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COVER STORY P 4

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SAFPA pre-election policy release

THIS week South Australian Forest Products Association (SAFPA) released its 2026 State Election Policy Platform in the lead up to the 2026 South Australian state elections that are scheduled for Saturday March 21. The policy platform is focused on protecting South Australia's sovereign timber capability.

SAFPA shared in a statement that "the Platform sets out a long-term vision to grow regional jobs, strengthen sovereign capability, and secure South Australia's timber future.

"Immediate action is needed. Surging imports and the substitution of steel framing are placing increasing pressure on our forest and timber industries, and on domestic manufacturing," SAFPA concluded.

There is concern that South Australia's sovereign capability is slowly eroding and COVID highlighted some serious concerns about future ability to ensure quality, sustainable timber availability as exports can dry up very quickly.

The platform sets out clearly the issues facing South Australia forestry sector along with explanations and proposed solutions. These cover policy areas from the domestic manufacturing, resource availability, productivity, carbon and environment, fire, water and labour.

Tammy Auld, chair of SAFPA



SAFPA is passionate about seeing South Australia thrive through all the benefits of forestry, including the over 21,000 direct and indirect jobs. Image: Shutterstock

passionately shared, "For 150 years, our industry has stood at the heart of this State's prosperity. From the Green Triangle to the Mount Lofty Ranges to the Bundaleer, the forest industries have powered regional economies, strengthened our manufacturing base, and provided the renewable, carbon-storing timber that has built our homes and supported our way of life.

"Forestry is, by nature, a long-term industry. A seedling planted today will stand through ten federal elections and eight state elections before it's harvested. The decisions made by governments today will shape not just the next term, but the next generation of jobs, housing, and carbon outcomes. That's why policy certainty, bipartisan support, and a shared vision are so critical.

"The forest and timber industries don't ask for protection – we ask for partnership, for certainty, and for recognition of the vital role we play in South Australia's sovereign capability. With continued support, we can deliver jobs, investment and carbon solutions for generations to come," she said.

The platform created by SAFPA seeks to secure fibre supplies, back domestic timber manufacturing and support innovation in regional South Australia.

SAFPA explains, "South Australians want secure supply chains, sovereign capability, and continued investment in local manufacturing. The forest and timber industries deliver all three."

SAFPA wants to see governments treat timber as a capability not a commodity, to be self-sufficient in their timber resources and to use the timber to build the future. The platform urges that now is the time to act to secure South Australia's future, sovereign capability, jobs, regional communities and housing for generations.

For more information view the Policy Platform on SAFPA's website: www.safpa.com.au/election

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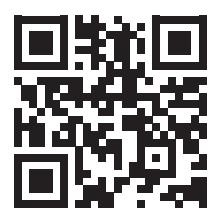


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Sustainable forestry delivers better carbon and environmental outcomes

AFPA has welcomed new evidence showing forest reservation methods fail to deliver greater carbon mitigation outcomes compared with sustainable and responsible active management of Australian forests.

The Forest Carbon Balance Evidence Review, published by Forestry Australia, highlighted that sustainable, well-managed forests play a vital role in carbon sequestration, emissions reduction, and delivering climate resilience in Australia. The review also found actively managed and growing forests absorb carbon at higher rates.

AFPA Chief Executive Officer Diana Hallam said this ground-breaking review once again demonstrated that the growing weight of science underscores the importance of the forestry sector in delivering sustainable forest management and helping to meet Australia's emissions reduction targets.



Growing trees absorb more carbon as they photosynthesise at a higher rate than mature trees. Just one of the reasons why properly and actively managed forests are better for the environment. Image: Shutterstock

"We welcome this important contribution from the scientists and academics of Forestry Australia that shows increasing risks from climate change, wildfire, and widespread tree mortality mean unmanaged forests are likely to become a significant source of carbon emissions," Ms Hallam said.

"Australia's productive forests play

a critical role in helping mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon capture and storage – and locking up areas, especially in native forests, is detrimental to climate action and emissions reduction."

Importantly, the review also outlined the significant role of bushfires in driving up Australia's forest emissions. The 2019-20 bushfires alone accounted for approximately 35 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Strategic fuel-reduction burning and silvicultural practices, such as thinning, can reduce carbon losses from high-risk wildfires while improving forest resilience to drought and climate change, the review said.

Ms Hallam said: "We welcome yet another important piece of scientific research that confirms without careful management, our beautiful forested areas can transition from carbon sink to carbon source."

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Returning to work in timber and forestry

As teams across Australia's timber and forestry industry gear up for the year ahead, the nation's peak workplace health and safety body is sounding a clear warning: progress in reducing fatalities is welcome, but the sector remains one of the most dangerous – and no one should become complacent.

The Australian Institute of Health & Safety (AIHS) is urging employers, supervisors, and workers in forestry, logging, timber processing, and related operations to keep safety as the top priority from day one back on site. Every workplace death is one too many, and the timber and forestry sector continues to face disproportionate risks.

According to the latest Safe Work Australia: Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2025 report (covering 2024 data), there were 188 work-related traumatic injury fatalities nationally in 2024 – a decrease from 200 in 2023. Several high-risk industries, including Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (which encompasses timber harvesting, plantation management, and wood product manufacturing), showed some improvement.

However, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing recorded the highest fatality rate at 13.7 per 100,000 workers – far above the national average of 1.3 – with 44 fatalities (23% of the total). This group, alongside Transport, Postal and Warehousing and Construction accounted for much of the harm.

Vehicle incidents (often involving trucks,



Forestry's workplace fatalities rate is ten times the national average, as we head into 2026 it is everyone's responsibility to care about workplace safety. Image: Shutterstock

utes, or heavy machinery on bush tracks), being hit by falling trees or moving objects, falls from height (e.g., during felling or maintenance), and machinery-related incidents remain leading causes of death in forestry operations. These hazards are all too familiar in timber harvesting, log transport, and mill environments.

AIHS Chair Celia Antonovsky said the national downward trend demonstrates that investment in safety leadership, training, and worker involvement is paying off – but the figures are a stark reminder.

"Every Australian worker has the right to go to work and come home safely. While it's encouraging to see fewer fatalities overall, 188 lives lost – including those in our high-risk primary industries – is still far too many," Ms Antonovsky said.

"For timber and forestry teams returning to work, this is no time to relax. The sector's fatality rate remains the highest in the country, and complacency can turn routine tasks into tragedies. We must use these figures as a call to action

to double down on prevention."

Ms Antonovsky highlighted the vital role of trained Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) in forestry workplaces.

"HSRs are one of the single most powerful tools we have to prevent harm," she said. "They give workers a trusted voice to raise concerns early – whether it's about chainsaw maintenance, vehicle safety checks, tree felling plans, or fatigue on long hauls – helping ensure hazards are addressed before they become incidents."

"When HSRs are properly trained and supported, workplaces become safer for everyone, from fellers in the bush to operators in the mill."

To help timber and forestry employers and teams maintain momentum, AIHS offers a range of online learning, training, and professional development programs. These resources strengthen safety capability, from risk assessment in high-hazard environments to building effective safety cultures in remote or seasonal operations.

As workers return to forests, plantations, and processing sites, AIHS is calling on the timber and forestry industry to review safety protocols, empower HSRs, invest in training, and treat every shift as an opportunity to send everyone home safely.

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Showcasing benefits of mass engineered timber in the built environment

THE opening of the State Government's Tonsley Technical College marks a major milestone for South Australia's forest and timber industries, which have proudly grown, manufactured and supplied much of the mass-timber material used in this state-of-the-art educational facility.

Purpose-built to train the next generation of technicians, tradespeople and innovators, the College is also a practical learning tool for South Australia's builders, architects and developers.

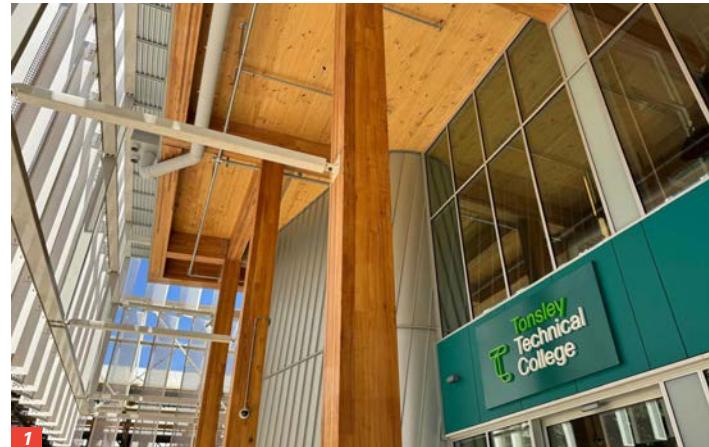
While mass engineered timber has featured in high-profile local projects such as the Adelaide Oval Hotel and an apartment development in Kent Town, it is still not widely adopted across South Australian construction. The contemporary design of Tonsley, designed by DAS and delivered by Sarah Constructions, demonstrates how mass timber can be used at scale in high-performance buildings.

Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Forest Products Association, Nathan Paine, said the project highlights timber's role in decarbonising the built environment while supporting domestic manufacturing.

"Tonsley shows how local architects, builders and developers can deliver future-focused buildings that support South Australian manufacturing and help decarbonise the economy by storing carbon within the structure," Mr Paine said.

"The College demonstrates the practical use of engineered mass-timber products, including cross-laminated timber (CLT) manufactured in Tarpeena, South Australia by NexTimber – Timberlink, and glue-laminated timber (GLT) supplied by Australian Sustainable Hardwoods from Heyfield in Victoria.

"By choosing locally manufactured timber over more carbon-intensive materials, the project supports forest growers, timber manufacturers and regional jobs, while reducing embodied



1/ The new Tonsley Technical College is built from CLT and GLT manufactured in South Australia.



2/ Left to Right: Simon Angove (Chief Sales and Marketing Officer Timberlink Australia), Peter Malinauskas (Premier of South Australia), and Jeremy Church (General Manager, NeXTimber by Timberlink Australia). All images: SAFAA

emissions and locking away carbon for decades."

According to the Association, the CLT and GLT used in the project are estimated to store more than 900,000 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent. When completed the building's total embodied carbon is 3,792,548 kilograms of CO₂-e, a 40 per cent reduction in CO₂-e when compared with a traditional build of this size.

The project also reflects a renewed focus on South Australia's sovereign capability to manufacture essential building materials locally. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the risks of relying on imported products and reinforced the importance of domestic manufacturing for economic resilience and national security.

As South Australian Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis recently said, "If we can't make key building products ourselves and are entirely reliant on imports, in a changing and dangerous world that makes Australia incredibly vulnerable. COVID showed us the importance of having our own sovereign capability."

Using South Australian timber in State Government projects is a practical expression of that principle.

At a time of increasing pressure from imported timber products and substitution with lightweight steel, the forest and timber sector has welcomed the Government's leadership in demonstrating how mass timber can support local supply

chains and regional manufacturing jobs.

Mr Paine said Tonsley, alongside the new Mount Gambier Technical College, shows South Australia has the capability to design and deliver the buildings it needs – from schools and homes to offices and hospitals – using locally grown and processed timber.

Simon Angove, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at Timberlink Australia, which manufactured the CLT for the project, said Tonsley demonstrates the strength of South Australia's timber capability.

"Projects like Tonsley show that South Australia already has the capacity to manufacture world-class engineered timber products locally and deploy them at scale," Mr Angove said.

"This building demonstrates how locally made CLT and GLT can support jobs, reduce emissions and deliver outstanding buildings for the future."

Mr Paine said the industry was grateful for the State Government's support.

"South Australia's forest industries thank the Premier, Minister Boyer and Minister Scriven for supporting local manufacturing jobs by choosing South Australian-made timber for this spectacular building," he said.

"The opening of Tonsley Technical College sends a clear message: timber in the built environment is sustainable, cost-effective and good for the economy."

MARCH**6: Queensland Women in Forest & Timber Network (WFTN) International Women's Day Breakfast – Brisbane Airport Conference Centre,**

8.00am - 10.00am. A meaningful morning of connection, inspiration and conversation as we celebrate International Women's Day with industry peers from across the forest and timber sector. For enquiries contact Tahlia: tahlia@ntha.com.au

For membership visit <https://www.ntha.com.au/membership/women-in-forests-timber-network-wftn/>

23-24: DANA – 2026 Special event. Global Natural Capital Investment Conference – Melbourne. Please note: This event has been deferred until late 2026. Details will be announced later in the year.**30-31: Forestry Australia Forest Valuation Summit – Rendezvous Hotel, Melbourne (includes summit dinner on day one).** Topic: *Valuing and Reporting Sustainability in our Forests*. For full details of speaker topics and to register interest, visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2026-forest-valuation-summit/>**APRIL****29-30: Sydney Build Expo 2026 – Sydney.** Australia's largest construction & design show that includes timber, designers, building and lots of international booths. For more information or to register visit <https://www.sydneybuildexpo.com/>.**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

18-19: FTMA National Conference – Sunshine Coast Convention Centre, Novotel Twin Waters, QLD.

The conference theme, At the Crossroads – Reframing for Growth, reflects the pivotal decisions facing our sector as we navigate a rapidly evolving housing market, new technologies and changing material preferences. Delegates will hear from internationally renowned futurist and best-selling author Michael McQueen along with long-time industry expert, Tim Woods, who will provide his comprehensive housing and market update. For more information, contact kersten@ftma.com.au

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.

OCTOBER**7-9: Forestry Australia 2026 Symposium – Rex Hotel, Canberra.**

This Symposium will explore how the forestry sector can articulate and share its values and engage constructively with diverse audiences and stakeholders – from local communities and Traditional Owners, to politicians and policymakers, the media, and the wider public. For more information visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2026-symposium/>

NOVEMBER**18: SAVE THE DATE: 2026 SIM-PAC Sustainability Awards – Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, Sydney.** The Awards recognise practical leadership in decarbonisation, circular economy, and sustainable industrial practice across the Asia-Pacific region. Further information will be available soon on the Awards website <https://www.sim-pac.live/2026-awards>

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Gumatj visit to Tiwi strengthens First Nations leadership in northern forestry

By HANNA LILLICRAP, NORTHERN TERRITORY ORD VALLEY FORESTRY HUB

IN October 2025, representatives from the Gumatj Corporation travelled to the Tiwi Islands for the second stage of a landmark First Nations forestry knowledge exchange. Building on an earlier visit to Arnhem Land, the on-country program strengthened cultural ties, showcased Tiwi plantation operations and training pathways, and reinforced shared ambitions for Aboriginal-led forestry in northern Australia.

WELCOME TO YAPILIK AND SHARING THE TIWI FORESTRY STORY

The Gumatj delegation arrived at Yapilika forestry camp on Melville Island, where they were welcomed by Tiwi Plantations Corporation (TPC) Chairman Kim Puruntatameri and members of the Munupi clan, Traditional Owners of the country on which the camp is located. A ceremonial welcome by Tiwi dancers set the tone for the visit, reaffirming cultural ties between the Tiwi and Yolngu peoples.

An introductory session followed where Tiwi directors presented the history, challenges and growth of the Tiwi forestry estate. Gumatj visitors learned that the Tiwi plantation estate represents around 4.5% of Australia's total hardwood* plantation area, and that TPC remains the only fully First Nations-owned plantation business in the country.

Directors from both corporations discussed their expectations for this part of the exchange, emphasising the value of reconnecting, understanding each other's histories and learning from parallel experiences in forestry



1/ Tiwi dancers welcoming the Gumatj delegation to Yapilika forestry camp.
2/ Participants visiting Eucalyptus pellita trial stands and discussing research, species selection and silviculture. All images: NTOVFH

development. The Tiwi leadership highlighted the importance of persistence in maintaining a long-term forestry vision, even through periods of market pressure and other challenges. The critical role of research as a foundation for informed decision-making was again emphasised.

“THE PARTNERSHIP ESTABLISHED... EXTENDS BEYOND A SINGLE PROJECT

Both Boards also reaffirmed a shared priority: finding ways to engage young people in forestry careers so they can carry these businesses forward into the future.

NURSERY OPERATIONS AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF TIWI FORESTRY WORKERS

The Gumatj group visited the Tiwi nursery, where Tiwi employees demonstrated propagation techniques for *Eucalyptus pellita*, the species selected for the second plantation rotation. Visitors observed seedling production, watering systems, quality control processes and the integration of on-the-job training delivered in partnership with the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board (TITEB).

Gumatj visitors noted the high level of skill among nursery staff, the strong work ethic on display, and the visible pride employees take in contributing to a Tiwi-owned forestry enterprise.

PLANTATION TOURS: RESEARCH, SILVICULTURE AND LONG-TERM PLANNING

The following day, the group visited several plantation areas, including early *E. pellita* trial sites and new planting areas. TPC Deputy Chair Gibson Farmer Illortaminni shared stories about the

Cont P 9

From P 8

earliest trials undertaken on the Islands and the long-term research underpinning species selection. Staff from Plantation Management Partners explained current site preparation techniques and how different approaches are being tested to manage competition from acacia regrowth and to maintain soil health.

The group discussed field management techniques, silviculture, soils, fire management and long-term yield expectations. For Gumatj, these insights provided a complementary comparison to their native forest operations on the Gove Peninsula.

STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND TIWI-OWNED SUPPLY CHAINS

The group continued to Port Melville and the Tiwi Port and Marine facilities. Tiwi directors outlined the port's development, past management arrangements and its recent transfer to full Tiwi ownership.

Standing on the 200-metre pontoons, the two groups discussed the port's strategic value for future forestry exports, marine operations and other regional development. For Gumatj delegates, the visit highlighted how Aboriginal ownership of infrastructure can strengthen supply chains and support long-term economic independence.

TRAINING PATHWAYS AND SHARED CHALLENGES WITH TITEB

On the final day, the delegation travelled to Bathurst Island to meet with TITEB representatives at their training farm and Wurrumiyanga headquarters. TITEB staff outlined the structure of current forestry training programs, the sequencing of training blocks and the logistical challenges of delivering training across



1



2

1/ *Tiwi and Gumatj directors discussing the operations, infrastructure and opportunities of Port Melville.*

2/ *Gumatj delegates visiting the TITEB farm and training facilities and learning about current forestry training programs.* All images: NTOVFH

two islands with limited transport and accommodation infrastructure.

Gumatj delegates identified strong similarities between the challenges faced in East Arnhem Land, particularly long distances, high costs and limited access to specialist trainers. This further highlighted the value of sharing solutions between regions.

At the TITEB offices, participants viewed a short film documenting an East Arnhem Land forestry project involving Traditional Owners and researchers. The film provided a meaningful conclusion to the technical component of the visit, linking back to the original inspiration for the exchange and illustrating how shared learning can continue across generations.

CONCLUDING THE EXCHANGE ON COUNTRY

The visit concluded with a final gathering where both clans reflected on the experiences shared over the three days. Rather than a formal evaluation process, the closing session focused on acknowledging relationships strengthened during the exchange and recognising the value of learning together on country.

In keeping with cultural protocol, the

exchange ended with the presentation of gifts between the Tiwi and Gumatj delegations, including locally produced artworks. These gifts symbolised respect, appreciation and enduring connection, reinforcing that the exchange was not only about forestry operations, but also about culture, identity and shared responsibility.

The closing moments made clear that the partnership established through the Forestry business exchange extends beyond a single project. Both organisations expressed a strong commitment to maintaining collaboration and supporting each other's forestry aspirations into the future.

BROADER LEARNINGS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The exchange represented the first direct forestry-focused partnership between Tiwi and Gumatj despite both organisations having decades of forestry experience. The on-country format proved essential for building trust, strengthening cultural connections and enabling practical learning.

Elders shared stories of historical connections between the communities, including instances when Yolngu people were sent to the Tiwi Islands to plant cypress trees under colonial punitive regimes - a reminder of long-standing cultural links that extend across the Top End region.

Gumatj representatives noted that limited access to research networks and professional forestry expertise

“ TIWI PLANTATION ESTATE REPRESENTS AROUND 4.5% OF AUSTRALIA’S TOTAL HARDWOOD

Cont P 10

From P 9

has historically constrained opportunities in East Arnhem Land. In contrast, Tiwi's long-term engagement with research partners has supported business resilience and investor confidence. The exchange helped identify ways Gumatj could strengthen similar partnerships in their region.

Both Boards recognised that with native forest harvesting winding down in several southern regions, northern Australia will become increasingly important as a source of sustainably managed hardwoods. First Nations-owned forestry businesses such as TPC and Gumatj are well positioned to contribute to this emerging role.

As one Gumatj director stated, the exchange represents "a big deal for our mobs – an opportunity to drive change together for the benefit of our people."

The second stage of the Forestry



Gifts were exchanged between the clans at the conclusion of the visits on the Tiwi Islands.

Image: NTOVHF

Business Model Exchange reinforced the strength of First Nations leadership in forestry across northern Australia. Through culturally grounded, peer-to-peer learning, both Tiwi Plantations Corporation and Gumatj Corporation gained valuable insights into operations, training, governance and long-term forestry strategy.

The Northern Territory Ord Valley Regional Forestry Hub acknowledges the support of DAFF and the Northern Hub that enabled this exchange and commends both Aboriginal organisations for demonstrating how First Nations led forestry can strengthen regional economies and deliver lasting outcomes for communities, country and the forestry industry.



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Peter Hutchison to continue as NTHA Chair

Continuity matters – especially during times of change.

NTHA is pleased to share that Peter Hutchison has agreed to continue as Chairman of the National Timber & Hardware Association for a further two years, supporting stability and strong governance as the Association moves through an important transition period.

Earlier this year, Peter indicated his intention to retire at the end of 2025. Following discussions with the Board and CEO, he has agreed to remain in the role to help guide NTHA through ongoing renewal while maintaining vital institutional knowledge.

Over the past year, several long-serving directors have retired and new voices have joined the Board. While renewal is essential, stability is equally important.

"Our priority has been ensuring strong stewardship – putting systems in place that protect members and make sure they are properly represented, not only



With several board member leaving, Peter Hutchison has delayed his retirement to stay on with NTHA board to help ensure stability as they go through renewal. Image: NTHA

today but for many years ahead," he said.

During this period, the Board has focused on strengthening the foundations of the Association, including updating the NTHA Constitution to better reflect today's membership and streamlining the Board to improve effectiveness and decision-making.

"It is a challenging environment. Associations are competing for relevance and sustainability while also needing to support their staff and members. Progress requires more than just good intentions – it requires solid structures and real outcomes. I believe we are now in a strong position, even though there is still work ahead."

NTHA thanks Peter for his continued commitment and steady leadership as the Association looks ahead to its next phase.

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Third round HAFF funding

An important boost to the program supporting social and affordable housing.

"IT is pleasing to see [the] announcement of the opening of third round of funding grants from the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) to boost the delivery of much needed housing for those who require it most," said HIA Managing Director, Jocelyn Martin.

"The first and second round of the HAFF funding has received significant interest and builders remain committed to boosting the supply of much needed social and affordable housing.

"The announcement is an important step forward for the HAFF program with round 3 aiming to support the delivery of the remaining 21,350 social and affordable homes to meet the national target of 40,000 new homes by 2029.

"It is hoped through this latest round of funding and the current review into the operation of the HAFF, we can see meaningful improvements to the program and result in fast tracking this



All areas of housing are important and social and affordable housing helps struggling Australia's get help. Image: Shutterstock

latest round of funding and streamlining the delivery of more homes faster.

"HIA has long advocated that Australia needs more housing supply of all types across the 'Housing Continuum' be it private housing, private rentals, long term rentals, subsidies and supported housing and social, community and affordable housing.

"Where one form of housing supply across this housing continuum falls short other parts of the system will additionally struggle to meet demand.

"That's why we need a coordinated approach across housing policy programs and across all levels of government to continue with initiatives and programs to increase supply of housing for all forms.

"As a consequence, it will be important to ensure productivity in the residential construction industry is supported by government focus on removing regulatory roadblocks, improving planning systems and tackling skills shortages.

"HIA is committed to work with all levels of government on policies that look to address Australia's housing challenges and supporting measures to get more Australians into housing," concluded Ms Martin.

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Groundbreaking biosecurity program

Early career researcher leads program to protect New Zealand's forests and timber industry.

ATMOSPHERIC scientist Dr Ilze Pretorius thrives on the dynamic nature of her work as an early career researcher with Scion's Bioeconomy Science Institute.

"No two days – or any two projects – are the same," she says. "I can discover new things every day, which is humbling. You never feel like you're an expert. There's so much in our beautiful world to learn."

As science lead for the ambitious five-year Protecting Aotearoa from wind-dispersed pests programme (October 2023–October 2028), funded primarily by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's (MBIE) Endeavour Fund, Ilze is at the helm of a collaborative, multi-disciplinary effort. The programme is designed to plug a major vulnerability in New Zealand's biosecurity system: the aerial pathway that allows insects and pathogens to travel vast distances on wind currents, often undetected until they establish and cause damage.

This Scion-led initiative directly targets threats to the country's valuable forestry and timber sectors, as well as horticulture, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration efforts. Wind-dispersed pests have already proven costly – examples include myrtle rust, which devastates native ecosystems and could affect plantation species, and fall armyworm, a significant invader that threatens arable and forage crops.

With climate change expected to alter wind patterns, increasing the frequency, duration, and reach of "airbridges" (predictable atmospheric connections between land masses like Australia and New Zealand), these risks are intensifying. The programme's core innovation is the development of the Aerobiological Surveillance and Prediction System (ASaP) – a sophisticated early-warning tool that



Bioeconomy Science Institute atmospheric scientist Ilze Pretorius. Image: Bioeconomy Science Institute

will forecast pest arrivals, optimise surveillance, and model potential spread once organisms land.

To build ASaP, the research addresses critical knowledge gaps across atmospheric science and pest biology:

- Modernising conventional wind trajectory models by incorporating cutting-edge advances in long-distance atmospheric transport, including Lagrangian coherent structures (LCS) to map precise pathways – for instance, tracing fall armyworm incursions from Australia to New Zealand.
- Constructing a comprehensive 30-year dataset on airbridge formation, frequency, locations, and how these are shifting under climate change scenarios.
- Investigating the survival and mortality of passive insects (such as moths) and microbes during extreme high-altitude conditions, including temperature swings, low oxygen, desiccation, and intense UV exposure.

“ DIRECTLY TARGETS THREATS TO THE COUNTRY'S VALUABLE FORESTRY AND TIMBER SECTORS

- Studying biological aspects like moth flight behaviour and the vertical descent mechanisms that bring airborne organisms to ground level.
- Developing Bayesian network models to integrate data for more accurate surveillance planning and risk prediction.

Ilze coordinates diverse research streams, working closely with research area leads and a wide network of collaborators. Key New Zealand partners include NIWA (for meteorological expertise), AgResearch, Plant & Food Research, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, the University of Canterbury (hosting postgraduate scholarships in aerobiological modelling, statistics, engineering, and moth flight science), Taranaki Regional Council, Taranaki Mounga Project, and others. International collaborators bring additional insights from institutions like Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and The Arctic University of Norway. Co-funding comes from Te Uru Kahika – Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa and the Foundation for Arable Research.

Ilze's daily responsibilities include aligning project components, guiding experimental design, overseeing reporting, organising workshops and events, and presenting findings at national and international conferences. "This programme is ramping up, with the focus on completing the ASaP system so New Zealand's primary industries – especially forestry and horticulture – can use it operationally," Ilze explains. The system will support hindcast analysis to identify optimal trap and surveillance sites, real-time forecasting to alert stakeholders before high-risk arrivals, and integrated modelling to predict internal spread across regions after landing,

Cont P 15

From P 14

enabling rapid response.

Recent progress includes the deployment of automated scouting traps in Taranaki (using pheromones and AI for moth detection) to monitor emerging threats like fall armyworm, informing both predictions and climate model validation. The programme also produces the bi-annual "Blown Away" newsletter to share updates, discoveries, and community stories.

The economic case is compelling: the

“ PREVENTING...ONE SERIOUS PEST COULD DELIVER RETURNS 10 TO 100 TIMES

science team estimates that preventing the establishment of just one serious pest could deliver returns 10 to 100 times the programme's cost (NZ\$125 million to \$1.25 billion) by averting losses in timber production, protecting planted forests' role in carbon storage, and safeguarding biodiversity.

Community and cultural dimensions are integral. In Taranaki, the programme supports ongoing research through youth (tamariki) engagement and partnerships with Māori kaitiaki to establish baselines for wind-dispersed arrivals, monitor changes, and incorporate mātauranga Māori into biosecurity strategies.

Ilze's leadership earned her a finalist spot in the 2025 Early Career Researcher category of the Science New Zealand Awards, recognising her contributions to forest biosecurity science through

innovative atmospheric-pest linkages.

"Scientists don't often get the privilege of working on a programme for so long," she reflects. "This is an amazing opportunity to build deep understanding. One of the biggest challenges in science today is that the work can remain isolated rather than making a real difference out there."

"But the benefits are massive. The work is humbling, challenging, and fun all at the same time, and it's an incredibly fulfilling career. I'm very happy with the career choice I made."

By fortifying defences against these invisible aerial threats, this forward-thinking Scion initiative is helping secure Aotearoa's forests, timber industry, primary production, and environmental treasures for the long term.



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Reflecting on the good old days whilst being mindful of modern software and engineering precision

By PAUL DAVIS

PICTURE this: it's the mid-1970s. The Easybeats are blasting from Dad's quadraphonic record player, the summer sun is blazing, and you are barefoot, sunburnt, and sticky from a 10c Paddle Pop. Childhood then was a slightly lawless adventure, no mobile phones, no "helicopter parents," and certainly no concept of "screen time".

If you wanted entertainment, you invented it. We spent our afternoons getting into mischief, learning how to start fires (and, in one memorable case, how to put out the resulting bushfire), and earning scraped knees was a badge of honour. Parents were a background presence who mostly just wanted us out of their hair. If you turned up at the back door muddy and missing a thong no questions were asked.

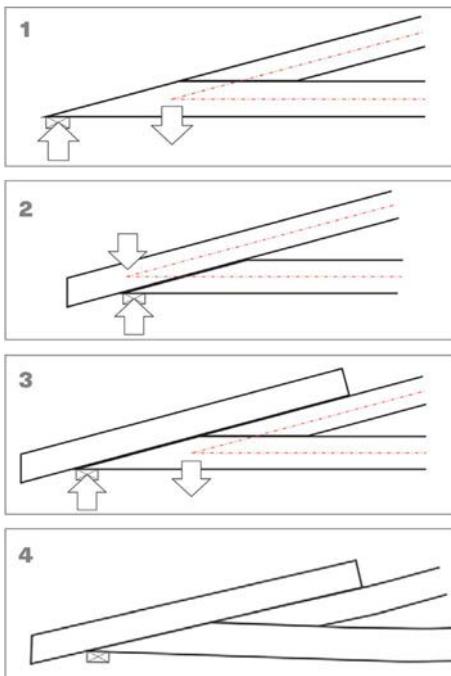
Being a kid in the 70s was essentially like being an unpaid intern at a disorganised company: you had responsibilities, no rights, and a sense that your presence was tolerated rather than celebrated. We were even pressed into service as the household's human answering machine, sprinting to grab the receiver and barking "8488 294 who is it" before voicemail existed.

What happened outside stayed outside. To their dying day, my parents never knew I was dragged up Hornsby train station when the train doors closed on my leather school satchel. I still have the scar on my left knee to prove it.

Fast forward to today, and the landscape has shifted entirely. Modern childhood is defined by supervision, rules, mandatory helmets, and playdates arranged months in advance. Just as a grazed knee now triggers app-driven first-aid protocol, our approach to engineering has moved from the "wild west" to a heavily regulated but highly sophisticated environment.

This shift is nowhere more obvious than in truss software. Once upon a time, it took an engineer a day to design a single truss.

Today, we have immense computational power, but like the shift from 70s freedom to modern "enrichment activities," this



This diagram displays four different truss situations and the stresses caused by each design

Image: Paul Davis

power comes with complexity and highlights the shortcomings of the past.

Take the cut-down top chord, often used at gable ends and Dutch gables. While it is a better approach than large batten overhangs or shonky gable blocks, modern software reveals a structural cost that isn't immediately obvious.

If you look at the first diagram showing a cut-down without the additional overhang piece, it looks fundamentally dodgy. The first issue is clear: there is next-to-no timber over the support, meaning the timber would likely shear right at the inside face of the support.

But much like the hidden dangers of a 70s flooded creek swim, the situation is worse than it looks. In a normal truss heel (as shown in the second diagram), the compression and tension forces meet directly over the top plate, aligning the centre of force with the centre of the timber.

In a cut-down heel, however, the reaction "wants" to be at that same junction of the centrelines. The problem?

That junction is no longer over the support.

Plating on an additional top chord overhang piece, as seen in the third diagram, resolves the shear problem by adding localised strength. However, it doesn't solve the geometry issue. The reaction is still not where the cut-down truss wants it to be. It acts just like an extra external vertical load, causing the heel to dip inside the support and the overhang to kick up, as shown in the fourth diagram.

Regardless of how many nail plates you throw at the heel, these extra stresses in the main chord segments remain invariant. This is the "money issue": a cut-down truss is generally more highly stressed and expensive than an equivalent normal truss.

Modern software from all providers is sophisticated enough to catch these stresses. It gives us the power to model complex roofs, but it also mercilessly highlights that you cannot have the power of modern times while keeping the simplicity of days gone by.

In the 70s, adults ran the show while we stayed out of the way. Barbecues were for Dad's old, balding mates to get drunk and reminisce. Little did we know that the local babysitting club was also a swingers' club!

So, we survived the lack of supervision, just as we used to survive with simpler engineering methods. But today we have traded the freedom to roam and find trouble for safety and precision. It's a necessary trade, we now know too much to go back....but they really were the good old days!

Source: Timber Trader News

Paul Davis is an independent structural engineer managing his own consulting firm Project X Solutions Pty Ltd. The views in this column are Paul's professional opinion and may not necessarily reflect the opinion of Timber Trader News.



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Ongoing fire response

AUSTRALIA'S southeast continues to face intense bushfire activity, with firefighters from multiple agencies and even international partners stepping up to protect communities and landscapes.

Fire & Rescue NSW shared, "Some of our most experienced fire specialists are completing their roles in the joint-agency Incident Management Team (IMT) overseeing the Brassknocker Fire Trail blaze in the Wadbilliga National Park at Yowie." The fire, located approximately 20 km west of Cobargo, has burnt 3,475 hectares. More than 100 firefighters from the NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Forestry Corporation have been deployed to the fire-lines. These crews have received vital support from aircraft and heavy plant machinery, including 11 bulldozers, excavators, and graders. Encouragingly, the fire has now reached controlled status, with rain forecast to further assist containment efforts.

This collaborative response highlights the multi-agency coordination essential in managing such incidents, particularly in remote and rugged national park terrain.

Adding to the international dimension of Australia's firefighting efforts, Canadian wildland fire teams have been deployed to assist amid severe fire activity. The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre noted, "Canadian wildland fire teams have been deployed to assist Australia as they respond to severe fire activity. This deployment reflects the strong, long-



Fire can quickly cause devastating damage to communities, homes, and the environment. It is the incredible firefighting teams who make all the difference in these crises Images: Shutterstock

standing partnership between our two countries in wildland fire management." The statement emphasised reciprocity, stating, "Australia has supported Canada numerous times over the years, standing with us during some of our most challenging wildland fire seasons...Canada is proud to return that support." The last such mobilisation occurred during Australia's devastating "Black Summer" fires between November 2019 and January 2020. "Our thoughts are with affected communities and all responders on the front line," they added.

In Victoria, heatwaves continue to challenge communities in the south and east, with bushfires flaring in regions like the Otways. The Victorian Forest Products Association highlighted industry contributions, "As heatwaves continue across Victoria and South Australia, our thoughts are with all affected communities and emergency personnel." A bushfire at Carlisle River nearly doubled in size overnight and approached within one kilometre of Gellibrand. Forest Industry

Brigades are working closely with emergency agencies across the Green Triangle and surrounding areas. The industry brings significant resources, including "Hundreds of trained firefighters ready to respond," "Fire appliances and specialist equipment," "A dedicated firefighting helicopter funded by industry," and "15 AI-enabled fire detection cameras acting as an eye in the sky." The association expressed their gratitude, "Thank you to our Forest Industry Brigades (FIBs) on the frontline who work around the clock to prevent fires from spreading and to protect plantation timber, livelihoods and the local communities where they work. Our thoughts are with all emergency responders at this time."

These updates underscore the resilience of Australian firefighting efforts—from dedicated local and state teams to industry-supported brigades and vital international aid—working tirelessly to safeguard lives, properties, and environments during this challenging period.



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