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Fire help from Forestry Corporation of NSW

COVER STORY P2

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FCNSW offers firefighting support

Victoria and South Australia have assistance this fire season.

IT'S almost as though there has been a line drawn across the continent in recent years, with rain falling only to the right of it most months.

As a result, this fire season has been devastating across parts of Victoria and South Australia, where the soil and vegetation are extremely dry, and (so far) comparatively less grim in Coastal NSW where rains continue to overdeliver.

Accordingly, Forestry Corporation of NSW has deployed 10 firefighters to South Australia to support firefighting operations, following several weeks of assistance in Victoria. Forestry Corporation, one of NSW's four firefighting agencies, has more than 500 trained firefighters on staff, who work to protect State forests and regularly assist interstate and international fire authorities.

Twenty Forestry Corporation firefighters have been assisting with Victoria's Walwa River Road fire in both field and incident management (IMT) positions, with an additional four staff in the IMT at Seymour in the state's south.



1/ The assembled NSW volunteers at a briefing for the Deep Creek fire last week.

2/ Forestry Corporation workers conducting a hazard reduction burn in NSW last year. All images: Forestry Corporation

Forestry Corporation's Fire Training and Operations Coordinator Nathan Fischer said with conditions now escalating in South Australia, crews are again on the move.

"These deployments really demonstrate the strength of NSW's joint firefighting capability," Fischer said.

"Across NSW, we work side-by-side with our partner fire agencies every day and that close collaboration means we can respond quickly and effectively when incidents emerge whether they're here at home or interstate.

"Forestry Corporation crews continue to work incredibly hard to keep our own estate safe, but just as importantly, to support our neighbours and the broader community when the need arises. I'm proud of our people who consistently step up at short notice, integrate seamlessly with multi-agency teams, and bring their skills and professionalism wherever they're needed," he said.

Among those deployed is South Coast-based strategic projects and programs leader Brendan Grimson, who will serve as a crew leader and bring extensive operational experience to the team.

"My role on this deployment is to ensure our crews stay safe and maintain strong situational awareness as we work in a new landscape," Grimson said.

"Fire behaviour, fuels and terrain can be very different interstate, so staying alert to changing conditions is critical."

In his current role, Grimson is supporting the implementation of the

Cont P 3

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From P 2

Fire, Country and People program where Forestry Corporation is working with Aboriginal communities in NSW to strengthen cultural and community-based fire management.

He said deployments like this highlight the strength and flexibility of Forestry Corporation's firefighting workforce: "We have highly trained staff in over 20 towns and cities across NSW who can respond quickly when needed. Whether it's protecting our own State forests or supporting our neighbours, we're ready to step in."

North Coast-based forestry worker Grace Bolton is undertaking her first interstate deployment in South Australia since gaining her national firefighting accreditation and will work in a team of firefighters under



1/ **Bulldozing breaks to stop the fire spread in Victoria.**
 2/ **Forestry Corporation firefighters working with their Victorian counterparts in a recent deployment.** All images: Forestry Corporation

the guidance of a crew leader.

"This has been my first fire season, which has been super exciting and South Australia is my third deployment so far this season," Bolton said.

"It has been an experience for sure, straight into the action responding to spot overs, putting in containment lines and spending a lot of time on the hose working hard work to protect assets."

"I've volunteered to go to South Australia to help both the community and environment, which is currently fire affected."

Forestry Corporation's firefighters are integrated into the South Australian fire incident management teams and, since their deployment last week, have helped to bring the Deep Creek fire on the Fleurieu Peninsula, south of Adelaide, back to Contained status.

To find out more about Forestry Corporation go to www.forestrycorporation.com.au

On the cover: The NSW contingent headed to South Australia to help fight the Deep Creek fire, including RFS, Forestry Corporation and SES members. Image: Forestry Corporation

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New award remembers timber leader

Timber Queensland launches national award to honour Colin MacKenzie and strengthen technical capability.

NEXT month will mark a year since the loss of Colin MacKenzie at the age of 75. In a fitting tribute, Timber Queensland has announced the establishment of the *Colin MacKenzie Award for Technical Excellence in Timber Application and Use*, calling on industry partners across Australia to contribute seed funding to bring the new national award to life.

The award will honour MacKenzie, who passed away on 24 March, 2025, and whose four decades of leadership profoundly shaped timber engineering, Australian Standards, and building compliance. The initiative responds to widespread calls from industry to formally recognise Colin's legacy and continue the work he championed lifting capability, innovation, and confidence in the use of timber across Australian construction.

"Colin's influence can be seen in almost every aspect of timber engineering and compliance standards," said Timber Queensland CEO Mick Stephens.

"This award will recognise the next generation of innovators and continue the legacy of technical leadership he dedicated his life to."

Timber Queensland is now seeking seed funding contributions from industry to establish the award as a permanent national honour.

The *Colin MacKenzie Award* will recognise individuals or small teams who are advancing timber engineering and design across Australia.

“THE COLIN MACKENZIE AWARD WILL RECOGNISE THE ADVANCEMENT OF TIMBER ENGINEERING AND DESIGN”



Colin MacKenzie was more than an expert in timber engineering, he gave generously of his time to industry bodies and was an encouraging mentor – all qualities the planned award will celebrate.

Image: Timber Queensland

"The award is intended for engineers, architects, designers, builders and researchers who are delivering real technical impact and helping to strengthen capability across the sector," said Stephens

"Judging will focus on technical merit, innovation, and the contribution a project or individual makes to improving knowledge, collaboration and sustainability in timber use and consider alignment with Colin's vision for timber as a high-performance, compliant and fit-for-purpose construction material."

Stephens said recipients will be honoured at a major industry event.

"We want this to be a significant national recognition, supported by an honour roll and a cash bursary that encourages excellence and inspires emerging professionals."

Award objectives and judging criteria have been drafted, with industry feedback to be incorporated as the program is finalised. Full details will be released once funding commitments are secured.

"Following the call for support the best governance and funding model will be established taking into account ideas developed with other potential national and state partners given the broad reach of the award," Stephens said.

"By supporting this award, organisations will be investing in the technical capability our sector needs for the future."

Organisations wishing to contribute are invited to complete an online form ([click here to access](#)) to indicate interest. Timber Queensland will contact supporters directly to facilitate contributions.

Australian Forest Products Association

AFPA THE LEADING VOICE FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

More apprentices needed

The HIA has flagged that there are still not enough apprentices to deliver the tradies Australia requires in coming years.

NATIONAL Apprenticeship Week is usually time to shine a light on the young people continuing the many trades that make up the timber and forestry sector.

While they deserve their moment in the sun, our peers in construction say it's also time to talk about the ongoing trade skills shortage.

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) wants to spend this National Apprenticeship Week highlighting the urgent need to expand apprentice training if Australia is to address ongoing housing shortages and meet future housing demand.

"Workforce shortages remain one of the biggest constraints on increasing home building activity, with the nation needing an estimated 83,000 additional skilled workers across our key trades," HIA executive director future workforce Mike Hermon said on Monday.

"Shortages across key residential construction trades, particularly carpentry, are limiting building capacity across the states. Builders across the country are telling us the same thing – demand for housing is there, but access to skilled labour is holding projects back.



HIA says we need an urgent injection of apprentices to meet the construction trade needs of the near future. Image: Shutterstock/Elias Bitar

"A recent survey of HIA's small business members indicated that the cost and access to skilled trades were both in the top 5 issues placing pressure on builders. The survey also showed that 67% of respondents said they were having trouble recruiting new staff or retaining existing workers. If we do not train more apprentices now, the homes Australia needs simply will not be built."

Hermon added that "Residential construction is a hands-on industry, and apprenticeships provide the practical, on-site training that cannot be replicated in a classroom alone - today's apprentices are tomorrow's carpenters, builders and site supervisors.

"HIA welcomes government

incentives that are helping employers take on apprentices, including the Priority Hiring Incentive, along with the Key Apprenticeship Program (KAP), to help apprentices purchase tools or meet costs of living challenges while training. These incentives are working and are encouraging more businesses to invest in training.

"However, they must be maintained, simplified and extended if they are to have a

lasting impact on housing supply," he said.

HIA, like NTHA and several other timber-related organisations, runs a group training scheme, which delivers mentoring and pastoral care to apprentices and helps reduce the cost and risk for builders – particularly small businesses.

But Hermon says more is needed: "All tiers of government must recognise that housing supply targets cannot be achieved without sustained investment in skills and training. You cannot set ambitious housing targets without backing them with an equally ambitious commitment to apprentice training."

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Masked owl monitoring

Sustainable Timber Tasmania is listening for the masked owl.

THE Tasmanian masked owl is bigger and slightly more bloodthirsty than its mainland cousins. Sadly, both these qualities have contributed to it becoming an endangered species, with only an estimated 500 breeding pairs.

Secondary poisoning is a major risk: birds who eat rats and mice killed with baits often die themselves. Another is habitat: masked owls nests in hollows in mature trees, many of which have been lost to land clearing for development and agriculture, leaving the remainder highly contested by a number of bird and mammal species.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania has recently expanded its acoustic monitoring program to include masked owls in informing forest planning and on-ground management decisions in Tasmania's public production forests.

The expanded monitoring uses advanced acoustic technology to detect masked owl calls before, during and after harvesting operations, providing new insights into where the species is present and how it uses forest landscapes.

Knowing where owls are before harvesters move into an area helps to determine exclusion zones as well as aiding in population counts, while tracking calls during and after operations in an area gives STT invaluable information about the impacts of human activity near masked owl habitat.

Early results from the program are encouraging. Recent acoustic monitoring was undertaken following masked owl observation in forest areas of the Central Highlands. High levels



1/ A member of the STT team at a monitoring station. Image: Supplied
2/ Tasmanian masked owl. Image: JJ Harrison/CC Wikimedia Commons

of owl activity were recorded, resulting in 16.4 hectares of suitable habitat being set aside during harvest. Surveys after harvesting confirmed continued owl presence. The results indicate harvesting operations have minimal disruption on owl occupancy and habitat.

The masked owl monitoring forms part of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's broader Acoustic Monitoring Program,

“ACOUSTIC MONITORING IS GIVING US CLEARER, REAL-TIME INFORMATION

now in its fifth year, which uses machine learning and large-scale data analysis to support adaptive forest management and conservation outcomes.

During the 2024–2025 financial year, more than 20,000 hours of acoustic data were processed across 36 forest coupes.

Monitoring has continued into the current financial year, with surveys undertaken in priority areas where operations are planned.

Acoustic monitoring allows forest managers to gather information that would not otherwise be possible at scale, helping them understand whether masked owls are present within coupes, in adjacent reserves, or continue to use areas following harvesting. This information is then used to adapt forest practices, including adjusting harvest boundaries or applying additional protections where important habitat is identified.

Suzette Weeding, general manager conservation and land management, said the expansion of acoustic monitoring to masked owls strengthens how potential habitat is identified and managed in working forests.

“Acoustic monitoring is giving us clearer, real-time information about how masked owls use forest landscapes,” Weeding said. “That information helps us make informed decisions to minimise potential impacts on the species, while continuing to manage public production forests responsibly.”

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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Annualised salaries

What does the annualised salaries decision mean?

By PETER MAGUIRE

FOR many years, businesses have been paying people on an annualised salary basis using set off clauses in common law contracts to compensate for and set off monetary award entitlements against over award remuneration. And, as long as people ended up better off overall than they would have been if the award was applied literally, that all seemed fair enough, but is it? The Federal Court says "No". And what does that mean for the timber industry?

ABOUT THIS CASE

This decision by the Federal Court arose from proceedings initiated by the Fair Work Ombudsman and a class action for employees in relation to alleged underpayment of wages by Coles and Woolworths.

At issue was the question of over how long a period could an employer rely on a set-off provision in an employment contract to effect set-off of and compensation for award entitlements such as minimum wages, allowances, overtime and shift loadings and penalty rates. In the Coles case, the relevant period in the contract was 12 months and in Woolworths it was 6 months.

There have been cases in the Fair Work Commission where annualised wage arrangements have been inserted into modern awards, but the door had always been left open in the related decisions for another gateway via common law contracts.

The General Retail Industry Award 2020 which applies in this case doesn't have an Annualised Wage Arrangements clause, but it is quite specific on this issue in that it states: "Wages must be paid for a pay period according to the number of hours worked by the employee in the period or they may be averaged over a fortnight". This 'averaging' element is consistent with other arrangements across different industries where RDOs



Ensuring entitlements is vital for avoiding future conflicts Image: Shutterstock/ChameleonsEye

and averaging of wages is commonplace.

The judge in this case made the decision that employees must be paid for hours in the pay period in which they worked. That invalidated the arrangements that Coles and Woolworths relied on for people to work additional hours in some pay periods and set off the overtime and penalty payments applying to those hours against above award remuneration on other pay periods for up to 6 or 12 months.

Both now have another considerable set of underpayments of wages to deal with, something that unfortunately has happened all too often.

RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

A secondary issue that arose was in relation to Coles and Woolworths being found to have not complied with their record keeping obligations.

Specifically, Fair Work Regulations provide that an employer must maintain records of overtime hours worked and the starting and finishing times of overtime hours if a penalty rate or loading applies to those hours.

It is quite common for people to believe that, if you are on salary, you don't have to record your working hours. The judge made it clear that having

a set-off clause does not exempt employers from other obligations under legislation and regulations and so Coles and Woolworths were obliged to maintain these overtime records and were in breach for not doing so.

The judge's decision in this regard is consistent with Annual Wage Arrangement clauses where they exist in modern awards in that they require the keeping of records of starting and finishing times and breaks and annual reconciliations of actual hours and remuneration against what entitlements under the award would otherwise have been (i.e. but for the Annualised Wage Arrangement).

The decision also puts the two employers in a difficult situation in resolving underpayment claims if they don't have clear records of the days and times that relevant employees physically worked, pay period by pay period.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Firstly, I would note that these major retailers have been trying to find a way around penalty rates for many years going back to WorkChoices which preceded the Fair Work era. The issue resurfaced again recently when employers made application to the Fair Work Commission to have the General Retail Industry Award 2020 varied to provide for a standard loading on minimum rates in compensation for overtime loadings and penalty rates.

The Albanese Government responded with a commitment to outlaw removal of overtime loadings and penalty rates from modern awards by legislation from 1 July 2026.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE TIMBER INDUSTRY?

The primary industrial instrument, the

Cont P 9

From P 8

Timber Industry Award 2020, doesn't have an Annualised Wage Arrangements provision but is also specific on this issue: Clause 21.1 says (in part): "...wages will be paid either weekly or fortnightly either according to the:

- i. actual ordinary hours worked each week or fortnight; or
- ii. average number of ordinary hours worked each week or fortnight".

So, based on the decision, the maximum period of offset would, in most cases, be a fortnight (although the award does permit 3 weekly, 4 weekly or monthly pay periods by agreement).

On the other hand, the Clerks – Private Sector Award 2020 does have an Annualised Wage Arrangements clause and that sets out a comprehensive set of rules that apply including the requirements for record keeping and reconciliations. If you employ clerical staff, you need to make yourself familiar with those provisions.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM ALL OF THAT?

A few thoughts:

- You need to ensure that any employee who is nominally covered by an award

or enterprise agreement receives their full entitlement to wages, allowances, penalty rates, overtime loadings and any other monetary benefit as per that instrument in every pay period (subject to any averaging arrangement or other variation allowed for in the instrument).

- If there is significant variation in different pay periods in the hours of work of an employee who is on an annualised salary (or flat weekly or fortnightly or monthly wage), it is critical that you maintain records of the hours and do the reconciliations to ensure that the employee is not underpaid and that you have the evidence to support your position in the event of an underpayment claim.
- If you are using set-off clauses in common law contracts, you need to get these reviewed in the context of this decision and the difference that makes to their legal effectiveness.
- You might want to think about whether it is just easier to revert to award and pay people by the hour with application of penalty rates and overtime loadings as and when they occur.

CONCLUSION

The award system is becoming increasingly protected by legislation and by legal decisions so we need to adapt

to the fact that the loopholes are closing, and we will just have to accept the rules as they are for what they are.

The other reality is that, given the comprehensive victory that the Albanese government had at the last election, it is highly unlikely that the Coalition will return to government in the foreseeable future.

That means that the current trends in workplace relations changes will continue – not reverse.

With all the changes that have occurred in recent years has come an ever-increasing level of complexity especially for small businesses. So, the bottom line is that, if you employ people, you need a competent advisor whether that be an industry association, an employment lawyer or a HR consultant who is competent in workplace relations law.

Peter Maguire is the owner and practice leader of Ridgeline HR, an award winning HRM consulting practice which he founded in 2000. Peter is an acknowledged expert in workplace relations compliance and a high-performance leadership coach with over 40 years' experience in HRM. Ridgeline HR's by-line is *Helping PEOPLE in BUSINESS* and that is essentially what Peter does – help business people with their people business.



Heavy vehicle updates bring changes

THE Master Code for Australia's heavy vehicle industry has been updated for the first time since 2018, providing renewed guidance to help set a consistent benchmark for managing safety responsibilities across the supply chain, and reflecting the uplift of standards demonstrated across industry since 2018.

Released by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) in January, the Code is designed as a practical guide to support businesses in understanding their Primary Duty, and executives in understanding their Executive Duty, under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL).

Aaron Louws, supply chain technical manager at NTI, an insurance provider specialising in heavy vehicles, said the updated Code will play an important role in helping industry understand what is reasonably practicable when managing safety risks associated with transport activities.



Aaron Louws with NTI's Bert Webster and Farah Lock at last year's NatRoad Connect 25 national conference. Image: NTI/LinkedIn

"The law hasn't changed, but the benchmark has," he said. "If a business controls or influences heavy vehicle transport activities then the updated Master Code is the single largest collection of reference material in Australia on how to manage those activities, associated hazards and risks."

Louws said the updated Code also provides clearer and more relevant guidance

for businesses beyond the traditional road transport sector.

One of the key updates is the Code's framework, moving away from role-based obligations to activities, prompting businesses to consider a broader range of activities that might impact their heavy vehicle operations.

Louws encouraged businesses to review existing controls and document how risks are managed.

"You don't have to implement every control in the Code, but you should be prepared to explain that what you're choosing to do is equally as effective for your business at managing the risk," he said.

NTI has a range of resources to support the update, including a webinar on 18 February. Click here to learn more.

The Master Code applies in all jurisdictions except WA and the Northern Territory.

Power from pines

OneFortyOne has switched on the first stage of its new Jubilee Boiler and Co-Generation Project.

ONEFORTYONE has reached a significant milestone in its renewable energy investment at the Jubilee Sawmill in Mount Gambier, with Phase 1 of its co-generation project completed and the new fuel handling system now successfully operational.

The fuel handling system was constructed and started up during the 2025/26 summer shutdown. It is now fully operational, transporting waste wood fibre residue to the existing boiler in the steam plant.

This marks the first major step toward the broader \$88 million biomass powered co-generation system that will enable the site to generate its own renewable electricity. Jubilee Sawmill general manager Nigel Boyd said the staged delivery model is central to ensuring reliability and long-term operational performance.

"Phase 1 was all about getting the fuel handling system commissioned early so we can run it, test it, and refine it well before connecting it to the new boiler," Boyd said.

"Breaking the project into stages avoids commissioning one large system at once. It means major components can be proven before integration, which reduces risk and delivers a more reliable outcome for the sawmill."

OneFortyOne engineering manager Andrew White said the new system is a major upgrade of the sawmill's ageing infrastructure.

"We had our old conveyor for about 70 years, and it was approaching the end of its life. The new fuel handling system is



1/ OneFortyOne engineering manager Andrew White with the new fuel handling system.

2/ The new fuel handling system has been connected to the old boiler while the rest of the upgrades progress, allowing for systems testing as well as less interruption to business.

3/ The new system can convey significantly more wood fibre than the old one it has replaced. All images: OneFortyOne

safer, more efficient, and has the capacity to store and move significantly larger volumes of wood fibre," said White.

"We can produce fuel faster than we consume it; four days of production gives us seven days of fuel, so the new system

essentially acts as a large, flexible storage solution that supports potential growth."

Designed inhouse, the system has been built for the future.

"We sized it for where the mill could be in the future, not just for our needs today," White said. "As log volumes increase, so does the energy required to dry and process them."

"This system creates a circular energy loop where increased log intake generates residue that becomes renewable fuel powering the sawmill."

OneFortyOne project manager Mick Geraghty noted the importance of local businesses working together on the project.

"A number of local contractors worked with us to deliver the installation, and they should be proud of the outcome," Geraghty said.

"It's a significant piece of infrastructure and an example of the capability we have in the region."

With Phase 1 complete, the project now moves into the main construction stage of the cogeneration plant. Civil works are well underway, including earthworks and site preparation. Major equipment installation will follow.

This project marks a major step toward OneFortyOne's 2030 emissions reduction target, eliminating Scope 2 emissions across its Australian sawmill operations.

By converting waste fibre into renewable energy and moving Jubilee off the grid, OneFortyOne will cut emissions while creating a cleaner, self-sufficient site for the future.

Call for more timber plantations

Professor Keith Crews has called for an expansion of the plantation estate to meet future housing and sustainability needs.

PROFESSOR Crews, Director of the Australian Research Council Industrial Transformation Research Hub to Advance Timber for Australia's Future Built Environment (ARC Advance Timber Hub) and Professor at The University of Queensland's School of Civil Engineering, outlined the sector's challenges and opportunities during a recent interview on ABC Radio's *Nightlife* – the Future for our Timber.

Crews, a leading timber engineering expert, said Australia must significantly expand its plantation forestry estate to meet future construction demand and support national emissions-reduction goals, emphasising that timber remains the only mainstream construction material that is both renewable and capable of storing carbon throughout its service life.

"Timber is uniquely positioned to support Australia's transition to a low-carbon built environment. When



Professor Keith Crews. Image: ARC Advance Timber Hub

sustainably managed, it sequesters carbon and offers a lower-emissions alternative to concrete and steel," Professor Crews said.

However, Australia's plantation estate has remained largely unchanged for four decades, raising concerns about long-term supply. Crews said plantation area must increase by 15–20% nationally to meet growing housing and mid rise construction needs, especially for softwood products. He pointed to state-based initiatives like the recent 25-year Queensland Future

Timber Plan as a model for what can be done.

Crews's discussion with the ABC's Philip Clark also highlighted the critical role of circularity. Professor Crews said better design for deconstruction, reuse and repurposing will reduce waste and enhance timber's carbon benefits. He noted that when timber products are kept in long life applications or repurposed rather than sent to landfill, carbon remains locked in the material.

Community contributions to the interview demonstrated widespread public commitment to sustainable timber practices. Callers discussed repurposing demolition timber, salvaging high value hardwoods, and recycling engineered wood products. Professor Crews described these activities as "excellent examples of circularity in action".

To hear the full interview, click [here](#).

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Image: Shutterstock

Softwood sales growth in 2025 offers clear signals for processors

SOFTWOOD sales volumes in Australia strengthened throughout calendar year 2025, offering softwood processors a clearer line of sight into evolving demand dynamics and output planning, according to the latest data from Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA). The trends underscore improving market conditions, particularly in the latter half of the year.

Across Australia, total softwood sales volumes grew at an average rate of 3.3% per month between January and November, rising from approximately 170,308m³ in January to 234,852m³ in November.

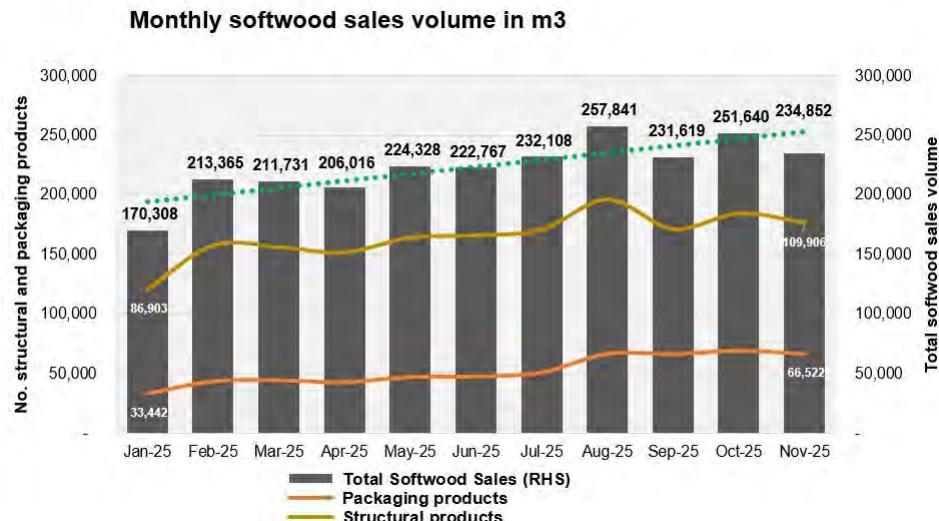
Of particular note for processors, was the 16% increase in average monthly volumes in the second half of the year (July–November) compared with the first half (January–June).

These figures are encouraging for processors balancing mill utilisation against a backdrop of historically volatile residential construction demand. The clearer uptick in the second half gives confidence that production planning can be less reactive and more strategic into 2026.

One of the standout stories in the data was the performance of packaging timber, which grew at an average monthly rate of 7.1%, roughly doubling from around 33,000m³ in January to about 66,000m³ in November.

This segment's rapid growth reflects broader economic activity in logistics, transport and goods movement, and highlights opportunities for processors to leverage non-residential demand streams to stabilise mill throughput when housing market signals fluctuate.

Meanwhile, structural softwood products, the traditional bread-and-butter for sawmills focused on residential



Monthly softwood sales data for January to November 2025. Image: FWPA

construction, increased at a steady average of around 2.4% per month, mirroring a modest improvement in dwelling approvals and building activity mid-year onward.

INDUSTRY DATA TOOLS SUPPORTING PROCESSOR DECISIONS

Access to accurate, timely data continues to be vital for processing businesses navigating marginal cost pressures and complex supply chains. FWPA's Data Dashboard has been widely adopted by processors to enhance decision-making with granular sales and market indicators.

"The new dashboard represents a significant upgrade, offering more advanced insights designed to empower our members in their business planning and decision-making processes," said Erick Hansnata, Manager of Statistics and Economics at FWPA. His team's work on data integration and analytics is already proving useful for processors

mapping demand across structural and packaging segments.

[Click here to subscribe to the dashboard.](#)

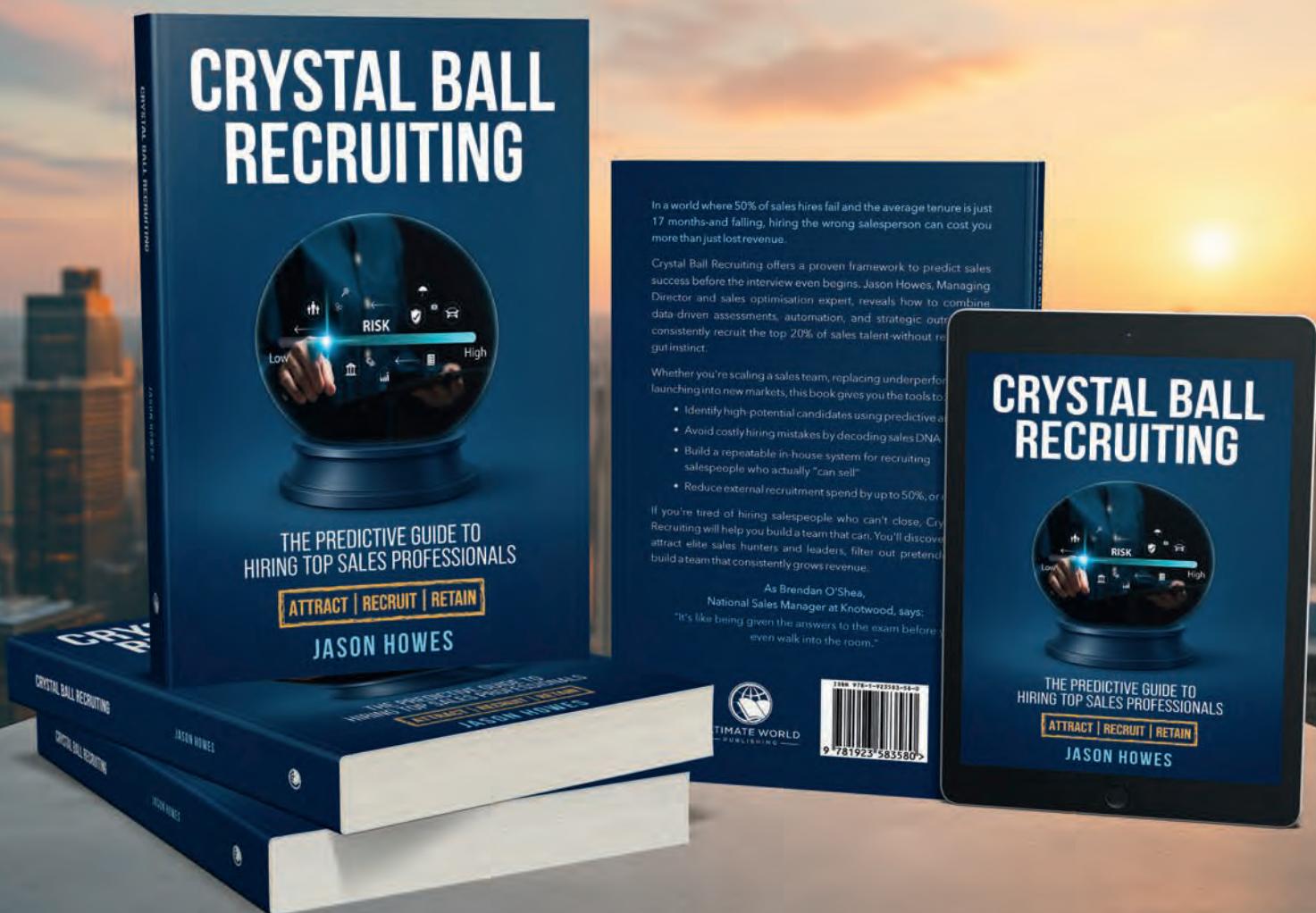
According to FWPA's analysis, the alignment between softwood sales and residential building activity became clearer from July 2025, suggesting that as approvals and commencements continue to edge up, processors may see even more consistent demand flows in 2026 if macroeconomic conditions hold.

"We're beginning to see positive signals for the timber industry, with demand incrementally increasing," said Kevin Peachey, Head of Built Environment Programs at FWPA. For processors, that translates into greater confidence in forward planning, inventory allocation and product mix optimisation – all essential for maintaining margins in a competitive environment.

For more on FWPA's industry data supporting decision making, [click here](#).

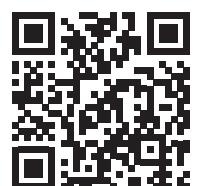
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New log haulage resources

ForestWorks has launched its new Log Haulage Manual and videos.

LAST year's new Log Haulage Industry Code of Practice (LHC) was released by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) with the stated aim of improving safety in the industry.

Now, ForestWorks is helping to implement these changes with its new Log Haulage Manual for the Forestry Log Haulage Code of Practice and a companion suite of educational training videos.

These resources provide concise, practical guidance to support safer log transport.

NHVR acting chief safety and productivity officer Kelli Walker said at the time of the Code's release that, after several years of development, the LHC offered a practical guide for anyone conducting business in the forestry sector.

"We're extremely pleased to release the LHC after working closely with the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) and the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)," Walker said.

"These associations, along with industry representatives, stakeholders and vehicle and equipment manufacturers, helped to recognise key issues in log haulage, such as the risk of vehicle rollover, and load loss.

"This new Code strikes a balance between detailed recommendations and practical information, to help an industry which operates in many different environments, with different kinds of products."

ForestWork's Log Haulage Manual for the Code of Practice and three supporting training videos will improve safety and consistency across log transport operations in line with the LHC. Developed with input from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, industry bodies, experts and training providers, the materials are free to access and designed for both personal and business training use.

An industry-owned not-for-profit organisation, ForestWorks delivers skills development services for the forest, wood, paper, timber and other industries. It relies heavily on expert industry input



ForestWork's Log Haulage Manual is designed to help drivers and businesses implement the new Code of Practice. All images: ForestWorks

and has focused on making its resources accessible.

The manual explains how safety duties under the Heavy Vehicle National Law and Workplace Health and Safety legislation apply to everyday forestry operations. It focuses on the areas that matter most to risk reduction, including load restraint, vehicle condition, forest road driving, site communication, and worker fitness for duty. Legal obligations and responsibilities are clearly explained and – even for employed drivers outside the chain of responsibility – there are valuable hands-on safety tips and guidance for when things aren't right.

The first video, Load and Secure Logs, is introduced by Alan Pincott, heavy vehicle rollover expert at ATSSS, and demonstrates effective load preparation and restraint, including headboards and tailboards, stanchions and bolsters, lashing systems, and verification checks before and during a journey as well as team responsibilities for maximum safety

“TOGETHER, THE MANUAL AND VIDEOS PROVIDE AN INTEGRATED TOOLKIT

and the importance of communication and drivers feeling confident to advocate for their rights. It features commentary from specialists including Linda Cotterill, haulage and sales manager at Forestry Corporation NSW, Chris Dwyer, owner C&T Dwyer Logging and Haulage, Andrew Groves Sr, owner G&J Groves and Dwayne Kerrison, general manager at Orana Enterprises. These experts cover the breadth of the topic and provide practical tips on ensuring compliance at all stages of the chain of responsibility.

The second, Driving Safely on Forestry Roads, is also introduced by Pincott and again features Kerrison. It covers topics such as reassuring other road users about their safety, as well as fatigue, knowing your vehicle, load assessment, route assessment, speed selection, rollover risk, use of safety systems, radio communication, and the additional care needed where surfaces are uneven or visibility changes quickly.

It includes a demonstration of low speed swept paths: the amount a trailer cuts in closer to a corner than the prime mover does. Four highly skilled drivers take common rigs with different prime mover/trailer combinations through a

Cont P 15



1



2



3



4

1/ Alan Pincott, heavy vehicle rollover expert at ATSSS, introduces two of the videos, sharing his expertise.

2/ Dwayne Kerrison, general manager at Orana Enterprises, gives hands-on advice on on loading and driving.

3/ Linda Cotterill, haulage and sales manager at Forestry Corporation NSW, shares her tips on safe loading.

4/ Andrew Groves Sr, owner G&J Groves, talks about the practices that keep his workers safe.

5/ Amanda Bell, forestry industry safety manager at AFPA, talks drivers through a stretching program as well as outlining personal safety tactics.

All images: ForestWorks

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marked course, with clear differences in their movement.

Finally, Safety Practices in Forestry Log Haulage is narrated by Amanda Bell, forestry industry safety manager at AFPA. It focuses on the safety of log haulage drivers themselves and addresses safe

access and egress, manual handling, fatigue and distraction awareness, personal protective equipment and reporting procedures for hazards and near misses. A range of basic exercises and stretching are



5

demonstrated to give drivers an easy routine to work the knots out.

Together, the manual and videos provide an integrated toolkit that can be used in inductions, toolbox talks, on-the-job coaching, and formal training programs delivered by Registered Training Organisations. The content is concise and easy to navigate, with a focus on practical actions that improve safety and compliance.

To access all the new materials from ForestWorks, click [here](#).

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The Forest welcomes students

The University of Tasmania continues its commitment to sustainability with this timber-rich re-imagining of the old Forestry Building.

DELEGATES and members of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) and Tasmanian Forest Products Association CEO Nick Steel were among the first to journey through The Forest last Friday, as part of the official launch of the new timber-focused University of Tasmania building in Hobart.

For the past four years in a row, the University of Tasmania has been rated as the number one university in the world on climate action, having made a commitment to world-leading sustainability outcomes. The Forest delivers on this commitment.

A landmark \$131 million restoration project, The Forest is a new study precinct that provides cutting-edge and accessible facilities for students and staff, as well as a regenerated living forest beneath the heritage entry dome.

Previously, the heritage-listed complex on Hobart's Melville Street was known as the Forestry Building and had been home to Crisp & Gun, who used it for offices and a dry timber store and sawmill, and, later, Forestry Tasmania. During the latter's tenure, a 22-metre dome-shaped conservatory was built, with large Oregon and hardwood trusses salvaged from other parts of the building for the construction. This indoor forest home won multiple awards in 1997–98.

Sadly, within 20 years the plants were gone and parts of the design could have been lost forever, until the University of Tasmania stepped in and bought the building in 2018.



1

1/ Britton Timbers MD Shawn Britton (left) with TFPA CEO Nick Steel.



2

2/ Timbers were sourced from multiple local suppliers, including Britton Timbers.



3

3/ A living forest is growing beneath the dome in The Forest's atrium.



4

4/ The Forest is part of an educational precinct that reuses 60% of the old warehouses already on site, resulting in 40% less embodied carbon than in a comparable building. All photos: Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)

The planning and design process took a long time, with the university's sustainability concerns driving many of the decisions. However, the result has been very much worth the wait.

Designed by Woods Bagot with landscape architecture by REALMstudios, the reimagined Forestry Building on now offers a superb classroom and interactive study experience that prioritises on-campus teaching, with spaces for presentations, seminars, large or small classes, group study sessions, and studying with friends.

Goals included re-using much of the original fabric of the buildings. This one was very much scored with 60% of the existing structures being retained. This, plus an emphasis on materials such as timber and hempcrete, resulted in a 40% saving in embodied carbon on a similar new build. Locally sourced timber structures and products were prioritised, including PEFC-certified timbers from Britton Timbers.

Additionally, the new structures are demountable, allowing for reconfiguration if the university's needs change. It's currently the southern home to the university's schools of Humanities

Cont P 17

Statement from Responsible Wood on unfounded PEFC claims

CEO Simon Dorries has made a public comment regarding a recent activist myth.

RESPONSIBLE Wood is aware of claims questioning the integrity of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) forest certification scheme in relation to an Australian retailer's timber supply arrangements. The claims are incorrect and misrepresent how forest certification operates in Australia.

The foundation of PEFC certification is timber that is sourced legally, deforestation-free and has followed an ethical and responsible supply chain, which has been verified by a recent independent review commissioned by Forest & Wood Products Australia. The system includes 215 different sustainability indicators



The PEFC eco label is a trustworthy symbol backed up by verified supply chains. Image: Responsible Wood

including biodiversity, cultural heritage and environmental and social safeguards that

forest managers must meet to maintain certification.

Further, an independently audited process exists to ensure continual improvement where non-conformances are met with corrective actions, with escalation to suspension or withdrawal of certification if not addressed.

As the national governing body for PEFC in Australia, Responsible Wood supports credible assurance systems that build confidence in responsible forest management and verified supply chains. We stand by PEFC-endorsed certification as a robust, audited framework and remain committed to continual improvement through transparent standard-setting and independent oversight.

From P 16

and Social Sciences, Business and Economics and Social Work, as well as University College, the Tasmanian Policy Exchange, the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, and Higher Degree by Research students, and teams of professional staff.

The entry dome on Melville Street has been brought back to life with Tasmanian forest plants and is open to the public, with access through the building to Brisbane Street. While 300 staff and up to 3000 students will be officially based in The

Forest, all students and the community are welcome to use the precinct's 300 study seats as a hub.

Next to the dome, space has been created for local businesses, industry and government to engage and collaborate with university students and staff.

Vice-Chancellor Professor

“ THE FOREST PROVIDES A CONVENIENTLY LOCATED HUB TO STUDY AND GROW

Rufus Black said The Forest would provide access to enhanced learning experiences and job opportunities for Tasmanians: "With more students working throughout their studies, and more jobs in the future requiring tertiary education, The Forest provides a conveniently located hub to study and grow.

"It's a place for the community to experience their university, either as visitors or as students. This is where students, staff, businesses, and community members can share ideas and experiences in a welcoming and accessible space for all."



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