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ISSUE 886 // 19 February 2026

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news



## Forestry Centre of Excellence opens

COVER STORY P2

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# New Forestry Centre of Excellence opens

The building is a celebration of timber and will bring together experts from across academia, industry and government.

SOUTH Australia's \$16 million Forestry Centre of Excellence (FCoE) officially opened its new purpose-built facility last Thursday in Mount Gambier.

A joint production between the South Australian government, Adelaide University and the forest industry, the FCoE is designed as an education, training and research precinct, bringing together government, industry and research partners to drive greater sustainability and innovation in the forestry sector.

With timber both a major economic driver in the region and the only genuinely sustainable material for addressing the nation's housing and building needs, the facility seeks to marry cutting-edge research with industry know-how, delivering results that will drive a greener future.

Since 2024, the FCoE has been operating out of temporary accommodation, under the directorship of Professor Jeff Morrell since 2025.

"The Forestry Centre of Excellence is about delivering practical, industry-led research that supports the future of Australia's forestry sector," Prof Morrell said.



**The new centre will speed collaboration between academia and industry.** Image: PIRSA.

"We will be working closely with growers, processors and product manufacturers to address real challenges such as productivity, sustainability, climate resilience and the development of high-value timber products.

"By translating science into solutions, the centre will ensure the industry continues to innovate, adapt, provide secure jobs and remain globally competitive in a rapidly changing market."

The purpose-built facility includes research spaces and a laboratory, meeting and administrative areas and an area with educational materials about the Green Triangle. Built from locally produced plantation timbers, CLT and glulam, the building itself is a showcase of Australian timbers and was recently gifted a Bunganditji name by the local Burrandies Corporation: Wiba Budamana,

which means 'to search for knowledge'.

The FCoE facility will also house the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub and Tree Breeding Australia, and is sited close to Adelaide University Mount Gambier, the Mount Gambier Technical College and Mount Gambier TAFE. These close links will naturally create strong pathways between research, skills development and industry.

The centre was officially opened by The Hon Clare Scriven MLC, Minister for Forest industries, Professor Nicola Phillips, Adelaide University Vice Chancellor and President, and Nathan Paine, CEO SAFPA.

"The Forestry Centre of Excellence is a powerful example of how university research can deliver significant benefits for our regional communities, the industries they support, and the environment we all depend on," Prof Phillips said.

"By co-locating world-class Adelaide University researchers with industry partners in the heart of the Green Triangle, ideas will be translated more efficiently from the lab to the plantation and processing floor."

Minister Scriven described the Green Triangle region as "one of the powerhouses of the Australian forest

Cont P 3

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From P 2

sector, helping to drive economic growth, attracting investment and supporting local growth”.

She said, “This centre is about backing one of our state’s great regional success stories with world-class research, innovation and skills, ensuring the forestry sector remains strong, sustainable and competitive well into the future.”

SAFPA’s Nathan Paine warmly welcomed the delivery of this State Government commitment at the launch. “Too often in regional Australia, we see good ideas announced but never delivered,” said Paine. “Today shows what’s possible when Government listens, commits and follows through, and I wish to thank Premier Peter Malinauskas and Minister for Forest Industries, Clare Scriven, for their continued investment and vision for the region.”

He described the opening of the Centre as cementing Mount Gambier’s status as a hub of forestry expertise and leadership for national and international thought leaders.

“It underscores the role of regional industries in South Australia’s economic



1

1/ Minister Clare Scriven and Professor Nicola Phillips cutting the ribbon. Image: Minister Scriven’s office



2

2/ The centre was officially opened by (left to right) The Hon Clare Scriven MLC, Minister for Forest industries, Professor Nicola Phillips, Adelaide University Vice Chancellor and President, and Nathan Paine, CEO SAFPA. Image: SAFPA

growth and decarbonisation future and demonstrates the outcomes that can be achieved when Government and industry work together toward shared goals,” Paine said.

To learn more about the FCoE, click here.

**On the cover: Dignitaries at the official opening (from left), Dr Jim O’Hehir, FCoE general manager; Nathan Paine, CEO SAFPA; The Hon Clare Scriven MLC, Minister for Forest industries; Professor Jeff Morrell, FCoE director; Professor Nicola Phillips, Adelaide University Vice Chancellor and President. Image: Minister Scriven’s office**

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# Vale Vic Gabriel

AFTER a long battle with cancer, Vic Gabriel has passed away on 14 February, 2026 at the age of 74.

Stephen Chehab announced the loss on Allied Forest Product's social media, saying, "It is with great sadness we announce the passing of our dear colleague and long-time account manager of the Allied family, Vic Gabriel."

"Vic was an industry icon with over his 50+ years of service to our great industry, working for firms such as Mallison, Parbury Henty, Alstregen, Le Messurier, Swan Timber, Tilling Timber and Allied Forest Products from 2012-2021."

"Vic was part of the Chehab family well before he started with us in 2012. Most of his dearest customers felt the same. The world has lost a great person



1/ Vic Gabriel (right) with two of his work family, Kieran Chehab (left) and Stephen Chehab.

2/ Vic made his clients and colleagues feel instantly welcomed and at home – or somewhere where there might also be a great meal, as here dining with Kieran Chehab at Darling Harbour.

3/ Superlatively good at his job, Vic was also a joy to be around. He will be very much missed by all who knew him.

All images: Stephen Chehab

who was truly larger than life, but it's comforting to know he is reunited with his wife Sharon."

Vic is survived by his children Shane and Ashley.



Australian Forest Products Association

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

## Interim CEO appointed for Homes Tasmania

BEN Wilson has been appointed interim Chief Executive Officer of Homes Tasmania, stepping down from his role as Chair of the Homes Tasmania Board.

The appointment has been welcomed by the housing sector. HIA executive director Tasmania, Benjamin Price, said it comes at a critical time for Tasmania's housing system.

"HIA has expressed significant concern about the performance of Homes Tasmania over recent years. The scale of Tasmania's housing need demands an agency with strong leadership, clear direction, and a focus on partnering with industry to deliver the homes Tasmanians urgently need," Price said.



HIA's Benjamin Price welcomed the appointment. Image: supplied

"Today's appointment signals a genuine opportunity to hit reset and put delivery back at the centre of Homes Tasmania's agenda."

"Ben Wilson brings a strong and credible track record in housing development in Tasmania. A former president of HIA in Tasmania, Ben brings unparalleled insight into the residential construction sector and a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the building industry."

# NSW strengthens biosecurity systems

## A new compliance unit will help enforce biosecurity legislation and regulations in NSW.

A NEW dedicated Biosecurity Compliance and Investigation Unit has been set up by the Minns Labor Government to strengthen biosecurity, tackle high-risk threats, and safeguard market access and trade.

The new unit, in the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Compliance Branch, will employ six full-time staff to focus on biosecurity issues threatening the State's \$25 billion primary industries sector.

With more than 340 weed species and 40 pest animal species costing NSW at least \$1.9 billion annually, the specialised unit will support and strengthen the work of all agencies responsible for biosecurity compliance and enforcement across the state.

The creation of the unit was a key recommendation of the Natural Resources Commission Invasive Species Management review and supports recommendations by the former Independent Biosecurity Commissioner.

The unit will

- respond to biosecurity risks and support on-ground surveillance activities across the state and at state borders for threats such as red imported fire ant and cattle tick.
- work with other agencies including Local Land Services and Local Control Authorities to expand compliance and enforcement capabilities for pest and weed management, including feral pigs and deer.
- undertake compliance operations to support the National eID program critical to maintaining access to the state's domestic and international livestock markets.

The dedicated Biosecurity Compliance and Investigation Unit follows the government's release of the NSW Biosecurity Action Plan 2025-2026, which outlined six focus areas to improve the biosecurity framework in NSW.



**Tara Moriarty, Minister for Regional New South Wales.** Image: supplied

This new unit will help deliver key commitments in the action plan, including the delivery of a new regulatory policy for biosecurity compliance in NSW, and regulatory guidance to ensure landholders, industry and community understand their biosecurity responsibilities.

Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW, Tara Moriarty, said, "This is about strengthening our biosecurity response and protecting our multi-billion-dollar primary

industries export and international markets.

"This sends a clear message, if you breach biosecurity protocols and laws then there will be a price to pay. With this new specialised team, the NSW Government is taking strong action to protect our state from invasive species and other major biosecurity threats.

"We are strengthening our compliance and enforcement providing the resources needed to keep NSW safe and secure. Biosecurity is critical, and this team will ensure we stay ahead of the risks facing our communities, industries and environment," Moriarty concluded.

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# Komatsu 895 Firefighters strengthen southern forest protection

MECHANISED firefighting capability across southern NSW and eastern Victoria has taken a significant step forward, with five Komatsu forwarders now operating RL21 Firefighting Kits in some of Australia's most fire-prone forest regions.

Four Komatsu 895 Forwarders and one Komatsu 890 are currently deployed across Orbost, Bega, Bombala, Canberra, Tumut and Albury/Wodonga forest regions. The machines are operated by Rodwell Logging, Retreev Pty Ltd, West Terrain Pty Ltd and Forestry Corporation NSW, forming a growing frontline response network along the NSW/Victorian border.

## PURPOSE-BUILT FOR RAPID RESPONSE

The RL21 Firefighting Kit was designed and developed by Peter and Mark Rodwell of Rodwell Logging, supported by funding through the Federal Government's Disaster Resilience Program.

Built around a 21,000-litre tank, including a 3000-litre emergency safety reserve, the unit features a high-velocity pump, dual water cannons and full in-cab controls, allowing operators to work safely within the protected forwarder cabin.

Engineered specifically for the Komatsu 895 platform, the RL21 mounts securely to the rear chassis and can be fitted or removed in less than two hours. Full crane functionality is retained, ensuring operational flexibility.

"The ability to respond quickly to early-stage fire starts in remote areas significantly reduces the likelihood of major disasters," said Peter Rodwell.

He points to a recent lightning strike in Bondi State Forest near the Victorian border. Early detection systems triggered a rapid deployment of the Komatsu



1/ The RL21 Firefighting Kit mounted on a Komatsu forwarder.  
2/ The RL21 Firefighting Kit being demonstrated for local foresters in the NSW/Victorian border region. All images: Komatsu Australia

895 Firefighter alongside a bulldozer, successfully suppressing what could have escalated into a major fire event.

Rodwell's longer-term vision is to see contractors within each forest region form cooperative firefighting groups, enabling forwarder owners to rapidly mount firefighting units and respond before fires gain momentum.

Outside the fire season, the versatility of the platform continues to prove valuable. One of Rodwell Logging's 895 Firefighters operates part time in road line spraying, where its large tank capacity has delivered clear efficiency gains over conventional systems. Otherwise both 895s are working in the company's Visy harvesting contract.

## LESSONS FROM MAJOR FIRE EVENTS

For Victorian contractor Retreev Pty

Ltd, the decision to invest in the RL21 followed firsthand experience of the devastating 2020 fires.

Owner Dean Venturoni took delivery of an RL21 unit in October 2024, mounting it to his existing Komatsu 895 with more than 5000 hours on the clock. The machine was soon tested during the major Walwa River Road fires, which burned approximately 130,000 hectares, including 11,000 hectares of pine plantation.

Operating extensively in native forest, the Komatsu 895 Firefighter was used for backburning, black outing and control line establishment, helping save several thousand hectares. Ready access to nearby dams enabled efficient 20- to 30-minute refill cycles, while the machine's large water capacity proved critical in protecting equipment during fast-moving fire fronts.

Over a three-week period, the unit logged nearly 400 hours of 24/7 operation and played a key role in protecting an additional 2000 hectares of young pine plantation.

"Many people are yet to fully appreciate the Firefighter's capability, its water volume, delivery rate, terrain mobility and speed in blacked-out areas," said Venturoni. "Just as important is having an experienced forwarder operator who understands how to use the machine effectively."

He believes that deploying multiple units within each forest region would significantly reduce fire impacts during severe summer conditions, a view echoed by Peter Rodwell.

## EXPANDING INDUSTRY CAPABILITY

In Orbost, West Terrain Pty Ltd fitted an

## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

### 28 FEBRUARY: REGISTRATIONS CLOSE.

Forestry Workforce Training Program (FWTP) – EOIs are open if you or your team would be interested in funded training that supports transferable capability and digital literacy for new entrants and operators and/or leadership pathways for supervisors and emerging leaders. Places are limited. Register now: <https://forestworks.com.au/forestry-workforce-training-program/project-2-implementing-stackable-micro-credentials-for-essential-industry-skills/#tab-pilot-eisenrolmentsopen>

## MARCH

### 4: Timber Queensland Webinar – ONLINE, 11.00am (AEST).

Sustainability by design – the impact of certified timber in the build environment Webinar presenter – Lara Maesele. 2025 Australian Timber Design award-winning architect. Sponsored by RW and PEFC. For registrations: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_SuLb26lcQNSg\\_JepfM1MOQ#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SuLb26lcQNSg_JepfM1MOQ#/registration)

### 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](mailto: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.sydnebuildexpo.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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.fba-events.com) or contact [rafal@forest-analytics.com](mailto:rafal@forest-analytics.com)

## JUNE

### 9-11: SAVE THE DATE: Woodex Trade Exhibition – Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Africa's premier trade exhibition for timber, woodworking machinery, tools, and forestry. WoodEX for Africa has evolved into a true international event, consistently attracting visitors and exhibitors from more than 20 countries. Visit [www.woodexforafrica.com](http://www.woodexforafrica.com) for more information.

## 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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From P 6

RL21 to an existing Komatsu 890.3 in late 2024. With only minor modifications required, the machine now stands ready to operate across the Victorian Snowy River National Park region.

Meanwhile, Forestry Corporation NSW strengthened its southern pine plantation protection by acquiring a new Komatsu 895 Firefighter for the Tumut/Tumbarumba region, funded under the NSW Government's Plantation Fire Protection Package.

Roger Davies, Forestry Corporation NSW Regional Manager (Tumut), described the fire forwarder as a major step forward in both firefighting capacity and operator safety.

"It enhances our ability to reduce fuel loads during hazard reduction operations and suppress fires, lowering wildfire severity across the region," he said. The unit has already prevented a local fire from escalating into a major plantation event.



**Rodwell's RL21 Kit ready to be mounted on a Komatsu Forwarder.**

Two operators are currently accredited, with plans to expand capability across the industry.

### DISTRIBUTION

Komatsu Forest Pty Ltd has entered into a marketing agreement with Rodwell Logging to distribute the RL21 kit,

**“THE ABILITY TO RESPOND QUICKLY SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCES THE LIKELIHOOD OF MAJOR DISASTERS**

which has been specifically engineered for the Komatsu 895.1 and 895.2 platforms and requires only minor modification for the new 895.3. Currently they have a rigged Komatsu 895.2 Firefighter and three RL 21 Kits available for delivery.

With units now operating across key forest regions and more kits available for installation, the RL21-equipped Komatsu forwarders represent a practical, contractor-driven solution to improving early fire

intervention, strengthening protection for plantations, native forests and regional communities alike.

For further information, ask any specific question or to grab one of the RL21 kits in stock, please contact Komatsu Australia directly on 02 9647-3600 or email: [info.au@komatsuforest.com](mailto:info.au@komatsuforest.com) or visit the website [www.komatsuforest.com.au](http://www.komatsuforest.com.au)

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Image: Shutterstock



# New speakers for FA conference

FORESTRY Australia has announced additional speakers for its upcoming 2026 Forest Valuation Summit, exploring Valuing and Reporting Sustainability in our Forests.

## DR LYNDALL BULL, LYNEA ADVISORY

Dr Bull is a forester with expertise in innovation and the bioeconomy. She is Principal of Lynea Advisory, a specialist consulting business serving the global forest sector. Bull is also the Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on the Forest-Economy and Co-Lead for the IUFRO Task Force on Scaling-Up Science-based Forest-Sector Innovation. Until recently she was the Forestry Innovation Coordinator at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. She has a PhD in innovation in the forest sector from the University of Melbourne.



**(From left) Dr Lyndall Bull, Jodie Mason and Jessica Brown have all joined the list of speakers for Forestry Australia's 2026 Forest Valuation Summit.**  
Images: supplied

## JODIE MASON, FWPA

Mason is head of forest research at Forest & Wood Products Australia, managing RD&E projects and programs of benefit to forest growers. She has over 20 years' experience in forest management, with focus on operations, certification, forest carbon, and environmental auditing. She has worked in both native forest and plantation management and provided consulting services to the sectors for 15 years, across Australia and internationally.

## JESSICA BROWN, MARGULES GROOME

Brown started as an analyst with Hancock Forest Management (now Manulife) and for the past 10 years has been a consultant with Margules Groome Consulting. Her experience spans forest valuations, transaction support, and due diligence, with a strong focus on forest estate modelling. She has

led and contributed to projects across Australia, New Zealand, and wider Oceania, Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, and Europe.

The Summit will also feature the launch of the first Joint Australia New Zealand Forest Valuation Standard, an initiative of New Zealand Institute of Forestry and Forestry Australia, with the support of Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA).

For more information and to book, click [here](#).

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# AFCA delivers online tools for safety codes

The Australian Forest Contractors Association has delivered a comprehensive online toolkit to help its members navigate the new codes.

FOLLOWING on from our stories in *Enews* #885, the implementation of the new Log Haulage Code (LHC) and updated Master Code for Australia's heavy vehicle industry is being made easier by the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA).

Funded by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) through the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative (HVS), AFCA has worked with stakeholders from across the supply chain to develop industry guidance and gap analysis tools to:

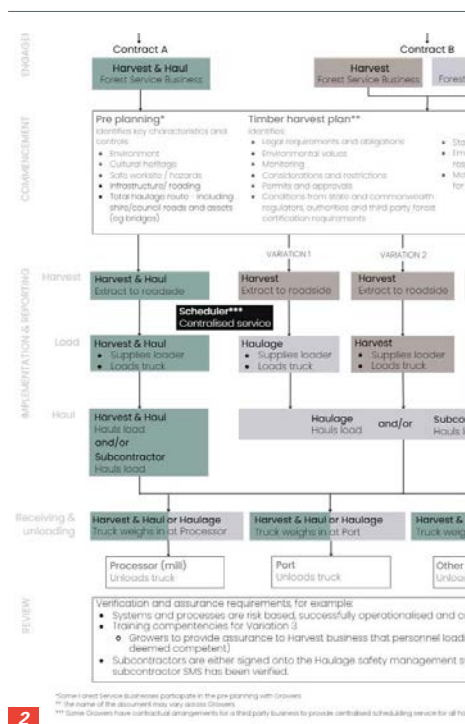
- Improve accessibility and understanding of the LHC.
- Support businesses in assessing and demonstrating compliance.
- Strengthen safety, assurance and commercial management practices across the forestry supply chain.

The online toolkit compiles multiple pieces of information essential to understand the changes into one easily accessible place. These include a comprehensive breakdown of log haulage acts, regulations and codes as



1/ The LHC and update Master Code are designed to make sure all forest contractors get home safely. Happily, no-one was injured in this accident. Image: Shutterstock/Travelstock by Powerhouse

2/ This flowchart from the toolkit shows how responsibility is shared and where various entities need to work together. Image: supplied



well as a flow-chart showing the chain of management and shared responsibility, highlighting areas where multiple entities may need to work together to mitigate risk. There are links to the codes, and overviews of various hazards and controls, as well as a comprehensive guide to what activities workplaces will need to implement in order to be compliant with the

LHC and Master Code.

The tool kit comes with downloadable templates and guidance including:

- Cumulative risk – protocol and gap analysis
- Decision and influence
- Simultaneous business operations

- Statement of work
- Subcontractors
- Training
- Verification and assurance.

The gap analysis for the LHC allows businesses to self-audit and find areas where processes or education need improvement, with the tool calling for each area requiring improvement to be assigned to a specific layer of the company and followed up – actions as important as the audit itself.

In addition, a cumulative risk gap analysis highlights commercial and operational pressures across the supply chain, strengthening visibility of shared risk exposure.

AFCA has also created a User Guide of quick tips that will guide you through the online tool and help you best use the information and the templates, which answers most questions and also explains how to download data to your own system for internal use.

Next Tuesday, AFCA will hold a live online demonstration and Q&A of the online tools, see box for details.

Email AFCA at [office@afca.asn.au](mailto:office@afca.asn.au) to receive the meeting link and calendar invite.

To access the quick tips user guide, click here. For access to the online tools, click here.

## ONLINE TOOLS DEMONSTRATION AND Q&A

AFCA will hold a live online event to show how to use and navigate the toolkit and provide guidance for people who have questions.

DATE: Tuesday 24 February

TIME: 1.00pm(AEDT)

EMAIL: AFCA at [office@afca.asn.au](mailto:office@afca.asn.au) to receive the meeting link and calendar invite



# Timber at centre of drug crime

WE all know the cost of timber has gone up in recent years, but criminals in NSW and Queensland have taken it to ridiculous levels in recent months.

Detectives from the NSW Police Force and Queensland Police recently uncovered \$14 million worth of cocaine – about 100kg – concealed in tonnes of timber boards.

The crime involved multiple locations with planks being stored in sheds in the Gold Coast and Lismore.

Police investigations commenced in August last year, before a 33-year-old man was arrested in Sydney in January, followed by four men in their 40s and 50s being arrested in Queensland and a 33-year-old man being arrested on the NSW Far North Coast last week.

NSW Police Detective Superintendent John Watson told the media that the planks had been soaked in a cocaine solution in order to transport the drug without detection and that a later extraction process would have been used to reconstitute the drug.



1/ **The cocaine was impregnated into the boards and required a chemical process to extract.** Photo: Queensland Police Service



2/ **Police found timber stored in sheds in NSW and Queensland.** Image: NSW Police Force

Watson said the partnership between NSW Police and Queensland police was critical to the police's success.

"Information flowed quickly, resources were shared, and the result is a major disruption to organised crime," he said.

"Criminal groups continue to evolve their methods, and this attempt to conceal cocaine within timber products was highly calculated. Our teams were ready for it, and their action ensured

drugs never made the streets."

Queensland Acting Detective Superintendent Brad Phelps said, "This investigation highlights the lengths that organised criminal syndicates will go to in order to attempt to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies.

"This concealment methodology, of impregnating cocaine into timber planks, had not been detected in Queensland previously."

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# Data-driven science delivers good news for Tasmanian forests

**Dr Marie Yee's research shows regrowth forests with similar biodiversity to old growth.**

DR Marie Yee, senior conservation planner for Sustainable Timber Tasmania, is the guest on Episode 40 of Tasmanian Timber's Original Thinkers podcast.

Discussing biodiversity in managed forests, Yee told the podcast team that she originally came to Tasmania from Sydney after graduating in science ecology and then working her way south.

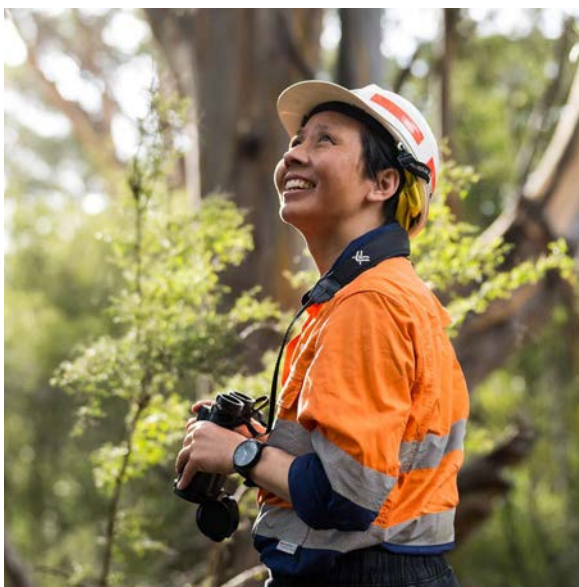
"A project popped up to look at the impacts of clear-felling within Tasmania. As a uni student, I was quite passionate about the environment: protesting against big corporations and old-growth logging in Tasmania. And so, when the opportunity came to do a project here, to actually do some science and get some facts about what is the impact of this practice on biodiversity..." suffice to say the results were revelatory and Yee has made her home and career in Tasmania ever since.

She described her attitude at the start of the project that brought her to the state as zealous, but as she was writing up her thesis and analysing the data, she found that comparing areas that had been clear-felled in the 1960s and 70s (20-30-year-old forest at the time of the study) with old-growth forest gave similar results for species richness (number of species).

"The diversity is still there," Yee said. "There's some slight differences in the species... because there are some species that like old forest, some that like young forest, and some that don't care.

"...I realised they were actually very progressive already in the early 2000s and the people who put those practices in place were people who worked within the industry."

"There's so much biodiversity out there, even in areas that have been harvested by clear-felling back in the 60s and 70s," she said, while also noting



**Dr Marie Yee.** Image: Tasmanian Timber

that practices had very much improved since those times. "Not necessarily the same as an old growth forest, which is why it's really important to leave older patches and leave large logs and have mechanisms in place at the landscape scale, but we've still got so much biodiversity and habitat."

Yee chose Tasmanian forests as the location for her PhD on beetles in various types of forest logs. The local practice of leaving deadwood in situ and a patchwork of age classes in the managed forests led to an abundance of specimens, unlike northern European forests where many beetles are on the red list.

Her career now emphasises a landscape-scale view with a mosaic of age classes and corridors of reserves to help species that prefer older species to move across the landscape, by both latitude and longitude. Rather than focusing on specific coupes, Yee

encourages a view of the whole landscape, dividing it into natural needs and harvestable areas.

She spoke about the various types of harvesting and balancing habitat, worker safety and regrowth at the stand scale as well as at a macro level, describing it as an evolving field and sharing some of the complexities in the planning process.

Far from seeing the swift parrots and other threatened species in managed Tasmanian forests as problems, Yee described their appearance in these forests as a sign that biodiversity had returned to harvested

areas and discussed management strategies for ensuring their safety within the forest estate.

Yee was asked about whether she thought native forestry should continue and replied that to her mind, there wasn't an alternative for either supplying some timber classes with the tight restrictions of Australian forestry rather than more lax ones overseas, nor for large landscape fire management.

"The business model that we have with native forestry and our firefighting team and all the resources of road access and being out there looking after the forest, maintaining its health – it works. And that includes native forestry as part of that business model."

A major theme of the interview is how the data dispels the activist positions that pit forest 'defenders' against 'plunderers'. Instead, Yee articulates a data-based position that steps away from politics and looks at the way well-managed forestry can result in sustainable habitats for humans as well as wildlife.

[Click here for the full podcast.](#)



**WE'VE STILL GOT SO MUCH BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT**



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# New \$81 million project

## A 30,000-hectare plantation on the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory is welcome news.

MATT Brann from ABC Rural has reported on a major new project on the Tiwi Islands. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and fund manager River Capital have committed \$81 million to a forestry carbon project. It will involve planting 30,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees, which are expected to produce 12 million m<sup>3</sup> of high-value wood products, as well as 5 million nature-based carbon credits over the life span of the project.

The trees will be managed by Midway Limited and the local Tiwi Plantations Corporation, in what is understood to be Australia's largest First Nations-led carbon initiative.

Brann spoke to Midway Limited's CEO, Tony McKenna, who said "It's really exciting that we've been able to introduce Clean Energy Finance Corporation and River Capital as major investors into the project.

"[This will] create long-term employment and income for the Tiwi people, and it's been really exciting to be part of bringing it all together."

The area to be used has previously been plantation land, with old tree crops either already harvested or at the end



**Unlike its American namesake, red mahogany, *Eucalyptus pellita*, is a robust tree that can survive cyclonic conditions.** Image: CC Wikimedia Commons

of their harvest cycle. The chosen new plantation species, *Eucalyptus pellita*, commonly known as red mahogany, is a fast-growing subtropical species that is better known in south-east Asia than in the Australian market. It has been trialled

on the island for 20 years, with success in both growing rates and good, straight stems for best timber recovery.

"It's dealt well with the cyclonic events we have in the Tiwis," McKenna added. "We can [go into the project] with a lot of confidence that it will grow really well and produce a good product at the end."

The resulting hardwood timbers are expected to be sold as structural members, as well as furniture and decking, to the local and international markets, with hopes that it will deliver a sustainable alternative to states that have closed their native timber industries.

The carbon credit unit system means there is revenue for the plantation upfront, changing the economics of the proposition and helping the Islanders to make this investment with minimal risk – at the same time as locking up a large quantity of carbon for the life of the timbers. Job growth is already underway with seedling nurseries and planting having begun.

To listen to the whole interview, click [here](#).

To learn more about the project, click [here](#).

## Responsible Wood in the classroom

STUDENTS from St Edmund's College Canberra recently examined sustainability beyond the textbook, with a presentation from Responsible Wood Sustainability Manager Matt de Jongh.

The session explored how Australia's managed forests supply renewable materials while supporting biodiversity and long-term forest health, covering forest management, certification and the use of timber in construction.

"We're helping students understand how resource choices influence environmental outcomes over time," said de Jongh.

"Certification is crucial because it gives consumers confidence that

the forest will still be there tomorrow – healthier and more resilient than before. Teaching the next generation about responsible forestry empowers them to make informed choices that benefit the planet and our communities."

The visit reflects increasing interest from schools in sustainability topics that connect environmental science with real-world land and resource management.

As de Jongh noted in closing, "when we choose certified timber,



**Matt de Jongh at St Edmund's College Canberra.** Image: Responsible Wood

we're choosing a future built on renewable materials, healthy forests and responsible stewardship. That's a message every young Australian should hear."





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# Condensation management technical guide

## New guide supports NCC-compliant condensation management for modern construction.

RISING energy efficiency standards have significantly increased insulation and airtightness in modern construction, fundamentally changing how moisture moves through buildings. While better-sealed building envelopes improve performance, they also reduce pathways for water vapour to dissipate, leading to a marked rise in moisture-related issues across Australian buildings. Condensation is therefore a major risk that must be considered early in the design process, regardless of construction material.

In response, WoodSolutions – an initiative of industry body Forest & Wood Products Australia, has released a new Technical Design Guide: Condensation Management in Timber Construction. The guide supports best practice for insulation and construction membranes specification to manage the flow of heat, air, and moisture to avoid surface and interstitial condensation in lightweight and mass timber construction. The guide reinforces the fact that timber buildings are durable and high performing when moisture is properly managed.

As condensation challenges are not exclusive to timber construction, these same principles apply to many different construction materials.

“Most condensation issues arise from design and detailing, rather than the material itself,” said WoodSolutions’ head of built environment programs, Kevin Peachey.

“Effective condensation management relies on informed design, correct specification of insulation and membranes, and a clear understanding of regulatory requirements.

“When done well, these activities support National Construction Code (NCC) compliance, reduces risk and liability across the supply chain, and builds confidence



### Condensation Management in Timber Construction

Technical Design Guide issued by Forest and Wood Products Australia

**The new WoodSolutions’ Technical Design Guide: Condensation Management in Timber Construction.** Image: supplied

in timber, particularly for mid-rise and multi-residential projects.”

The guide explains condensation requirements under the NCC, outlining performance obligations and compliance pathways, including Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions and verification methods, while examining condensation risk across Australia’s four NCC climate zones. Critical contributing factors

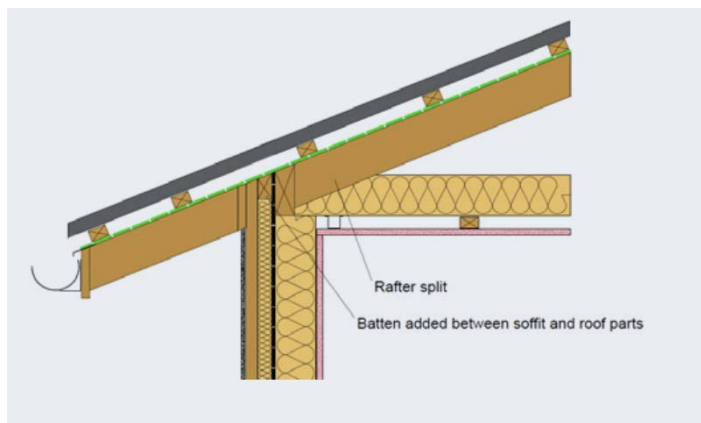
such as climate control of moisture during construction, the influence of temperature, and key junctions where moisture is likely to gather are also addressed in detail.

While condensation is often perceived as a minor issue, a nationwide survey by the Australian Building Codes Board found that more than 40 per cent of new buildings (across all manner of building materials) show evidence of condensation and mould. These moisture-related issues can contribute to mould growth, occupant health concerns – including increases in allergies and asthma – and structural deterioration, as well as increased defects, rework and project risk, reinforcing the importance of informed design and appropriate specification for all building materials.

Available for free from the WoodSolutions website, this guide has been created to help architects, engineers, builders and specifiers design timber buildings that perform over the long term. By addressing one of the construction industry’s timber specification challenges, it supports confidence in specifying timber products for broad applications, and the delivery of healthier, more durable and resilient buildings.

The new guide is designed to sit alongside existing materials such as WoodSolutions’ overview and series of guides on managing moisture in timber (click here for links). It is number 57 in WoodSolutions’ Design Guide series and continues the authority’s goal of extending the percentage of construction specified as timber through independent, non-proprietary technical information, education and resources.

Click here to download the new Condensation Management guide.



**Figure 34b: Junction between a timber-framed exterior wall and pitched roof**

**The guide includes guidance for detailing lightweight timber-framed and mass-timber buildings.** Image: supplied



# NZ wildfire research focuses on beech forests

## New research is putting the litter bed flammability of New Zealand's beech forests under the microscope.

WARMER, drier weather is becoming more common as climate change drives heating events in the Pacific. Accordingly, scientists are now researching events which were previously considered unlikely.

New Zealand's Bioeconomy Science Institute's extreme wildfire research team and Lincoln University academic staff are jointly supervising student Georgia Stevenson, who is conducting ignition experiments in north-west Canterbury beech forests between now and April as part of her PhD.

These experiments – the first to examine litter flammability and conduct field-based ignition tests in any native forest type in Aotearoa NZ – are taking place at two locations near Craigieburn on New Zealand's South Island. The tests are small in scale, with flames only allowed to spread for 30cm before being extinguished.

Through these experiments, Stevenson will evaluate the thresholds at which beech forests can ignite and spread. Her main aim is to identify the conditions under which litter beds will ignite and develop into self-sustained wildfires in mountain or black beech forests in the region.

"It's essential to understand litter flammability for effective fire management," Stevenson said. "Results from this research aim to help the prediction and management of wildfires in these forests."

The timing of the experiments is weather-dependent but they will run

on up to 15 days throughout the planned timeframe. Stevenson has Department of Conservation authorisation to do the research.

Seven attempts at ignition have been made so far, over two burn days. "Most of these haven't succeeded," Stevenson said. "The litter has been too damp, and we're hoping for drier and warmer conditions so we can conduct tests until we get a self-sustaining ignition."

Bioeconomy Science Institute fire ecologist Shana Gross says wildfires in these forests present a significant challenge for conservation and the management of landscape fire risk. "Several significant wildfires have impacted native beech rainforests in NZ over the past decade," Gross said.

"New Zealand forests are not considered very flammable because they're often too wet to burn. However, everything can burn when conditions align, as we saw in the 2024 Bridge Hill fire that burned a significant amount of beech forest in the Craigieburn area. Stevenson's research is helping identify the conditions under which a native forest no longer acts as a fire break – and where we would lose these important ecosystems."

"In NZ, the fuel moisture conditions we use as part of the fire weather warning system were developed for pine forests," Gross added. "Stevenson's research is an



**PhD student Georgia Stevenson (L) and summer scholar Coral Peat conducting ignition tests in Craigieburn Forest Park.** Image: supplied

important step in helping us understand how these fuel moisture conditions relate to the fire hazard in NZ's beech forests."

The Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao brings together New Zealand's four leading bioeconomy research institutes (AgResearch, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, Plant & Food Research and Scion) into a single organisation. As Crown Research Institute, it links over 1500 scientists with academic, government, industry, cultural bodies and more.

Stevenson's experiments are part of and funded by a larger Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment project aimed at better understanding when native forests will ignite and when fires will escalate into extreme wildfires. The Brian Mason Scientific and Technical Trust has also contributed funding to Stevenson's project.

Strict safety protocols will be in place for all experiments. These include keeping the ignition tests at a small scale and always having a team of firefighters and their equipment on hand.



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