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ISSUE 890 // 19 March 2026

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news

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## Industry secondment advances research and business

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# Forests and economies

## This International Day of Forests celebrates the value of trees.

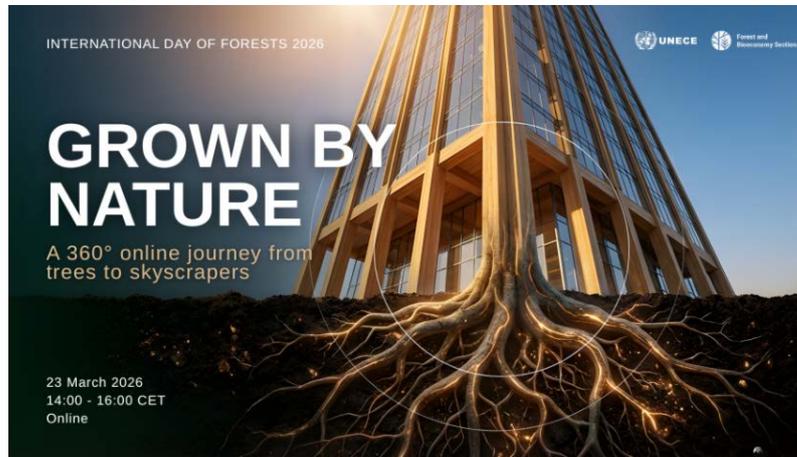
MARCH 21 is International Day of Forests and this year's theme is Forests and Economies.

Every year, forests generate at least \$450 billion in measurable economic value around the world. From building and furnishing materials to forestry and milling jobs, to food production and medical research, forests are a treasure house for humans, long before you factor in the wellness benefits we receive from exercising in and living beside them.

This year, the theme looks at the many innovations that are being produced from our forests, particularly engineered wood products that stand poised to take over as the carbon-storing fabric of our future cities.

Through sustainable forestry, we could embrace a future where our homes, workplaces and public buildings can be re-used and regrown, and where carbon is held in our walls, not belched from the smelters that create our building frames.

The day also asks people to celebrate the wider impacts of forests, which



**As part of the UNECE's celebrations, a talk on the centrality of timber to thriving future cities and economies will take place.** Image: supplied

include moderating temperatures, keeping the rainfall cycle going, stabilising soils and producing oxygen. In addition, it looks at the intense costs of deforestation, from human and animal displacement to disruption of natural cycles and opportunity loss for bio-based medications and more.

Coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, there will be a series of online campaigns and events, including the UNECE webinar: Grown By Nature: A 360° online journey from trees to skyscrapers. This will bring together global experts, from architects and fashion designers to biotech pioneers to demonstrate how Sustainable Forest Management ensures that economic ambitions never outpace

environmental boundaries. As the blurb says: "Through high-energy demonstrations and data-driven 'myth-busting,' we will reveal how the UNECE region has successfully increased its forest area over the last thirty years while simultaneously scaling up production.

"Join us as we bridge the gap between the trees and the skyscrapers, proving that a thriving economy and a thriving forest are not just compatible, they can become inseparable."

Click here for details and booking – alas, the time zone means only night owls will be able to participate live.

Local celebrations include Forestry Australia's webinar this evening and multiple tree planting events around the country. Look for more events on local social media and spread word about how you'll be celebrating the day using the hashtag #ForestDay. Click here for more details, as well as social media resources and forest facts to share.

**“ A THRIVING ECONOMY AND A THRIVING FOREST ARE COMPATIBLE**

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# Bridging research and industry practice

## Insights from Dr Luis Yerman's AKD secondment.

THE ARC Advance Timber Hub has described its pride in Dr Luis Yerman's successful industry secondment, in late 2025, with Hub partner AKD.

Dr Yerman, a Senior Research Fellow at The University of Queensland School of Civil Engineering, representing the ARC Advance Timber Hub and the National Centre for Timber Durability and Design Life, undertook the six-month industry secondment to bridge academic research and real-world timber applications. This industry engagement is an important key performance indicator (KPI) of the Hub.

With his background in chemistry and extensive experience in timber durability, fungal decay, moisture behaviour and fire performance, the secondment allowed Dr Yerman to apply research expertise in an operational setting while gaining deeper insight into industry challenges. The secondment was designed to explore the broader issue of mould in timber products, from its underlying causes through to management and prevention across the product lifecycle.

Dr Yerman said at the conclusion of the secondment, "I'd like to express



**1/ Dr Yerman's expertise in timber durability, fungal decay, moisture behaviour and fire performance was as valuable to AKD as their insights into industry challenges were to him.**

**2/ Seeing real-world conditions for everything from harvesting to final retail product at AKD helps to set future research parameters.** Images and story used with permission from Dr Luis Yerman and the ARC Advance Timber Hub.



my sincere gratitude to AKD for the opportunity to complete an industry secondment at the Caboolture sawmill.

"These six months have been truly rewarding. I learned a great deal about timber operations and had the pleasure of meeting many talented and dedicated people across the business."

Over the course of the placement, Dr Yerman developed and delivered a structured body of work covering three interconnected areas. These included a review of commonly used mould remediation approaches, an investigation of material characteristics that influence moisture and biological behaviour, and an assessment of environmental conditions relevant to timber storage and handling. Together, these activities provided a holistic framework for understanding mould risk from multiple angles.

A key objective of the secondment was knowledge exchange. By working at the interface between research and industry practice, the project supported clearer alignment between scientific understanding and practical decision-making. It demonstrated the benefits

of embedding researchers within operational settings, enabling two-way learning, more relevant research questions, and stronger pathways for future collaboration. It also created opportunities to translate academic methods into applied contexts and to identify areas where further collaborative research could add value.

Dr Yerman thanked the national team at AKD (Mateo Gutierrez, Kim Harris, Andrew McLaughlin and Marina Milić) for the opportunity, their guidance and collaboration throughout his time there. "I'm also very grateful for the warm support from the Caboolture team, especially Diana Jaramillo. It's been a fantastic experience, and I look forward to continuing to strengthen our collaboration in the future," he said.

Dr Yerman also thanked Chris Lafferty and Ian Blanden from Hub Partner FWPA; Professor Tripti Singh from the National Centre for Timber Durability and Design Life, and Hub Director, Professor Keith Crews, for their support and engagement throughout his journey.

Dr Yerman's secondment shows how industry-research partnerships address real-world challenges and lays the groundwork for ongoing collaboration between academia and the timber sector.

**On the cover: Dr Luis Yerman was out of the lab and into the field during his secondment with AKD, gaining a fuller understanding of the minutiae in his specialist subject of timber decay.** Image: courtesy Dr Yerman

“THE SECONDMENT CREATED OPPORTUNITIES TO TRANSLATE ACADEMIC METHODS INTO APPLIED CONTEXTS

# NSW timber workers push for secure jobs and supply

IN the wake of a 'moratorium' on native timber harvesting across much of the NSW Mid-North Coast, the Timber, Furnishing and Textiles Union (TFTU) has been an active voice on behalf of workers. Now, the union is hosting a two-day roundtable at NSW Parliament House. Wednesday and Thursday, timber workers from across regional New South Wales are sitting down with industry, forestry representatives and skills leaders, pushing to secure the future of the state's forestry and timber jobs, as well as building support for regional communities that depend on timber jobs.

TFTU NSW Secretary Alison Rudman said timber workers wanted the NSW Government to recognise the importance of the industry to regional employment and local manufacturing.

"Timber workers are proud of the role they play in regional communities and they want to see a strong future for the industry," Rudman said.

"This roundtable is about bringing workers, employers and experts together



**Alison Rudman (front row, second from right) protesting the sudden closure of native timber harvesting in the proposed GKNP with TFTU and AWU members last year.** Image: supplied

to focus on real solutions that protect jobs and support sustainable forestry."

The union says timber workers are calling for the NSW Government to prioritise locally grown timber in government construction projects, strengthen the state's timber supply and invest in skills to ensure the industry remains a major regional employer.

Timber workers are also calling for long-term certainty through extended wood supply agreements and stable demand for

timber products, measures the union says are critical for businesses and workers alike.

"The NSW timber industry supports thousands of regional jobs and provides essential materials for housing, construction and infrastructure," Rudman said.

"Government policy should back local timber, local jobs and local manufacturing."

The roundtable will also examine workforce development and training pathways to ensure the

industry continues to attract and retain skilled workers in regional areas.

Rudman said the discussions would help shape the union's advocacy with the NSW Government.

"Our members want secure jobs, strong regional communities and a sustainable timber industry for the future," she said.

"That means government backing the workers and businesses who grow, harvest and process timber here in New South Wales."

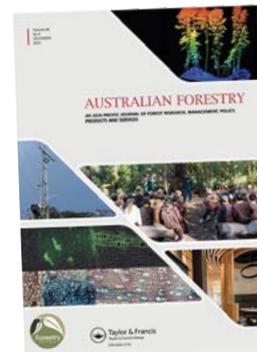
Australian Forest Products Association

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

## Help shape the future of Australian Forestry journal

FORESTRY Australia is calling on members and subscribers to deliver feedback on *Australian Forestry*, the organisation's peer-reviewed journal to ensure it remains relevant, valuable and fit for purpose.

As part of a three-year strategic review process led by an appointed review panel, interested



**The Australian Forestry journal is undergoing review.** Image: supplied

parties are being asked to complete a short survey to deliver insights and reflections that will help inform the review panel's work to strengthen the journal's relevance, reach and impact, and ensure it continues to deliver value for forest scientists,

researchers and managers. [Click here for details.](#)

# NRA revision underway

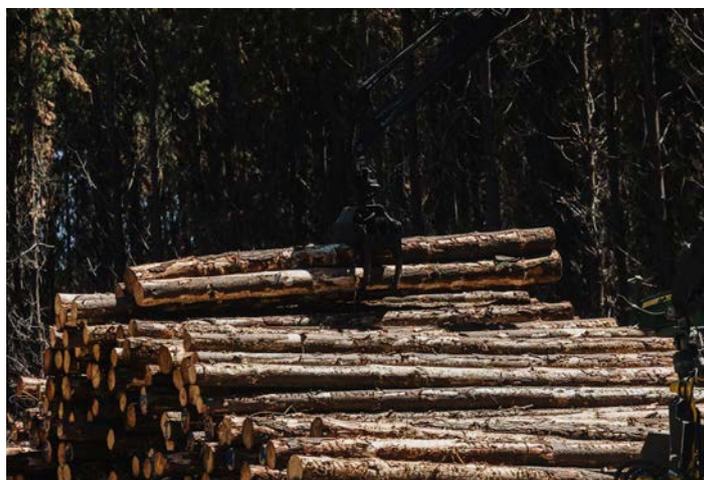
## Revision begins on Australia's Controlled Wood National Risk Assessment.

FSC International has launched the revision of the Australian Controlled Wood National Risk Assessment (NRA) (click here to view), first published in 2019. The NRA evaluates the risks associated with sourcing timber and forest products from non-FSC-certified forests and establishes mitigation measures to address identified risks.

The revision is being undertaken following the release of the updated FSC Risk Assessment Framework in 2024. The framework aligns with recently revised FSC policies and the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) requirements (click here to view), strengthening FSC's approach to risk assessment and deforestation in a changing regulatory and market environment.

Key changes introduced in the updated Framework include expanding the risk categories from five to 12 and increasing the number of Indicators from 32 to 64. Most of the new Indicators represent a more detailed breakdown of existing Indicators, while seven Indicators address new areas of risk.

FSC International has engaged the Australian consulting firm Gandan



**Non-FSC-certified forests and their attendant risks are the focus of the review.** Photo: © FSC ANZ/Andreas Weiss

Yarnings to oversee the revision of the NRA. The firm has decades of expertise in the forestry sector and on topics of sustainability and FSC certification.

At Gandan Yarnings, environmental and forestry certification specialist Tim McBride will manage the process, assisted by Tolita Davis-Angeles, a Cobble Cobble woman who specialises in First Nations engagement frameworks and Kevin Haylock, who has forty years experience in managing native forest and plantation operations. The project is

“THE NRA EVALUATES THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SOURCING TIMBER

supported by FSC ANZ and will be developed according to the following timeline:

- February 2026: Provide a report to FSC International assessing the need to update the 2019 NRA (completed).
  - March 2026: Submit Draft 1 of the revised NRA to FSC International for review.
  - June–July 2026 (30 days): Undertake public consultation on Draft 1 of the revised NRA.
  - August 2026: Submit the consultation report and Draft 2 of the revised NRA to FSC International for review.
  - September 2026: Submit the final draft of the revised NRA to FSC International for review.
  - December 2026: Submit the final revised NRA to FSC International for approval.
- For questions or comments about the revision work, please contact Gandan Yarnings at [gandanyarnings@gmail.com](mailto:gandanyarnings@gmail.com).
- To find out more about FSC Risk Assessments click here.
- For any questions or further information about the revision process, please contact FSC ANZ's Senior Policy Manager Stefan Jensen at [s.jensen@au.fsc.org](mailto:s.jensen@au.fsc.org).

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# Business Grants

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territories for our industry here in Enews. Our connection might be available to assist you with eligibility criteria, grant writing, application process and

lodgement. They have a high success rate, so contact us if you would like to make an appointment. Contact: editors@timberandforestrynews.com

## Emerging Technology Commercialisation Fund (NSW only)

THE Emerging Technology Commercialisation Fund (ETCF) is an open competitive fund that aims to address market gaps that limit NSW's ability to translate innovation into economic growth. Its objectives are to:

- Progress emerging technology innovations to commercial deployment: ETCF will de-risk emerging technology innovations by progressing them along the TRL pathway towards commercial deployment.
- Improve commercial viability and investment readiness: ETCF will strengthen recipients' commercial viability and investment readiness – so they are better positioned to generate early revenue and attract further private investment.
- Generate long-term economic benefits for NSW: ETCF will scale jobs and capabilities in NSW – strengthening NSW competitive advantages in Government priority areas (for example, local manufacturing, housing and net zero), building a stronger innovation ecosystem and supply-chain capabilities.

Applicants must be one of the following:

- A company incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), or
- An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)

And:

- Be a for-profit entity
- Not be listed on any public stock exchange.
- Have an active Australian Business Number (ABN).
- Be headquartered in NSW.
- As of 1 January 2026, have more than 65% of their Full Time Equivalent Employees employed in NSW.
- Have revenue of less than \$2.5 million per year in the last financial year (FY2024/25).
- Not be a subsidiary of another company.
- Own the IP or have an exclusive license to commercialise the IP in Australia and globally.

Types of projects funded under this grant must:

- Be TRL 3-7 on the TRL Scale at the time of applying for the ETCF
- Progress along the TRL Scale



**NSW has been home to many great inventions, including plastic banknotes, which were born at a 1968 CSIRO meeting in Thredbo. The ETCF will help fund future innovation.** Image: Donyale Harrison

an existing physical prototype of a device, technology, or product. OR Progress along the TRL Scale a proof-of-concept of a biological or life sciences innovation.

- Be completed within two years (unless there are exceptional circumstances).
- Not have received grant funding for the activities specified in the application.
- Not be eligible for the Medical Devices Fund (MDF) funded by NSW Health.

Example projects:

- Prototyping, product development and piloting studies
- Manufacturing and/or scaling

- Conducting market research, testing and trials
- Regulatory approvals and other relevant certifications
- Salaries and access to external expertise that is directly related to delivery of the project
- Commercialisation strategies and commercial feasibility studies
- Project consumables directly related to delivery of project outcomes
- Specialist equipment and/or infrastructure necessary to progress the project
- Intellectual property protection or advice.

### GRANT DETAILS

**Provider:** Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer

**Amount:** \$500,000 - \$2,000,000

**Round 1 Closes:** 29 Apr 2026

**Location:** NSW

**Who Can Apply:** Businesses

**Co-Contribution Required:**

Unspecified by Provider  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/emerging-technology-commercialisation-fund-etcf-2026>

## MARCH

**27: Perth Timber Construction Playbook – Fraser's, Kings Park, Perth, 8.00am - 10.30am.** Hear directly from Playbook contributors as they unpack key insights, practical guidance and real-world case studies demonstrating timber innovation in action at this Timber Insight-hosted event. To register, visit: <https://events.humanitix.com/perths-timber-construction-playbook-launch/tickets>

**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](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.

**23: SAVE THE DATE: AFPA members dinner – QT Hotel, Canberra, 6.30pm - 9.30pm.** Further information, including speakers and registration details coming soon.

## 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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# New Shadow Minister

IT'S been a great year for anyone who loves leadership changes in Australian politics. The Nationals have been the most recent to reshuffle and, under the new leadership of Matt Canavan, new Deputy Leader Darren Chester MP takes up the role of Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Chester served as Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Minister for Defence Personnel during the Turnbull and Morrison governments, although a failed tilt at the leadership saw him only make the outer shadow ministry under the leadership of David Littleproud.

He's been a proud but principled member for Gippsland since 2008, faithfully representing the rural interests of his electorate but also famously shouting down local party members who wanted him to renounce his support for marriage equality in the leadup to the 2017 plebiscite.

Assistant Shadow Minister for Forestry Tony Pasin MP has retained his role in the reshuffle.



**Darren Chester, here shown with schoolchildren from his electorate, lists interests including marathon running and dogs on his website and has been battling for the forestry sector during his near-20 years in parliament.** Image: supplied

The appointment has been welcomed by the forestry sector. AFPA CEO Diana Hallam said: "I congratulate Mr Chester, who joins Mr Pasin in the Shadow Ministry, as well as acknowledge the new Nationals Leader Senator the Hon Matt Canavan, who will take on the trade and investment portfolio and has called for more 'Australian farming, and more Australian manufacturing'.

"Mr Chester and Mr Pasin are both dedicated and long-term advocates of Australia's forestry sector, as they have sustainable forest industries in their electorates that provide vital support for local economies, jobs and communities."

Hallam highlighted Chester's understanding of forest industries and also welcomed the appointment of Andrew Willcox MP as Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing and Sovereign Capability.

She added: "We also sincerely thank Senator Ross Cadell for his outstanding contribution to our forest industries, as the former Shadow Minister."

Hallam said the sector looks forward to continuing to work with Cadell on forestry issues in future, along with the Coalition, Federal Labor and crossbench MPs and Senators to achieve sensible policy reforms and outcomes for the industry.

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# Concerns codes and cost stand in way of housing

WE'RE not looking good for hitting our housing targets in Australia. A surprise war in the Middle East certainly won't help, nor will interest rates creeping back up. One area that could, though, is the current consultation on streamlining and modernising the National Construction Code (NCC), which has just closed for feedback.

The HIA has released details of its input, calling for a 'knock-down rebuild' of the NCC. The association says that excessive regulation and complexity is slowing the delivery of new homes across Australia. Its submission to the consultation outlines a suite of reforms aimed at simplifying the code, reducing red tape and supporting innovation in home building.

HIA Executive Director Building Policy, Shane Keating said the review presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset the code, so it better supports housing supply, productivity and affordability.

"It has become increasingly difficult to build a home in Australia," he said.

"Over decades the NCC has grown layer upon layer of new objectives and requirements. What began as a technical code focused on issues like structural integrity and fire safety has expanded into a much broader policy tool.

"Many of these changes are well intentioned, but the cumulative impact and their interaction have added complexity and cost to new homes."



**Volume One of the current NCC 2025 preview draft stands at 660 pages.**

Image: supplied

HIA's submission calls for a number of key reforms including simplifying code provisions, moving the code to a 5-year amendment cycle to provide builders with stability and certainty, making all referenced Australian Standards free, improving usability of the NCC, reducing unnecessary regulatory burden and creating clearer pathways for adoption of AI, innovation and modern construction methods.

The association is also calling for the Australian Building Codes Board to be strengthened, with clearer governance and resources to ensure the NCC operates as a truly national code.

You can subscribe for updates on the NCC through the Treasury website by clicking [here](#) and following the links.

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# Fuel shortages and price hikes bite

As diesel disappears in parts of NSW and Victoria, federal and state governments are calling for calm.

SOME days it feels like the Seventies are back: belligerent superpowers are shouting about nuclear war, the young'uns are protesting in the streets and now there's a fuel crisis. All that's missing is affordable housing, Space Food Sticks and flares. But while the return of 10c lolly bags and \$20,000 house prices would be welcomed by many, suppliers running out of diesel is not.

AAP reported on Monday that multiple suppliers across regional NSW and Victoria were out of diesel, some out of fuel altogether, while others were imposing \$50 sales limits, which might get you a quarter tank in a sedan but isn't going to get a logging truck far.

Some companies and farms that rely on private delivery to onsite storage have seen those deliveries halted entirely. Prices are soaring everywhere, with the *Gloucester District News of the Area* interviewing one sawmill operator facing an extra \$8000 a week delivering his hardwood products (click here). Police have warned of diesel thefts from farms and workplaces.

At the same time, the Federal Government is assuring us there's no dire shortage, and that's not entirely inaccurate: there is a reasonable onshore reserve remaining in the baseline Minimum Stockholding Obligation, of which 760 million litres of petrol and diesel is currently being released, and tankers continue to arrive as scheduled and are expected to do so well into April. It is demonstrably true that purchasing levels have been at record highs as buyers panic-buy or try to beat the next



What it feels like buying diesel or petrol at the moment. Image: Shutterstock/Douglas Cliff

price rise, and so the suggestion we have a demand problem rather than a supply problem is not an outrageous one.

Let us not speak of how much bigger the fuel reserve was in the past. Nor that we've stored most of it in the US, nor how easy it would have been to use our own fleet to supply from our own refineries before both were offshored by multinational oil companies in the early-to mid-2010s. Definitely let us not speak of the coming time when tankers are likely to stop arriving if, as seems likely, the Strait of Hormuz remains closed, nor of the fact, as the *AFR* reported on Tuesday, that fuel bound for Australia failed to load at a Chinese port on the weekend.

Mukesh Sahdev, the former head of crude trading analytics at Shell and now the chief oil analyst at XAnalysts, told the *AFR* shortages could become evident next week if the number of ships arriving declined as expected (click here for the full story).

"We are okay for the week of March 22, and then we have a problem on the diesel side, just as demand for diesel is

increasing," Sahdev said. "If you look at what is arriving, in diesel that week of March 22 we are importing 600,000 barrels a day. After that, the numbers are starting to fall."

China and South Korea – another significant supplier of diesel and jet fuel – have both signalled they will cap shipments by oil exporters to ensure domestic supply if the global situation continues to worsen.

In addition to the 760-million litre release, Federal Environment Minister

Chris Bowen has temporarily amended Australia's fuel quality standards to allow higher sulphur levels for 60 days from 12 March. This will allow around 100 million litres a month of new petrol supply that would otherwise have been exported to be blended instead into Australian domestic supply.

The Federal Government is also working with fuel companies to prioritise deliveries to regional and remote locations, while State Governments have held industry roundtables. Words like rationing remain in play as saving jobs and keeping broader supply moving become the key goals – and the small number of pioneers trialling electrical trucks have been very good about not gloating.

National Cabinet will meet today (19 March) to discuss further strategies, and the PM has signalled the ACCC will investigate price gouging.

Meanwhile, let's hope negotiators find a way to calm the US, Israel and Iran conflict before the Reserve Bank commits us to that other classic of the 1970s: regular interest rate hikes.



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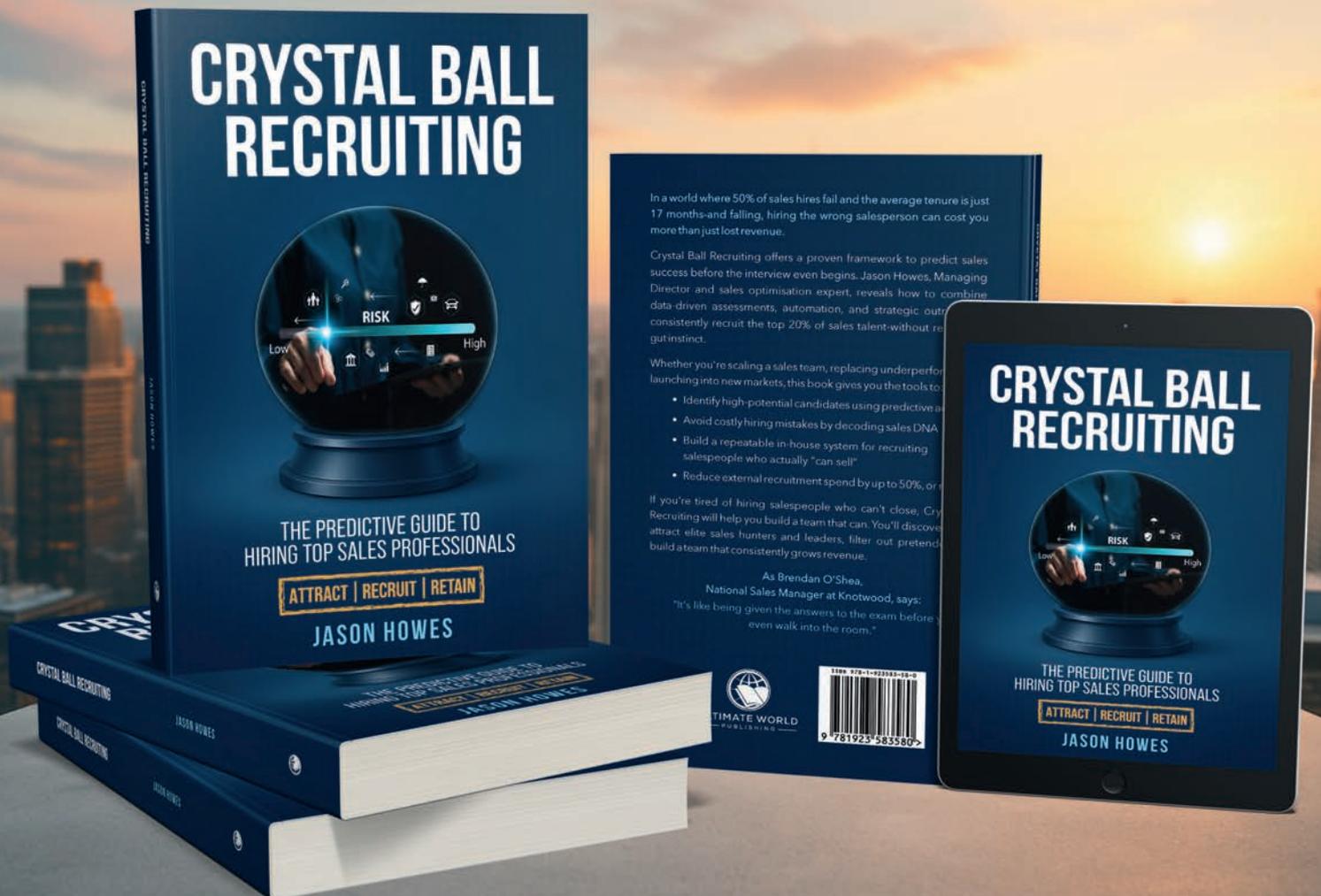
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# Nowra Workplace Hub

## Timber finishes warm the interiors of the refurbished government building.

GOVERNMENT jobs are often perceived as slow, but the recent \$5 million revitalisation of the Nowra Workplace Hub on the NSW South Coast has been completed in just seven months.

Delivering workspace to 250 employees from six government departments across its 1800m<sup>2</sup> on two floors, the hub is planned to boost the NSW Government's capacity to recruit employees who work near the communities they serve.

The original building was constructed in the early 2000s. Utilising an existing structure has minimised both costs and time, but hasn't compromised the results. A new concierge desk helps the public find the department and worker they need faster, while security turnstiles improve safety. Timber finishings throughout the refit give a sense of warmth and connection to nature that is welcomed by workers and visitors alike.

The building has a series of new facilities added, including updated workspaces and bathrooms that are fit for purpose and amenities that rival those provided in metropolitan offices. Staff now have access to end of trip facilities including bike racks and shower rooms, EV charging and onsite communal areas that allow for easier networking, meetings and communication. The transformation is designed to support government employees living and working on the South Coast, attract diverse talent and strengthen ties between agencies and the community.

The government's central property agency, Property and Development NSW (PDNSW), emphasised hiring teams from the Shoalhaven area during the project



1/ **Mark Slater from the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (left) beside Member for South Coast Liza Butler with other dignitaries and workers at the Nowra Workplace Hub.**

2/ **The common area at the hub features timber furnishings for warmth and invites easy cooperation between departments.** All images: supplied

with lead contractor Intermain Pty Ltd partnering with 30 local subcontractors to deliver the refurbishment.

Tenants including the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), the Department of Customer Service (DCS), the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) can now enjoy the upgrade's 4.0-star Green Star – Interiors rating, which meets the latest NSW Government workplace design standards to ensure accessible, future-ready workspaces.

Minister for Lands and Property Steve

Kamper said, "This revitalised Nowra Workplace Hub is a fantastic investment in the South Coast and the talented people who live and work here.

"This hub will help regional workers better serve communities across the South Coast and NSW, while supporting the local economy and creating new opportunities for people to build careers close to home. The South Coast now has a modern, contemporary government workspace which is vital to attracting and retaining the best staff."

Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast Ryan Park emphasised that the Hub didn't just provide improved conditions for existing workers, but made it easier for other enterprises to find a workspace in the area.

"The completion of Nowra's Workplace Hub is a win for the talented employees of the South Coast and the communities they work for," Park said.

"Modern office spaces foster economic growth by keeping and creating jobs in regional NSW. Nowra's refreshed work hub provides upgraded facilities for hundreds of government employees who call the region home, and a welcome space for many more who travel to the South Coast for work."

It was a theme echoed by the Member for South Coast, Liza Butler, who said: "I am pleased to see the completion of these offices which will from today empower hundreds of the South Coast's government employees to do their best work.

"The space can be expanded further to welcome more public or private sector tenants, ensuring it remains a modern and valuable workspace long into the future."



### Komatsu with Bigger Crane & Smart Forestry

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# Sustainability beyond forests

PEFC's recent webinar "Growing Trust Beyond Forests: PEFC Trees outside Forest certification for urban forestry and agroforestry" marked an important starting point for a wider discussion on how certification can adapt to rising sustainability expectations that extend beyond traditional forest boundaries.

The discussion brought together researchers, policy experts, auditors, and practitioners who explored why agroforestry and urban forestry matter, what it takes to manage trees outside forests responsibly, and how third-party certification can transform good practice into claims that markets, policymakers, and consumers can trust.

The Agroforestry section identified that the biggest obstacles are often not about what happens on the farm, but about the conditions around it. These conditions include secure land rights, clear and supportive policies, strong institutions, access to markets, and incentives that make sustainable practices worthwhile. Economic viability is especially important.



**Tree removals in urban forests require transparency from management groups, even when there is a clear need, such as this January 2025 storm damage in Marrickville, Sydney.**

Image: Donyale Harrison

For smallholders, decisions are strongly shaped by income security, which means agroforestry needs to be treated as a viable production system, not just an environmental add-on.

Policy concerns were also discussed: in the absence of a clear, shared definition for agroforestry, it is often overlooked in strategies, poorly captured in national statistics, and harder to target through funding and incentive programmes.

The urban forestry session emphasised that in cities, sustainable management relies not on ambitious planting targets alone, but on long term care that is thoughtfully planned, consistently monitored, and responsive to the evolving needs of both people and the urban environment.

The Municipality of Zwolle, the first city to be awarded a PEFC Trees Outside Forests certification, delivered a case study on urban forestry. Presented by Erik Bakker, Zwolle's Urban Green Space Manager, it showed how certification can support municipalities by making policies and management plans transparent and demonstrable to citizens, while also aligning urban tree stewardship with sustainability requirements in procurement and tendering. Stakeholder engagement was shown to be essential in urban forestry, especially where decisions involve visible trade-offs such as removals or changes in species.

For more details and to watch the webinar, [click here](#).

## Furniture procurement creates risk

THE Australian Furniture Association has raised concerns about the growing risks associated with poor government procurement practices of furniture and furnishings, warning that inaction is contributing to regulatory exposure, supplier disputes, cost blowouts, reputational damage and intensified scrutiny from oversight bodies.

Common issues include inadequate market testing, inconsistent evaluation practices, non-compliance with established procurement rules, and inadequate documentation to justify decisions.

Furniture and furnishings suppliers have also become more vocal when tender processes appear unclear, unfair, or insufficiently competitive. Common points of contention include restrictive specifications, inconsistent debriefs, and evaluation records that don't align with outcomes.

Poor procurement discipline in this sector is closely associated with:

- Over-specification or mis-specification of furniture
- Inadequate assessment of installation, logistics, and lifecycle costs
- Unplanned contract variations due to missing scope details
- Emergency purchases following inadequate planning.



**AFA CEO, Patrizia Torelli.** Image: supplied

The result is frequent budget overruns, delayed workspace readiness, and reliance on costly short-notice procurement solutions.

To protect public value and ensure furnishings and workspace investments deliver long term benefits, the Australian Furniture Association has called on government agencies to adopt measures including:

- Ensure specified products are compliant and fit for purpose
- Select verified products with the FurnitureDNA™ Digital Product Passport Mark
- Early and accurate project scoping to avoid emergency purchasing
- Properly competitive sourcing, including clear and neutral specifications
- Robust value-for-money analysis, including whole of life costing and installation logistics

"Furniture procurement may appear routine, but its financial and operational impact is far from trivial. Without proper governance, these purchases quickly become high-risk, high-cost activities," AFA CEO, Patrizia Torelli said.

"Acting now protects public investment and restores confidence in government procurement outcomes."

For the full list of concerns and suggested solutions, [click here](#).

# Reports of activist intimidation from former VicForests head

FORMER VicForests chief Monique Dawson has told *The Australian* newspaper that staff were abused, followed home and targeted online during the state's emotional native timber fight.

The paper's Victorian political editor Anthony Galloway spoke with Dawson, now chief executive at the not-for-profit Healthy Forests Foundation, after she penned a post, *Reflections on Becoming a "Villain"*, on her Substack (click here to read).

In the post Dawson talks about ending her 30+ year career in the public service being personally vilified as an "environmental vandal" during her tenure at the head of VicForests.

As she told Galloway, the campaign against the agency and its staff went far beyond legitimate policy debate and highlighted a growing risk to the functioning of the public service.

"We couldn't put any signage on

our vehicles because people were being followed home. Vehicles were being vandalised. They were being egged. People's kids were being abused," Dawson said.

"If staff were in uniform and they were at the local shops, people would bail them up at the shops and aggressively, verbally abuse them ... it was virtually open season on the organisation."

Dawson said the agency was forced to introduce protocols advising staff against wearing uniforms in their communities.

"We had messages left on our



**Monique Dawson worries that activist intimidation will deter public servants from taking on contentious roles in the future.** Image: supplied

(answering) machine which were picked up by our elderly receptionist who was caring for her husband who was dying, and she'd pick up messages on the machine, which were, 'You're all evil and you should be dealt with, and we know where you live,'" she told *The Australian*. "No one should have to be subjected to that."

Dawson said she was supported by the Andrews government through this

period and was speaking now not to relitigate the forestry debate, but to warn about the implications for the public service when officials implementing policy become the focus of political campaigns, warning that personal attacks risk deterring capable bureaucrats from taking on contentious roles.

For the full story (paywalled) click here.

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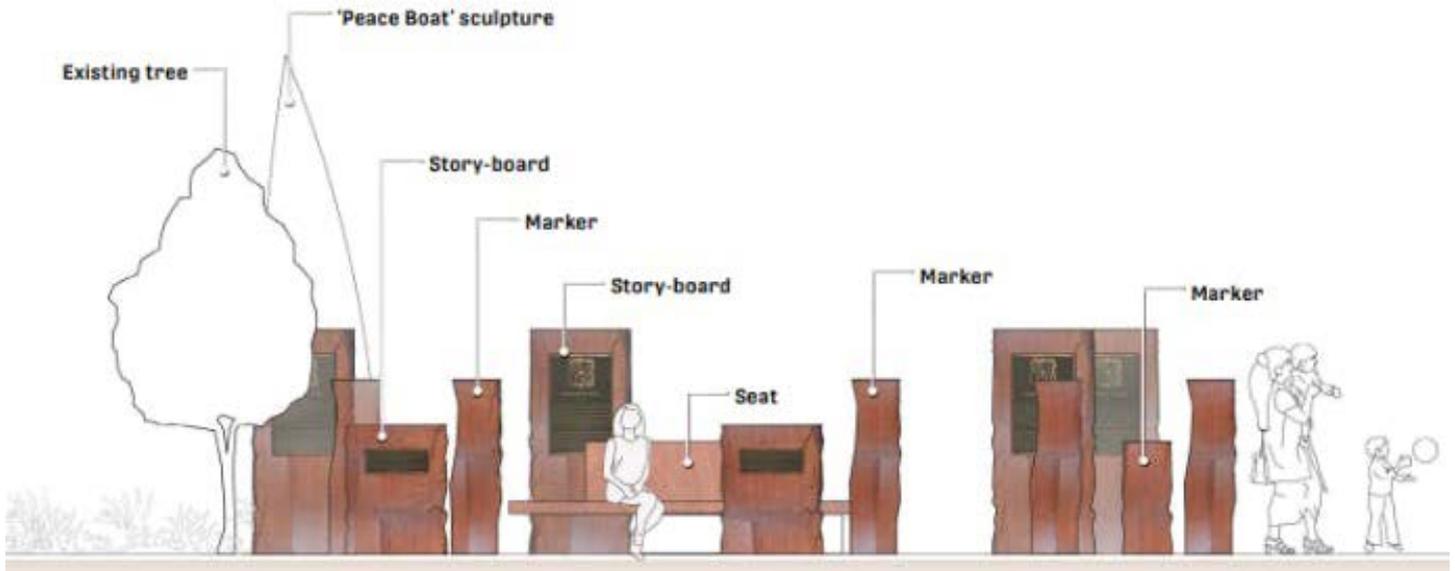
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Image: AKD

# Merriwa's Story Space

Much-loved river red gums are returning to their park community in a new form.



An artist's impression of the Story Space. Image: supplied

WHEN the beautiful river red gums in Merriwa park started to lose limbs and in some cases topple back in 2023, Wangaratta Rural City Council sprang into action. Careful pruning and maintenance work with the city's arborists saved many of the trees that were at risk, but several had to be removed in 2024.

It was a blow to the community, which had played and celebrated local events in their shade for decades. But that's not the end of the trees' story in the park. Local residents wanted to see the timber re-used in a way that was meaningful and honoured the trees, the park and the community, and the local council was on board with that desire.

A new project, Merriwa Park Story Space, was born.

The salvaged red gums will be returned to the park as six double-sided story boards and seating, creating a quiet place where people can pause, reflect and see themselves in the stories of Merriwa Park.

Rather than have a story imposed on the park from the official archives, locals' stories will help shape the space, with the council inviting the community

to share their stories, memories and experiences of Merriwa Park.

"This is about belonging," said Marcus Goonan, director community & infrastructure at the Rural City of Wangaratta. "Merriwa Park is a special place with a significant history and the Story Space will honour that."

Until 5pm 13 April, residents are invited to share their stories, loosely grouped into five categories: historical, cultural; First Nations stories; flora and fauna; and other. (Click here for links to the online forms and a hard-copy option than can be sent in or delivered to council.) There will also be community pop-ups to help gather stories face-to-face.

Visitors to the Council website can flick through submitted tales, which have already begun accumulating such as 'Platypus in the lagoon' from local resident Denise Pirko, who wrote: "The Merriwa lagoon was the first place I saw

a platypus in the wild, something that was a delight to share with my kids who were there at the time."

The Merriwa Park Story Space project is guided by the Grit and Resilience Consortium, a state-funded initiative managed and delivered through the Rural City of Wangaratta. It's guided by a community led Consortium made up of 13 community members and six partner organisations, all working together to strengthen connection, belonging and everyday wellbeing across the region.

"Strong places are built from local stories," said Grit and Resilience Consortium co-chair, Carmel Vermeltoort.

"If the park has been part of your life in any way, we would love to hear from you."

Grit and Resilience Program Coordinator, Bek Nash-Webster said, "The Story Space design will honour the legacy of the red gums and of the park.

"The focus on connection and community is why the Grit and Resilience Program chose this project to be delivered through Council."

“MERRIWA PARK IS A SPECIAL PLACE WITH A SIGNIFICANT HISTORY”

# WA Governor tours historic timber towns

A treetop walk and the State Timber Museum were just two of the highlights.

HIS Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson, Governor of Western Australia, toured the Shire of Manjimup last week. While this is an area filled with ghosts of the thriving forestry sector that was halted in 2024, the resilient locals showed off the beauty and heritage of the area and how the community is adapting post the native forestry ban.

The visit provided an opportunity to showcase the unique character of the Shire of Manjimup and introduce the Governor to both the inland and coastal communities that make the region such a special place to live and visit.

Shire President Donelle Buegge and Chief Executive Officer Ben Rose hosted a community reception at the Manjimup Wellness and Respite Community Centre, where Hon Chris Dawson was formally welcomed to the town. The event brought together Council and community members and representatives, offering an opportunity to share local stories and highlight the strong community spirit that defines Manjimup.



1/ Honourable Chris Dawson (right) with Walpole resident Mike Filby, local legend who keeps the South Western Highway Beautiful. Image: Shire of Manjimup

2/ The Governor's party on the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk. Image: Government House Western Australia

Following the reception, the Governor visited the Manjimup Heritage Park including the State Timber Museum and Power Up Electricity Museum, where he was given an informative tour of the site. During the visit, he learned about the region's rich timber milling history and the important role the forestry industry has played in shaping the identity and development of the Manjimup community.

Shire President Donelle Buegge said the visit was a valuable opportunity to showcase the diversity of the Shire of Manjimup.

"From our rich forestry heritage in Manjimup to the

stunning natural beauty and coastal lifestyle of Walpole, we were proud to share with the Governor some of the things that make our region so unique, and to highlight the passion, history and community spirit that make the Shire such a wonderful place to live," Buegge said.

As part of his visit, the Governor visited the magnificent Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, one of the natural wonders of the world, located between Denmark and Walpole.

The ancient and unique red tingle forest has

origins that can be traced back 65 million years to the supercontinent Gondwana – when Australia was joined with what are now Africa, India, Antarctic and South America.

Much of the plant life in the tingle forest is unique to the south-west of Western Australia. And the tingle trees are endemic to a limited area surrounding the town of Walpole.

The attraction celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, showing how enmeshed preservation of native flora has long been in WA's timber towns.



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## HEAD OFFICE

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd  
PO Box 3001  
Maraylya NSW 2765

## PUBLISHER

Timber Media Australasia Pty Ltd

## EDITORS

Donyale Harrison  
Jess Hockridge  
Nicky Ainley  
editors@timberandforestryenews.com

## ADVERTISING

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

## ACCOUNTS

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

## SUBSCRIBE

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### CONTACTS

#### Media releases and editorial:

Donyale Harrison // Jessica Hockridge // Nicky Ainley  
e: [editors@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:editors@timberandforestrynews.com)

#### Display ad bookings:

Campbell McInnes // e: [campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com](mailto:campbellm@timberandforestrynews.com)

#### Accounts:

Chris Parker // e: [cparker@ttnews.com.au](mailto:cparker@ttnews.com.au)

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