

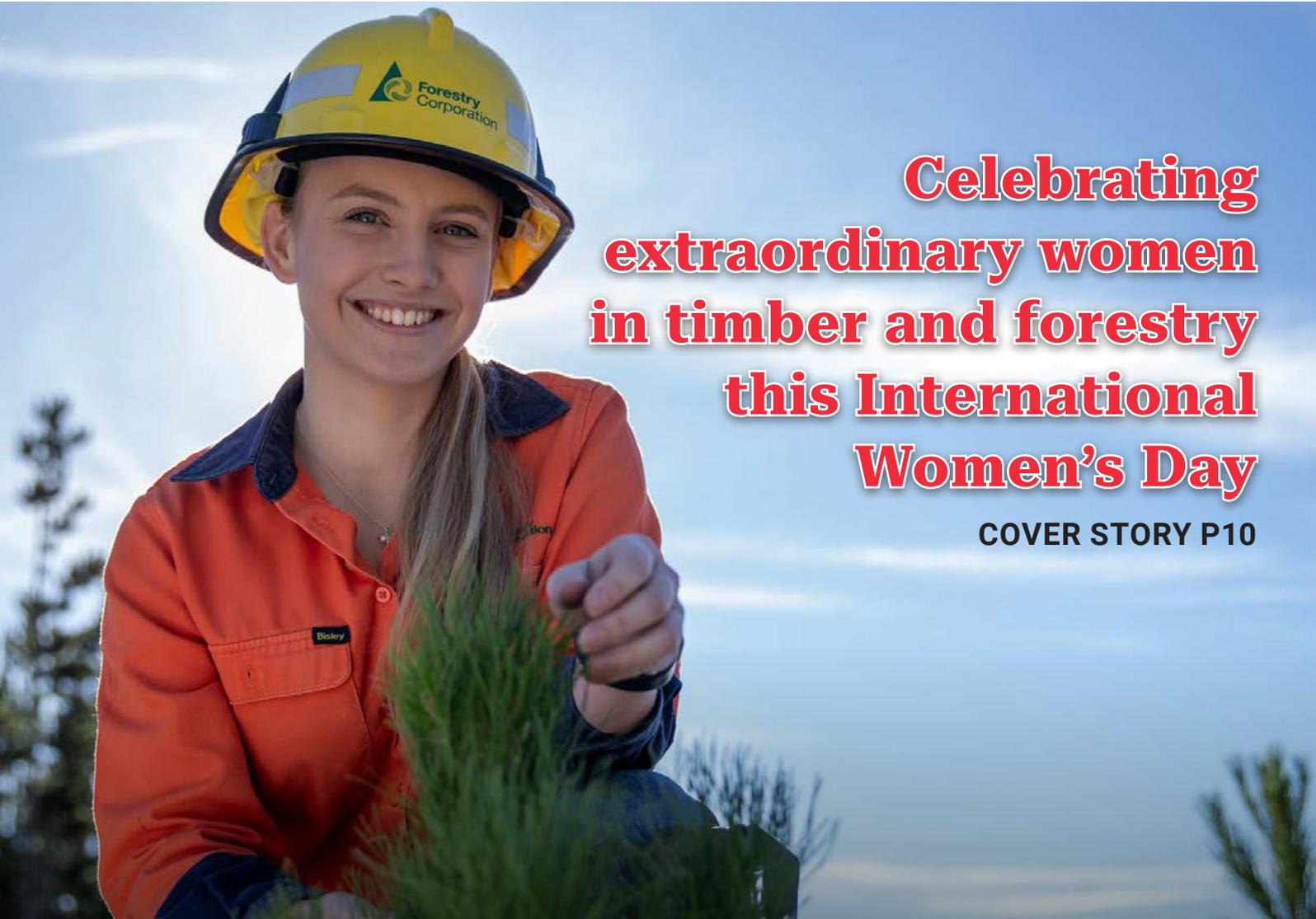
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ISSUE 888 // 5 March 2026

# timber & FORESTRY *e*news



## Celebrating extraordinary women in timber and forestry this International Women's Day

COVER STORY P10

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# The ecologist putting everyone in the picture

IT speaks to Forestry Corporation of NSW's land management ethos that talented arctic wildlife photographer, ecologist – and nature lover, Bronwyn Ellis has worked for this organisation for 40 years.

Bronwyn is slightly built and thoughtfully spoken. But make no mistake she is her own force of nature, and she has carved out a deeply meaningful career within this sustainable business.

Bronwyn moved up the industry, from her earliest role in 1984 as Forestry Corporation's (then) sole female Forest Ranger, taking subsequent positions as a field ecologist and (more recently on secondment) the environmental and sustainability team coordinating ecological monitoring programmes.

Since 1998, according to Forestry Corporation's GPS tracking, Bronwyn has walked more than 3500km across forestry terrain (which is roughly from Cape York to Melbourne).

## PROTECTING THE FOREST

One of the endangered plants Bronwyn has a special connection to is a plant called *Tylophora Woolfsii*. There used to be no records of it in her area for the



**Bronwyn Ellis had a dream that she worked in forestry when she was a teenager, and she has now been living that dream for 40 years.** Image: FCNSW

coastal and hinterland forests near Taree and Wingham. That is, until Bronwyn found it for the first time in Comboyne State Forest on February 7, 2008.

"It's a really tricky plant to identify. It looks similar to another common one, so I had to follow up and go back and try and find it flowering so that we could be 100% certain," Bronwyn said. "As a result of that, a botanist has been back to my sites in the last couple of years and established conclusively that these plants are there. That is probably my biggest plant find."

Looking for animals can be more challenging because they are (naturally) on the move. Forestry Corporation ecologists follow tree markings, scats, and droppings. They also use sound

recorders and cameras, which are deployed for two weeks at a time to capture activity.

"We do targeted surveys before harvesting operations as part of the planning process and we have an annual monitoring programme across the State," Bronwyn explained. "Because we want to understand what is out there, and how the populations are going - in addition to identifying specific habitats that we need to protect."

## OWL SOUNDS LIKE A WOMAN SCREAMING

Her current day-to-day efforts focus on finding and identifying flora and fauna in the native forest that is either unexpected or endangered between the coast and hinterland of the Manning and mid-north coast. Her work helps everyone understand what calls the forest home.

Bronwyn's portfolio also involves some night surveillance work, and she says the sounds of the forest after dark are not as terrifying when you know which animal noises swell and carry through the trees on the night air.

For the uninitiated, the call of the Sooty Owl sounds eerily like a "woman screaming", which can be unsettling.

Cont P 3

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From P 2

However, to Bronwyn's trained ear, it's all part of the magic of the forest's many and special secrets.

This is important work that she loves, because it protects any threatened species for future generations.

## AWARD WINNING PHOTOGRAPHIC PASSION

Bronwyn's passion for photography has been an unexpected win for Forestry Corporation. Her talent has been recognised multiple times by the Australian Photography Magazine's photography awards.

She finished third in the 2017 amateur wildlife category for the magazine's Australian Photographer of the Year competition (which includes 2100 entries from Australia and New Zealand). She has entered regularly, never finishing outside the top 20 in the nature category.

She photographed her portfolios in hostile, but compelling polar regions, which remain an ongoing fascination for her. Since 2014, she has travelled to Alaska, Antarctica, arctic Norway and Greenland on wildlife photography adventures. She has photographed Brown Bears, Polar Bears, King Penguins, Albatross, Arctic Foxes, and Elephant Seals. "With photography, I just get transported to another world and I'm so focused that time can just vanish," Bronwyn said.

"Although, I mostly leave my camera at home on a workday here in Australia, unless I specifically want to try to photograph something. And, yes, there are lots of times when I wish I had my camera with me out here in the forest, but I have a job to do."

Then there are the days when Bronwyn's talent behind a lens makes her a welcome resource for the organisation. Her photographs of the Greater Glider at night, while geared more for surveillance than capturing artistic wildlife images - deliver meaningful results.

"A photo from a distance is a non-invasive way of getting an identifying sample of what's out there," Bronwyn said. "We look for them so that we can mark their position down on the Map App and protect their habitat."



1



2



3



4

1/ **Eating leaves is exhausting business.**

2/ **Bronwyn captured this Greater Glider emerging from its den during a night spotlight survey for Forestry Corporation of NSW.**

3/ **Bronwyn captured this timeless image of a young and curious female bear who approached their ship in the sea ice on a photographic tour of north-east Greenland in 2023.**

4/ **This Hastings River Mouse is an endangered native rat species that Forestry Corporation of NSW has on an annual (trap and release) monitoring programme. Bronwyn's image was taken on its release.**

All images: Bronwyn Ellis

"We also put out the bat sound recorders, to pick up the bat calls and a different one to pick up other calls like Koalas and Yellow Belly Gliders."

Forestry Corporation's dedicated work in this arena is rarely publicly celebrated, despite it having a team of ecologists on the ground within its land management operations. "As forest managers we care about the forest and the wildlife, and we follow the rules to keep it all in balance by understanding the forest, and making a difference on the ground," Bronwyn said.

### FORESTRY CALLED...

Bronwyn says working in forestry has been a calling for her. "This will sound a little weird," Bronwyn says. "But I had a dream about it when I was a teenager that I was up in the mountains driving around. And, then after I left school, I applied for a ranger's job and got it."

While at that time she was a woman working in a man's world, her straight-forward work ethic has been part of the

pioneering example that has helped open the door for more women, who today confidently shoulder leadership roles within the organisation.

Nailing down what is special about the forest for her remains a vast subject. "What's not special about it?" she smiles.

"It's a really nice place to be in. It's the birds, all the animals, the koalas, the gliders, the owls (that I am particularly fond of). I think the Sooty Owl is my favourite owl."

"I have one of the best jobs because I get to work with nature, and I like finding things. Whether its unique fauna for an area, or special plants that are unusual, rare, or listed as endangered."

Bronwyn says it is gratifying that her work allows the forest to be managed sustainably today and into the future. Bronwyn is proof that when you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life.

# TMA women in forestry

IN this issue we would like to recognise International Women's Day (Sunday, 8 March 2026), which has a theme of Give to Gain. There are many talented and gifted women in our industry, and we would like to recognise and thank them all for the hard work and contributions they make to grow and strengthen our industry.

Timber Media Australasia proudly owns **Timber and Forestry Enews** and **Timber Trader News**, and we would especially like to acknowledge the women within our own team whose creativity, professionalism and dedication bring both publications to life.

We celebrate the incredible women who shape our stories and ideas through their creativity and commitment. Donyale Harrison and Jessica Hockridge, our Editors in eNews, contribute thoughtful, engaging and insightful writing across both



visual narratives. Each edition's design, layout and visual identity reflect their skill, precision and artistic vision. They do far more than arrange pages, they create the experience that brings each story to life.

## TimberTrader news

magazines. Their ability to inform, challenge and connect with our readers ensures our publications remain relevant, respected and forward-thinking within the timber and forestry industries. Through their words, they give voice to innovation, industry leadership and community progress.

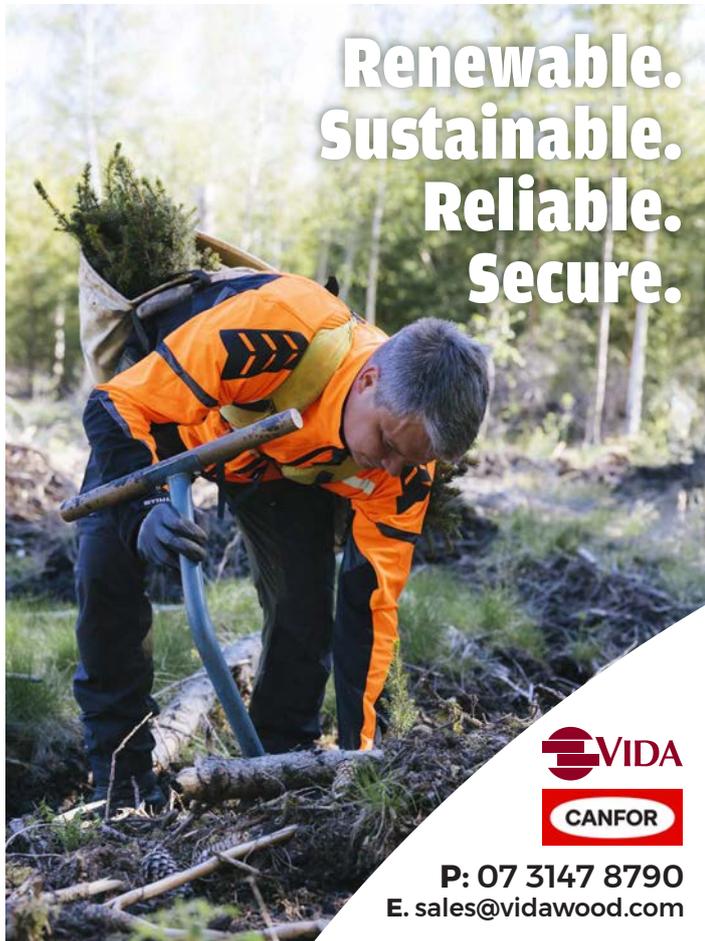
Equally, we recognise the exceptional work of our Graphic Designers, Zonya Bird and Julitta Overdijk. Their creativity transforms concepts into compelling

Together, these four women exemplify the spirit of this year's International Women's Day theme. They give their talent, energy and expertise to our publications, and in doing so, help our entire industry gain

knowledge, connection and inspiration. Their work behind the scenes ensures that every issue not only informs - but engages and endures.

On behalf of Timber Media Australasia, we thank them, and all women across our industry, for the passion, resilience and creativity they contribute every day.

Images: TMA

A photograph of a forestry worker in an orange high-visibility jacket and dark pants, bent over and working with a chainsaw in a forest. The worker is carrying a bundle of logs on their back.

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A scenic landscape photograph of a forest with a misty valley and mountains in the background.

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# International Women's Day

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day officially began in 1911 with its first gathering supported by over a million people. In 2026 International Women's Day is a "global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality."

The website hosts a community, has ways for people to get involved, give to charities, learn more about women's empowerment and International Women's Day itself.

"Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge gender equality."

International Women's Day 2026's theme is 'Give to Gain'. The goal is to make International Women's Day one of the biggest annual giving days, "together, let's make International Women's Day one of the biggest GIVING DAYS of the

International Women's Day

Together we can forge  
**gender equality.**

Collectively we can all  
**#GiveToGain.**

March 8

 International Women's Day

[www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)

Download free posters and graphics from the International Women's Day website to help celebrate and share the message. Image: IWD website

year. Imagine the impact if all IWD events nominated a women-focused charity as recipient of fundraising and/or visibility support". "When we give, we gain... Giving is not a subtraction, it's intentional multiplication. When women thrive, we all rise."

International Women's Day is not just for women, "since 1911, IWD belongs to all who care about gender equality...No one government, NGO, charity, corporation, academic institution, women's network, or media hub is solely responsible for IWD. ... IWD is an inclusive day that belongs to all groups everywhere."

There are so many ways to get involved with International Women's Day. Recognise and celebrate the women around you, register for an event, participate in the lettering challenge, "make International Women's Day your day and do what you can to truly make a positive difference for women."

For more information click here.

(All quotes are from the International Women's Day website)

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# Women in forestry

THE timber and forestry sector has been historically a male-dominated sphere. However, with International Women's Day coming up this Sunday, 8 March Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) would like to highlight some incredible women who are helping to shape the timber and forestry industry.



1/ **Jodie Mason, Head of Forest Research.**



2/ **Beth Welden, manager of the ForestLearning Education Program.** All images: FWPA

## JODIE MASON

Jodie Mason is the head of FWPA's Forest Research. She manages the RD&E projects and programs that benefit forest growers.

Jodie holds a Bachelor of Forest Science and a Master of Business Administration. She has over twenty years' experience in forest management, including over 8 years with FWPA. She has focused on operations, certification, forest carbon and environmental auditing. Jodie has worked in both native forest and plantation management and provided consulting services to the sectors for fifteen years, across Australia and internationally. Some of these include the Forest Practices Authority and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Jodie is passionate about collaborating research and sharing ideas and experiences to help further research. Recently, she presented the research priorities identified through FWPA's Growers and Softwood processors advisory committees (GRAC & SMAC) during the FWPA and AFWI Climate-

“JODIE HAS...PROVIDED CONSULTING SERVICES TO THE SECTOR FOR FIFTEEN YEARS, ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONALLY

Smart Forestry Research Development Workshop. Jodie was also involved in the Silvopastoral studies (see *Enews* issues #811, #827 and #846 for more information) that did practical research on the coexistence of cattle and forestry on the same pastures which will assist farmers in diversifying their land and ecosystems as well as their income and investment options, and will provide extra timber to the timber and forestry industry.

## BETH WELDEN

Beth Welden manages FWPA's ForestLearning Education program, aiming to serve educators, children, and the public with information on Australian forests and forest-based products, and provision and access to forestry teaching resources. The program is further supported by links to key government, industry organisations and educational service providers.

Before joining FWPA, Beth spent the previous 13 years involved in the formation and management of peak school to industry partnership programs with AgForce Queensland and the Gateway Schools to Agribusiness South region. Beth has held roles in communications, teaching, science research, science curriculum extension, curriculum development, and strategy within schools, peak agricultural industry associations, the Plant Biosecurity CRC and various government agencies including CSIRO, DAFQ and DNR&M.

Beth served as a non-Executive Director for the first Primary Industries Education Foundation Board and was a participant in Australia 2020 and the DAFF Rural Leaders Course. She holds a Grad Dip Ed (Science), 1st class Hons Science (Entomology), Bachelor of Applied Science, CERT IV Training and Assessment and Cert IV TESOL.

“BETH ENJOYS CREATING ECOSYSTEMS WHERE INNOVATION, EDUCATION, AND COLLABORATION CAN FLOURISH

Beth thrives on “connecting people, ideas, and industries. For over 20 years I've worked across education, industry, and research—bringing government, universities, and communities together to create, implement and evaluate programs that have lasting impact. Along the way, I've led award-winning national initiatives, built cross-sector partnerships, and helped translate complex research and policy into engaging learning experiences that reach schools, teachers, and students. I enjoy creating ecosystems where innovation, education, and collaboration can flourish—whether that's through new technologies, workforce pathways, or community engagement. As a board director, I've contributed to governance, risk management, and strategy at national and not-for-profit levels. At heart, I'm passionate about building inclusive, future-focused solutions that make a tangible difference to people and the planet.”

**MARCH**

**6: Queensland Women in Forest & Timber Network (WFTN) International Women's Day Breakfast – Brisbane Airport Conference Centre, 8.00am - 10.00am.** A meaningful morning of connection, inspiration and conversation as we celebrate International Women's Day with industry peers from across the forest and timber sector. This event is now full. For future events 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.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)

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**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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# Devastation and determination

## The Shelley Pine Plantation after Victoria's January bushfire.

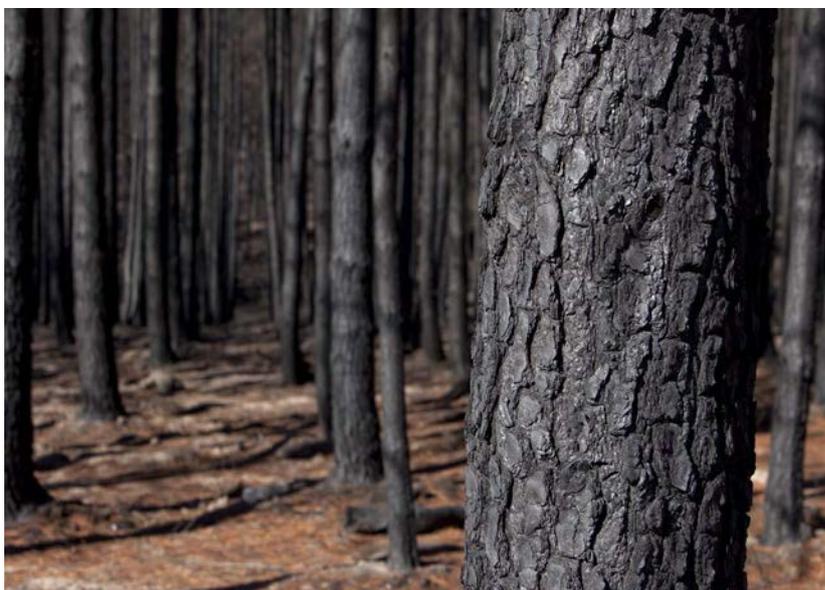
VICTORIA'S Upper Murray region is slowly emerging from one of its most destructive summer fire seasons on record. The Walwa-Mt Lawson State Park fire began in early January and burned across 120,000 hectares before containment more than a month later. Under catastrophic conditions it claimed fourteen homes, destroyed farms and wiped out 11,000 hectares of pine plantations. One of the hardest hit areas was the Shelley Pine Plantation owned by HVP Plantations.

The 13,500-hectare estate now stands as a stark forest of blackened trunks.

Corporate fire and silviculture manager Richard Mailer said the blaze consumed 80 per cent of the property or 10,500 hectares of trees ranging from one year old to 37 years old. The remaining 20 per cent had already been damaged in the 2019-2020 Black Summer fires. In just six years the entire estate has been affected leaving a profound impact on the local community. HVP also lost specialised harvesting equipment and its shelling works centre in the latest fire.

Recovery work began almost immediately. Staff are working to salvage whatever usable timber remains because wood degrades rapidly once scorched. HVP grows its trees on a 25-year rotation with the first commercial harvest normally starting at ten years. Unfortunately, more than half the burnt trees were younger than this threshold so that portion is effectively lost. Older stands that had reached thinning age around 17 or 18 years or were approaching clear fell at 25 years offered better prospects.

Assessing the damage requires careful inspection. Teams examine each section of the plantation looking beyond the charred outer bark to determine whether the timber inside remains



**After a fire, burnt timber deteriorates rapidly, so any salvage operations must be carried out without delay.** Image: Shutterstock

sound. This process demands extra planning specialist evaluations and more intensive handling of every log. Where the wood proves viable it could still be turned into building products packaging and furniture. The effort represents a vital part of the broader fire recovery process involving HVP staff contractors and processors who are collaborating to extract as much value as possible from trees that were intended to stand for many more years.

The scale of the task is immense. Once salvage operations conclude the entire plantation will be prepared for replanting. This includes land rehabilitation, rebuilding infrastructure and clearing hundreds of kilometres of roads essential for future access and transport. The full replanting program will take about five years to complete and will require approximately 13 million new trees. HVP has already boosted its nursery production by an extra million seeds to support the winter start of re-establishment.

“THE 13,500-HECTARE ESTATE NOW STANDS AS A STARK FOREST OF BLACKENED TRUNKS

For the regional timber industry, the losses compound earlier setbacks. The Shelley Pine Plantation supplies softwood to mills across north east Victoria and southern New South Wales. The Black Summer fires had already destroyed about one third of the region's pine plantations although the sector managed to salvage nearly half of the affected timber at that time.

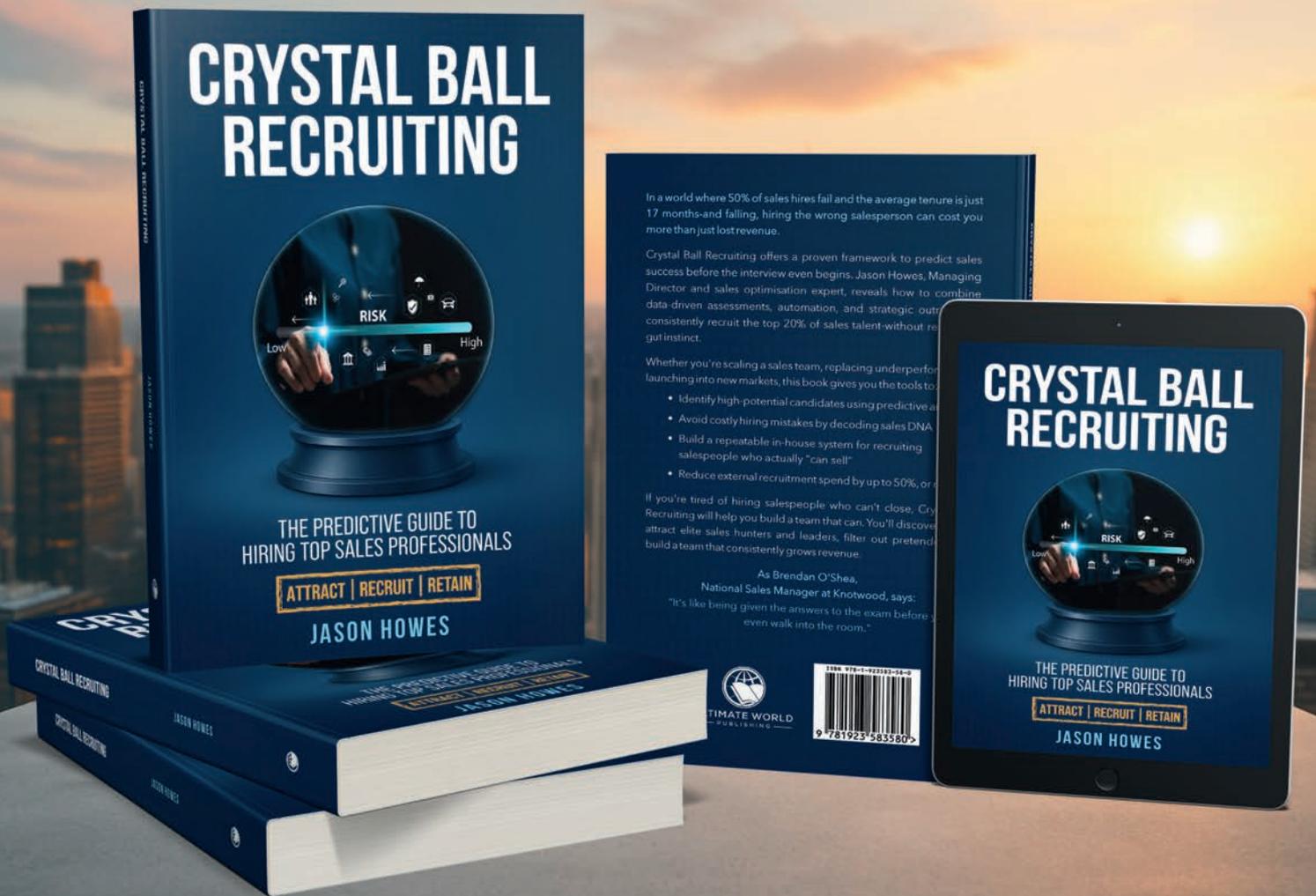
Lessons from that event helped this time around. The Softwoods Working Group chief executive Carlie Porteous noted that the industry had upgraded equipment to handle burnt wood and improved its approach to managing carbon emissions and local effects.

Even with these advances the latest fire presents fresh challenges. HVP is still calculating the precise impact on long term timber supply at a time when building activity has slowed. Mailer described the situation as particularly difficult given the combination of resource loss and subdued demand.

Yet the salvage operation offers a measure of resilience. By focusing on the quality hidden beneath the surface HVP is demonstrating that recovery is possible even after repeated disasters. The community and industry now look ahead to the slow but steady work of replanting and rebuilding an estate that once formed the green heart of the Upper Murray landscape. The coming years will test their commitment but the determination to restore what was lost is already clear.

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# Izzy Smith is proof that from small things, big things grow

THE 23-year-old is a 1.58m (5'2") pocket rocket of energy and drive who has made her place in a hardhat, with a career choice men historically dominate. Strap in, because this Silviculture Supervisor at Forestry Corporation of NSW has some big thoughts that bear thinking about.

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Pine trees take 28 years to mature. Plantation species in NSW State forests are either hardwood (mostly eucalypts) or softwood (mostly radiata pine), depending on the wood's density and hardness. The structural and framing timber that comes from the pines which Izzy oversees (in the central west of the plantation) is used in housing construction.

"If I do this job for ten years, there is a damn good chance my grandkids could live in a house supported by timber that came from the trees I've helped grow," Izzy smiles.

"Everyone consumes timber, but only a select few buy the raw products. The people buying it are builders and manufacturers, for example. Not many people buy a pine tree. They are buying the manufactured bench top or cupboard, so they don't have a connection to the process.

"I know how much care and effort has been put into growing the trees to make these products. I know that our harvest operators are making as many decisions as a pilot per second when they are cutting the timber. They are looking at each log and assessing the diameter, length, what the sweep is, branching, and making a judgement on what products we should get out of trees to maximise their value.

"Forestry is such a unique industry,



1/ **Forestry operates like a large-scale long rotation crop farming operation.**  
2/ **Izzy Smith.** All images: Forestry Corporation Image Library

and there is so much passion among us all. Every single tree was planted by hand. Our tree planters are some of the grittiest people you'll ever meet...by far. They have walked through blackberries along every single row carrying a tray of trees on each hip and a shovel, bending over and planting every single one of these trees... regardless of the weather. And they can plant up to 4000 trees a day. How much commitment and pride does that take?

"And, at maturity, we cut every single tree individually. It's all meticulously

**“ I KNOW HOW MUCH CARE AND EFFORT HAS BEEN PUT INTO GROWING THE TREES**

planned. We've nurtured them, fertilised them, kept the weeds and pests off them, protected them from fire, maintained the roads, promoted them, and allowed people to enjoy them –to ride motorbikes or their horses among them. They have been growing for 28 years, and at that point we feel an obligation to the people who planted these trees to get as much timber as possible from each tree."

She re-iterates that forestry is renewable, unlike concrete and steel –and technology now gives them significant and detailed control over every step of the process meaning that environmental protections are more robust than ever.

"I would say to those that are concerned about our industry that we are large-scale long-rotation crop farmers. The trees are a crop, just like wheat or barley. At the end of day, they grow back just as fast as they did the first time. All we are doing is making space for the next generation.

"How many other farmers have to protect their crop for 28 years, before they can reap the rewards? I can understand how it looks when we cut the trees down. However, this pine was planted purely for this reason, it's been assessed, so we are aware of native habitat trees or endangered species in there and take measures to protect them. The forest was built for that purpose.

"The country needs our forests to be sustainable. The public need houses, regional timber towns need employment. In most cases, within two years of a harvest, new trees are growing there. Think about that."

From P 10

### “I’LL DO IT”

“I was born and bred here in Bathurst, and I’ll likely be here for most of my life. I grew up with forestry around me and I never knew it was here,” she said. “I used to ride bikes through here; I learnt to drive and rode horses in the forest. I spent most of my childhood in these forests and I had absolutely no idea what they were for.

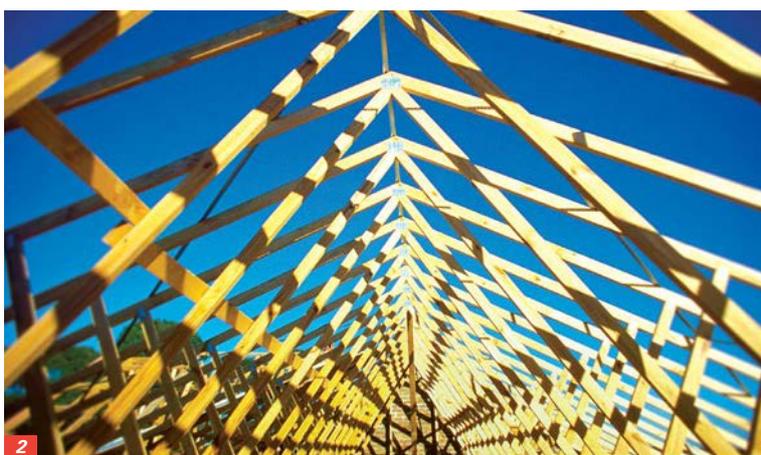
“Anyone can access and enjoy a state forest. I am the type of person who always asks ‘why’ for everything, and I never asked why the pine trees were here. I can’t be the only one who didn’t fully understand forestry?”

To that end, she put her hardhat aside recently accepting the mantle of Bathurst’s Young Woman Ambassador. Historically, it has been a showgirl role, which is a long way from Izzy’s day-to-day persona.

“There were so many more reasons to do it than not to,” Izzy smiled. “I’ve turned the role into what I wanted it to be. I signed up to promote forestry and agriculture. So many people aren’t aware of it and when you make people aware of how beautiful it is, how phenomenal the operations are, and the amount of passion and planning that goes into it. What’s not to love about it?”

“If I can help get people into the bush and understand what we do, they are

**“THE COUNTRY NEEDS OUR FORESTS TO BE SUSTAINABLE**



1/ More than 80% of Forestry Corporation of NSW’s staff are trained to fight fires to a national standard.  
 2/ Forestry Corporation grows enough trees to build 40,000 new homes every year.  
 All images: Forestry Corporation Image Library

more likely to value the wood that comes from the forest.”

### SLIDING DOOR MOMENT

Izzy Smith initially took a seven-month contract with Forestry Corporation of NSW with no expectations.

“I was very doubtful of myself, because I was never going to be the fastest or the strongest and really doubted that I would be able to keep up with everyone physically,” Izzy said. “But I’m a hard worker, I’m very determined, and I just fell in love with it.

“I’ve bogged my Ute out here on my own more times than I care to count. Whilst we do have radios that are regionwide, but everyone can hear

everything, so the very last thing I wanted to do was tell them all I was stuck. You tend to work it out for yourself reasonably quickly.

“In all honesty, in the end the physicality wasn’t an issue. Yes, everything was harder for me to do at the start, but once I had been there for a while, I built the muscle and the skill.”

Izzy is now one of 16 women in the 78 strong Bathurst forestry workforce, and her confidence is palpable. Before she joined, she was challenged by health concerns that were thought to be related to stress and an office environment. They are now all gone, and she credits her health to her outdoor lifestyle.

### FORESTRY BUILDS CONFIDENCE

Ultimately, she says she has her dream job.

“Real estate taught me contract management, negotiating, and

professionalism. Forestry has taught me what I’m capable of. This is my office,” she says gesturing to the wide-open space she stands in.

“I’m paid to be here. I’m paid to fight fire. I’m paid to walk through the plantation and check on the health of the trees, identify weeds, supervise helicopters flying at low altitudes and watch skilled harvesters cut down logs and turn them into people’s homes. You can’t ask for much more than that.”

**On the cover: Izzy Smith... a powerful reminder to recognise, celebrate and champion the achievements of the incredible women around us on International Women’s Day this Sunday.**  
 Image: FCNSW



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# New data shows flat growth for forestry and challenges ahead

AFPA has welcomed the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resources Economics and Sciences (ABARES) forecast showing agricultural production is expected to hit a record \$107.4 billion in 2025-26, when combined with the forestry and fisheries sectors.

The ABARES March 2026 Agriculture Commodities Report highlighted the overall value of production for forestry is expected to remain stable with limited growth over the next five years. (Note, these figures do not include the processing of wood products for housing from Australia's forestry industry, which is the sixth largest manufacturing sector.)

AFPA Chief Executive Officer Diana Hallam said: "While these new figures confirm the vital role of sustainable forestry in Australia for essential products, the environment, exports and economic growth, the report also identified serious challenges and

headwinds for our sector.

"Some of these challenges and risks include high manufacturing and energy costs, greater use of structural steel in residential and mid-rise construction as well as a growing amount of imported timber products of varying quality flooding the Australian marketplace, including from China.

"The report also highlighted a gradual decline in housing with new dwellings increasingly weighted towards higher-density buildings, tempering demand for timber.

"These figures reaffirm the importance of having policy alignment with Australia's Timber Fibre Strategy, which outlines opportunities for the industry to make a greater contribution to achieving national goals, particularly in improving carbon, innovation and housing construction outcomes."

The ABARES figures showed the value

of forestry exports was due to fall by five per cent in 2025-26 to \$2.74 billion.

Ms Hallam said: "It's absolutely vital that Australia's forest products and innovative forestry supply chain remains strong and continues to innovate, thrive and grow.

"Earlier this year, we submitted our pre-Budget 2026-27 submission, which reiterated the importance of continued industry support from the Federal Government for the successful Support Plantation Establishment Program and Wood Processing Innovation Program.

"We must also ensure the 80,000 Australians directly employed across Australia's forestry industries have a strong and vibrant future, which is essential for national productivity, our environment and communities everywhere."

More information will be provided next week.



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The 895 ready to fight fires or back to work in under two hours

# AFPA voices concerns at Senate inquiry on EPBC Reforms

THE Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) recently appeared before the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee in Canberra as part of the ongoing inquiry into the Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 and related legislation. AFPA joined representatives from the National Farmers' Federation and Timber NSW to share industry perspectives on the significant changes to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

In her opening statement, AFPA Chief Executive Officer Diana Hallam expressed support for the core aims of the reforms.

"AFPA supports the intent of the changes to the EPBC Act including the introduction of standards," she said.

The association backs the application of environmental standards to Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), including those for Matters of National Environmental Significance, which aligns with the existing regulatory approach under RFAs.

However, Hallam emphasised the need for careful management during the transition. The reforms must be implemented within tight timeframes to avoid major disruptions to an industry well positioned to support Australia's net zero goals.

"The absence of a stable regulatory framework after the sunset date of 1 July 2027 is likely to result in the disruption of Australia's sustainable forestry practices and duplicative regulation that will challenge the industry's viability," she warned.

Ensuring stability should be a government priority.



1/ **Diana Hallam, AFPA Chief Executive Officer.** Image: AFPA



2/ **Shadow Minister for Fisheries and Forestry Senator Ross Cadell.** Image: Parliament of Australia

AFPA also endorsed the Commonwealth's plans to develop Bilateral Agreements, Bioregional Plans, or Regional Assessments with both RFA and non-RFA states. These mechanisms are essential to deliver certainty, prevent overlapping federal and state rules, and reduce unwarranted interference from interest groups.

The statement highlighted the role of expanded plantation forests in carbon sequestration and providing low-carbon building materials as alternatives to steel, aluminium, and concrete. Plantations can also benefit native flora and fauna. The reforms must not hinder plantation growth or the sector's capacity to meet rising demand for timber products.

However, several unresolved issues could affect plantations, public native forests, and private operations. These include extremely tight implementation

timelines, the release and finalisation of remaining standards to enable workable Bilateral Agreements or similar plans, resourcing challenges for states under the new workload, the unclear role of the new Commonwealth EPA and risks of duplication with state agencies, potential unacceptable impacts, and the recognition that no additional offsets or net gain requirements should apply given the 2.9 million hectares added to reserves when RFAs were established.

Hallam concluded by looking forward to a solid foundation for the forest industry's future success under the reformed EPBC Act.

The inquiry also heard broader industry alarm about the changes. Hallam told the committee that investment in forestry activities had been paused pending clarity on the new regulatory environment. Shadow Minister for Fisheries and Forestry Senator Ross Cadell highlighted risks to more than 80,000 jobs, describing the changes as rushed and lacking consideration for regional communities reliant on forestry.

Witnesses from the National Farmers' Federation and Timber NSW echoed concerns about inadequate consultation, inaccurate mapping data, escalating compliance costs, and a looming "maelstrom" of legal uncertainty.

The committee is expected to deliver its report by 24 March. With key elements of the reforms commencing progressively from early 2026, the forestry sector continues to seek assurances that the transition will preserve viability and support sustainable practices.

“SENATOR ROSS CADELL HIGHLIGHTED RISKS TO MORE THAN 80,000 JOBS”



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# Business Grants

Access state and/or federal funding to grow your business!

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

## Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Grants Program

INVEST in innovation, advanced technology and job creation to strengthen the state's economy and position Queensland as a leader in modern manufacturing.

The Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Grants Program (TQMGP) is helping shape the future of Queensland's manufacturing sector.

Administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, the TQMGP offers \$79.1 million in grant funding over 3 years, delivered through 6 competitive rounds, with a new round opening every 6 months.

Round 1 has \$12.5 million available, with eligible businesses able to apply for up to \$1.5 million in matched grants.

Eligible Queensland-based manufacturers can apply for matched funding grants of \$100,000 to \$1.5 million for projects that are:

- Facilitating pathways for export opportunities
- Reshoring or onshoring manufacturing activity currently undertaken interstate or overseas
- Improving manufacturing productivity and competitiveness
- Stimulating private sector

investment and generating jobs.

Grants are available for:

- Advanced manufacturing equipment which meets program objectives (up to 50 per cent of eligible costs)
- Software purchasing to support system integration and manufacturing process improvement e.g. enterprise resource planning (ERP), material requirements planning (MRP), manufacturing execution system (MES).

To be eligible for an offer of funding, an applicant must meet each of the following eligibility requirements:

- Have a majority manufacturing turnover or be part of a structure that has a majority of manufacturing turnover.
- Manufacturing as defined under Division C of Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 (Revision 2.0)
- Have between 5-200 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees or be part of a structure that has 5-200 FTE employees
- Have a project site in Queensland
- Have an existing manufacturing presence in



**The grant is an opportunity for Queensland manufacturing businesses to improve their productivity and competitiveness.** Image: Shutterstock

Queensland at the time of application. A minimum of five FTE employees must be located in Queensland

- Have operated within Queensland for a minimum of three consecutive years prior to submitting their application
- Must be purchasing advanced manufacturing equipment with Industry 4.0/5.0 features or software purchasing to support system integration e.g. ERP, MRP, MES
- Be the manufacturing entity that will own any equipment to be purchased under the proposed eligible project
- Be registered for GST and have an active Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Not be part of a group structure that has been awarded more than \$1.5 million in funding from the TQMGP across any number of rounds
- The maximum funding to one applicant and its associated group structure across all

rounds of the program is \$1.5 million.

Eligible project costs are listed below and include:

- Advanced robotics, automation and/or Industry 4.0 and 5.0 equipment
- Sector-relevant technology, system or process to support system integration and manufacturing process improvement
- Artificial intelligence (AI) systems to support manufacturing processes
- Associated project costs critical to the success of the proposed project
- Freight and/or electrical upgrades specific for the new manufacturing equipment (not more than 10 per cent of equipment funding).

### GRANT DETAILS

**Provider:** Business Queensland

**Amount:** \$100,000 - \$1,500,000

**Round 1 Closes:** 16 April 2026

**Location:** QLD

**Who Can Apply:** Businesses

**Co-Contribution Required:** Yes

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/manufacturingretail/manufacturing/grant-programs/transforming>

# Protecting heritage trees

LAST week, we covered the breaking story of Nature Conservation Council (NCC) calling for the immediate protection of 'Big Spotty', the world's tallest spotted gum tree (*Corymbia maculata*) standing at 72m (236ft) and believed to be around 500 years old. The truth as we detailed last week is that 'Big Spotty' is already subject to protection that has been in place for around 25 years.

The area is within what Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) calls Compartment 50a (c50a) inside a state forest. Whilst areas of c50a have been selectively harvested since 1951 with growth and regrowth taking place, at no time has any harvesting taken place in the exclusion zone. This prompted us to ask FCNSW if there are any plans to undertake harvesting anywhere within c50a – the answer was clearly no, so we are struggling with what NCC is really playing at. Their final statement says it all 'Big Spotty will continue to be permanently protected well into the future in an area of forest that will never be harvested'

'Big Spotty' isn't the only special tree subject to protection. 'Old Bottlebutt' is the largest red bloodwood tree (*Corymbia gummifera*) in the Southern hemisphere, located in the Burrawan State Forest and is estimated to be more than 200 years old. It stands around 52m high (170ft) with a recorded girth of more than 16m (52ft) just above its base. Clearly this is also an impressive tree.



A hardwood timber deck with seating is built around 'Old Bottlebutt' for a great viewing experience  
Image: FCNSW

South of Port Macquarie, the Old Bottlebutt Walking Track is located off Bago Road just North of Herons Creek. The track is described as meandering through an area of remnant rainforest in a 600m loop, taking in footbridges and creek crossings and is listed by others as being wheelchair friendly. It starts and finishes back at the Burrawan picnic area.

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# Why choosing certified matters

IN a world increasingly conscious of environmental impact, the materials we choose matter more than ever to consumers and for meeting performance requirements under frameworks such as NatHERS, Green Star and other sustainability benchmarks.

As expectations rise around energy efficiency, carbon outcomes and responsible sourcing, material selection plays a growing role in demonstrating compliance and ethical choices while delivering durable, high-performing buildings.

Timber has long been valued for its natural beauty, versatility and performance. But when sourced responsibly, it can also play a powerful role in protecting forests and supporting communities, while delivering tangible benefits for projects.

At Responsible Wood, sustainability means ensuring forests continue to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits, today and for generations to come. Choosing certified timber provides confidence that the wood used is sourced from forests managed to rigorous, independently verified standards.

## WHAT DOES "CERTIFIED" ACTUALLY MEAN?

As the national governing body for the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) in Australia, Responsible Wood provides independent, third-party certification to verify that forest management and supply chains meet robust requirements aligned with global best practice.

Certification supports

outcomes like:

- Forests are regenerated and not over-harvested
- Biodiversity, water systems and soil health are protected
- Cultural and community values are respected
- Workers operate under safe and fair conditions

When you specify certified timber, you're choosing transparency, accountability and independently verified sustainability.

## WHY CHOOSING CERTIFIED TIMBER IS A SMART CHOICE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

• **Reduce risk** – Choosing certified timber simplifies due diligence by providing documented evidence that wood products are responsibly sourced. This helps builders, designers and specifiers meet procurement policies and regulatory requirements with confidence.

• **Strengthen your market position** – Many government and commercial projects require or strongly prefer certified products, alongside green building rating tools. Choosing certified timber helps you remain eligible and competitive.

• **Build trust with clients** – Today's clients expect more. Lip service to sustainability claims don't pass muster – clients want proof. Certification provides credible, third-party verification that supports your brand and reinforces



**Responsible Wood**

RW/1-10-1

**Look for the Responsible Wood and PEFC logos on timber products.** Images: Responsible Wood



**PEFC**  
PEFC/21-1-1

your environmental commitments.

- **Support the future of forests** – By choosing certified timber products, you support forest managers who invest in long-term stewardship: protecting forests for future generations while sustaining regional communities and jobs.

When you choose certified timber, you're backing a system that:

- Protects biodiversity
- Safeguards ecosystems
- Supports communities
- Maintains forest productivity

It's a practical way to align your projects with sustainability goals while maintaining quality, durability and performance.

## MAKE CERTIFICATION THE STANDARD

If you already choose timber, take the next step: choose certified timber.

Look for the Responsible Wood and PEFC logos on timber products, specify Responsible Wood timber and wood products, and ask your suppliers about certified options.

Because sustainable building isn't just what you build – it's what you build it with.



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