing support through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, along with levy and voluntary contributions from the forest and wood products industry, has enabled the delivery of an expanding program of activities and industry services in a challenging economic environment."

FWPA CEO, Andrew Leighton noted: "The progress made in 2024/25 across engagement, program delivery and national collaboration reflects our commitment to supporting a stronger, more-resilient forest and wood products sector."

[Click here to download the report.](#)

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Mill closures

Two Victorian mills lost for very different reasons.

TWO Gippsland towns are mourning the loss of their sawmills this week, for very different reasons.

Reid Brothers, a fourth-generation family firm at Yarra Junction, saw the final sale of its machinery and equipment earlier this month; another victim of the Victorian Government's decision to close the hardwood timber industry.

Local TFTU delegate Greg Shahin mourned the loss on Facebook, noting the mill had been in continuous operation since 1918 and he had personally known three generations of the Reid family with his own son completing his apprenticeship at the mill.

Nearby, the news of AKD's Yarram Sawmill closure has also hit hard. The decision impacts 73 workers and comes as a result of tightening economic circumstances. The mill produced lower-grade fibre products for landscaping and pallet and packaging manufacture.

In a media release, AKD CEO Shane Vicary said that following an organisational review, the company determined that the current market conditions and near-term forecast demand alongside increasing operating costs, meant Yarram's operations had become unsustainable.

"This has been an extremely difficult decision to arrive at – but a necessary one to take – when we consider all the external factors at play and prioritise what's best for AKD's long-term future," he said.

"To remain a sustainable and competitive Australian business in this sector, we are adapting to market conditions, simplifying our



1/ Reid Bros prior to the auction that sold off all the remaining equipment and machinery. Image: courtesy TFTU/Facebook

2/ AKD's Yarram Sawmill. Image: courtesy Darren Chester MP/Facebook

operations and strengthening the core business at our four major sawmilling sites – which continue to produce the full suite of structural softwood products."

AKD has made sure all entitlements are met, along

with an Employee Assistance Program and potential redeployment options at other AKD sites for those who can relocate.

"Having operated in regional communities for 70 years, the significance of our departure from Yarram is not lost on us," Vicary said. "We understand how important our operations have been to the fabric of this region and are committed to working with local stakeholders in Gippsland to reduce the impact of the closure where reasonably possible.

"We're grateful to each and every individual at the site for their hard work, care and dedication through their time with AKD."

Gippsland MP Darren Chester sympathised online, saying: "The closure of the AKD Yarram Sawmill is no reflection on the workers or the people of Yarram who deserve additional government support to help the community recover from this significant social and economic shock."

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Guulabaa snags another award

CONGRATULATIONS to Guulabaa – Place of Koala, which last week took home the Editor's Choice Award at the Architecture & Design 2025 Sustainability Awards.

Selected by the editorial team at Architecture & Design from across all shortlisted entries, the Editor's Choice Award recognises projects that demonstrate outstanding community contribution, design leadership, and authentic engagement with

“PRAISED FOR ITS COLLABORATION-FIRST DEVELOPMENT MODEL



1/ **Forestry managers, Traditional Owners and koala specialists have come together to create a space where people can learn about and protect koalas while having fun.**



2/ **The Hub at Guulabaa, a series of architecturally designed decks that bring visitors closer to the trees.** All images: FCNSW

local partners.

Guulabaa was praised for its collaboration-first development model, its culturally grounded landscape management, and its seamless integration of conservation and community education. A partnership between Forestry Corporation of NSW, Traditional Owners,

koala and conservation specialists, and recreational businesses, the site welcomes all ages and activity levels (see Enews #854 and #822 for more on the project).

The award is the latest in a series of wins for Guulabaa, including:

- Winner, ULI Asia Pacific

Awards for Excellence

- Winner, Australian Good Design Award – Built Environment
- Shortlisted, World Architecture Festival (WAF) 2025 – Completed Buildings: Civic and Community
- Shortlisted, Australian Timber Design Awards

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Forest photo winners announced

The two student winners of the 2025 Forest Photo Competition highlight regional beauty.

ONEFORTYONE'S 2025 Forest Photo Competition marks the fifth iteration of this popular competition that encourages young people to get out and look at the natural world.

This year's competition attracted more than 100 entries from students across the Limestone Coast and Western Victoria. Launched in August to mark National Forestry Day, the competition is designed to encourage students to spend time in the forest, exploring and sharing their stories of connection to our iconic landscape.

OneFortyOne executive general manager Australia, Cameron MacDonald, said the entries were outstanding again this year. "Students shared their unique perspectives – from the excitement of spotting kangaroos and lizards to the thrill of finding a [giant] pinecone," McDonald said.

"These stories remind us why our forests matter and why caring for them today is so important for future generations."

“THESE STORIES REMIND US WHY OUR FORESTS MATTER”



1/ Primary School winner Trick Gosden's photo celebrates the beauty of the pine forest.

2/ Brolgas nesting near the family farm were the subject for Secondary School winner Levi Staude. Images: courtesy OneFortyOne

adventure every time. I look for mushrooms and other interesting things on the ground. Once I even found a pinecone as big as my head!"

Trick's winning photo and words captured the magic of discovery in the pine forest, describing it as a place full of surprises and adventure. The judging panel said that Secondary School winner Levi Staude, who is in Year 8, submitted an entry that reflected his connection to the landscape, sharing his excitement spotting wildlife and seeing the forest at work.

"I like looking for animals in the forests and swamps," Staude said. "We had brolgas nest in a swamp near our

farm this year for the first time in two years as last year was too dry for them. I see lots of kangaroos with joeys but it's uncommon to see wallaby joeys. It's been a good year for the emus as we have seen three lots of chicks this year so far in the forests near our farm. Watching the harvesters work and listening to the trees crash as they get cut down is

always great. The trees don't look heavy while they are standing but make the ground thud when they hit the deck."

The winning photos will be featured on OneFortyOne's social media channels and website, and a selection of entries will be displayed at exhibitions across the region.



The judges faced a difficult task selecting a Primary School winner and a Secondary School winner, but two were finally found, with each young photographer explaining the choices behind their shots.

Primary School winner Trick Gosden is in Year 3 and said: "I like the pine forest because it is right in

my backyard. It is fun and full of surprises. The forest gives us life and there are lots of animals that live there, and if you are really quiet you might see kangaroos or lizards. Sometimes its hard to spot them, but that makes it exciting.

"I like to explore and use my imagination, because the forest feels like an

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Linking industry and academia

The WoodSolutions Industry Academia Workshop aims to build future industry capability.

LAST week, WoodSolutions hosted its annual Industry Academia Workshop, a two-day forum designed to strengthen the connection between research, education and the practical needs of the wood products sector.

The workshop was hosted by the Forestry Centre of Excellence (FCoE) and the University of South Australia, providing an ideal setting to explore the future of timber in the Australian built environment and its potential to drive innovation, sustainability, and growth across the sector.

Jeff Morrell from Forestry Centre of Excellence (FCoE) and Rameez Rameezdeen from University of South Australia welcomed participants, and the University of Tasmania's Industry Associate Professor in Timber Design, Jon Shanks, guided the program, leading important discussions.

Run by Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA)'s WoodSolutions program, the event provided an opportunity for researchers, lecturers, industry professionals and technical experts to come together to share knowledge, test ideas and explore solutions that support the future capability of the sector.

A core focus of the workshop was guiding and supporting research to ensure it addresses the practical challenges and emerging opportunities facing the timber and construction sectors. PhD candidates and early-career



1/ Industry leaders and academics gathered for the workshop, exchanging expertise and sparking innovation.



2/ Associate Professor Jon Shanks leading a discussion. All images: courtesy WoodSolutions

academics engaged directly with industry professionals working across forestry, manufacturing, design, construction and education.

Discussions explored fibre availability, market demand and how timber can be used responsibly across the supply chain. Sessions focused on designing durable and sustainable homes considered how the sector responds to performance requirements while meeting growing interest in low-carbon construction.

Participants also examined how industry and education providers can work together to build capacity, improve career pathways and support future skills. This includes keeping timber and related disciplines

visible in STEM curricula and ensuring students understand the role of timber in modern construction.

SHARING EXPERTISE

The day commenced with an excellent field tour led by ForestrySA, taking participants from UniSA City West to Mount Crawford Forest. The tour included a visit to the Forest Information Centre and inspections of key plantation and harvesting sites at Watts Gully and Charcoal Pits.

ForestrySA specialists provided practical insights into plantation establishment, harvesting operations and fibre supply – offering participants a valuable opportunity to deepen their understanding of the processes behind sustainable

fibre production.

Over the two days, the program showcased collaborative projects and highlighted innovation taking place across the built environment, research programs and manufacturing. Industry presenters shared case studies that demonstrate new approaches, emerging technologies and opportunities to apply research to real-world challenges.

A key theme of this year's workshop was exploring how timber can help tackle Australia's housing shortage. The sessions sparked important conversations about how the construction sector can harness timber to deliver faster, more sustainable, and cost-effective housing solutions, highlighting opportunities for real impact across the industry.

The annual workshop reinforces the importance of collaboration in driving sector growth. By strengthening connections between academia and industry, WoodSolutions is supporting research translation, innovation and the practical application of knowledge across Australia's forest and wood products value chain.



3/ Forestry SA specialists discussed timber supply and plantation establishment during the field tour.



4/ Harvesting in Mount Crawford Forest.

Leadership shake ups for Libs and Nats

WHILE it's been years since we rolled a Prime Minister, Opposition party leaders have apparently become fair game. Over the past nine days, the heads of both Coalition parties in NSW have changed, along with the Victorian Libs swapping leaders again.

Good news for the timber sector is the election of Coffs Harbour MP Gurmesh Singh as leader of the NSW Nationals after the resignation of Dugald Saunders for personal reasons.

An ex-macadamia and blueberry farmer, Singh has fought hard against the maximalist Great Koala National Park imposed on the Mid-north Coast's timber industry and lobbied for workers and impacted businesses to be fairly



1/ **Gurmesh Singh is the new NSW National Leader.**



2/ **Kellie Sloane has taken up the NSW Liberal Party leadership.**



3/ **Jess Wilson has won the Victorian Liberal Leadership.** All images: supplied

compensated for their losses. He's shown a genuine commitment to listening, as well as a good understanding of forestry issues and a willingness to work hard.

Federal Member for Page Kevin Hogan said Mr Singh is a "strong voice for regional NSW and a tireless advocate for his community.

"His election as leader is well deserved recognition of

his hard work, integrity and commitment," he said.

Tamworth MP Kevin Anderson is the new Deputy Leader.

The NSW Liberal Party has seen a peaceful transition of power from Mark Speakman to MP Kellie Sloane, Member for Vaucluse and shadow health minister. Sloane is a former journalist who grew up in South Australia and worked in several

TV roles at the Nine Network before moving into NGO work and then politics.

Natalie Ward, MLC, stays on as Deputy.

Victoria has its second new Liberal leader in a year after

Jess Wilson,

Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly for Kew won a spill. A career politician in her first term, this was her second tilt at the leadership after losing in the first round of voting in the post-Christmas spill that installed her predecessor, Brad Battin, late last year.

Sam Groth retains the Deputy role.



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Timber building key component at COP30

IN heartening news, the importance of timber framing and other wood products in construction was a significant discussion point at the recent COP30.

Forestry's power to capture carbon and encourage sustainability seems to be a message that is finally getting through, with several initiatives focused on timber construction and the responsible forestry that will support it.

One of the key events was the launch of the Building for Forests Acceleration Plan, with the Principles for Responsible Timber Construction officially embedded in the plan to promote forest-positive and low-carbon building.

The official launch took place during the COP30



The launch of the Building for Forests & People: Delivering Resilient Building Solutions plan at COP30. . All images: courtesy Built by Nature

Presidency Climate Action Agenda event "Building for Forests & People: Delivering Resilient Building Solutions", convened by GlobalABC, SW4SW, the Forest & Climate Leaders' Partnership (FCLP), Built by Nature, and other partners. The presented Acceleration Plan, full

title Building for Forests: Accelerating Wood-Based Construction for Climate, Forests and Livelihoods sets out a clear pathway to scale up sustainable wood-based building as a solution for climate mitigation, affordable housing, and forest conservation.

Its goals include engaging 30 countries in sustainable wood housing by 2028, delivering innovative finance products for smallholders and SMEs, and aligning timber construction with national climate and forest strategies. National governments already endorsing this approach include Canada, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, Luxembourg, Spain, Brazil, and New Zealand.

The government of Brazil formally endorsed the Principles at the event, a move that underscored accelerating global momentum for timber-based climate solutions.

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From P 16

As the buildings sector accounts for nearly 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions, substituting carbon-intensive materials with renewable, carbon-storing alternatives like responsibly sourced timber offers a triple win: reducing emissions, fostering forest restoration and enabling resilient housing for billions who lack adequate shelter.

Paul King, CEO Built by Nature, said: "The Principles for Responsible Timber Construction are designed to ensure that timber construction delivers real climate benefits while protecting forests and supporting livelihoods. Seeing them embedded in this COP30 Acceleration Plan and endorsed by Brazil is a huge step forward in making responsible timber construction a global norm."

Over the course of COP30, Italy and Finland also acknowledged the Principles, possibly ahead of their endorsement.

A key tool in spreading the message of the Principles will be a new documentary, *Our Future: Built by Nature*, which is hosted by Kevin McCloud and features Sir David Attenborough.

As part of the documentary, the six winning projects from the recent Built By Nature Prize (see *Enews* Issues 870-873 for shortlisted projects and winners) are used as illustrations of how the theory of sustainable



1 & 2/ The plan is being promoted by a documentary that showcases what is possible with sustainable timber building.

timber construction can be implemented.

The documentary follows each winning project and the value chains behind them, revealing how transformation is possible in a sector responsible for nearly 40% of global emissions.

To see the trailer for the documentary, click here.

Elsewhere at COP, Thorsten Arndt, Head of Advocacy at PEFC International, moderated a fishbowl discussion at the Forest Pavilion, where he framed wood construction as a bridge between cities and forests.

"If we use wood to build cities, then cities will help us build forests," he said. He noted that responsibly

sourced timber can send a demand signal that supports restoration, innovation in processing, and more diversified forest value chains.

Thais Linhares Juvenal from FAO presented the Acceleration Plan at the event, outlining its structure across four shifts – paradigm, technology, finance and policy – with targets including investment in engineered wood technologies, curriculum reform in technical institutions, forest

production through planted forests and agroforestry, and policy reforms that create fair competition for sustainable materials. The message centred on implementation capacity rather than ambition alone.

Participants spoke candidly about the obstacles that slow uptake. In many countries, wood remains associated either with poverty or luxury, rarely with mainstream housing.

Others pointed to tax regimes that favour concrete, limited professional training, and the challenge of building trust where large-scale timber construction is still unfamiliar.

A recurring theme emerged: markets scale when buildings exist. Demonstration projects, procurement rules and architectural visibility matter as much as national strategies.

Click here to read more about the PEFC discussion.



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