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Victoria and Tasmania Timber & Hardware Industry Awards finalists

COVER STORY P 3



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Leighton leaves FWPA

FWPA CEO announces resignation to take on new role as OneFortyOne CEO after a transformative and collaborative tenure.

FOREST & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) announced on Wednesday that CEO, Andrew Leighton is stepping down from his role following the decision to accept a new position as Chief Executive Officer of one of the industry's leading companies, OneFortyOne.

Since joining FWPA in February 2022, Leighton has led the delivery of the 2023–2028 strategic plan, and built a strong internal team, transforming the way FWPA delivers member services through industry consultation and collaboration.

The FWPA Board said: "Andrew's leadership of FWPA has been characterised by a key focus on R&D innovation, adoption and implementation. He has used his tenure to position FWPA as an industry leader, working closely with industry bodies to align research with emerging needs and supported a long-term vision for growth."

Craig Taylor, FWPA Chair, acknowledges the Board's sentiments, "Naturally the Board is disappointed to



Andrew Leighton's term as FWPA CEO has seen strong relationships with partners. Image: supplied

a privilege to lead FWPA and work alongside such a dedicated team and engaged members. I am proud of what we have achieved together to support innovation and promote the value of our industry. I am excited to take on this new opportunity as CEO of OneFortyOne and will continue to support the incredible work of FWPA and their continued success."

He will work with the FWPA Board and management team to support a smooth transition before he finishes up in the role in early July.

Chair Craig Taylor said, "The FWPA Board will commence a confidential recruitment process within

the week, and we hope that the incoming CEO will have the opportunity to have some overlap with Andrew before he leaves FWPA."

FWPA emphasises that it remains focused on delivering value to members and progressing its strategic priorities without disruption. Updates on recruitment of a new CEO will be provided in due course.

be losing Andrew. He has done a great job for FWPA over the last four years. His insight, management and leadership will be greatly missed.

"We are, however, excited for Andrew to be taking over the CEO role at one of our industry's largest and most progressive companies and of course we wish him all the best."

Leighton reflected on his tenure as CEO of FWPA, saying, "It has been

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Timber & Hardware Industry Awards

NTHA has announced the 2026 Victoria and Tasmania finalists.

THEY'RE the people who champion the final step of bringing timber to the residential market and every year the National Timber & Hardware Association (NTHA) celebrates retailers, suppliers and fabricators at the Timber & Hardware Industry Awards.

This week, the 2026 finalists from Victoria and Tasmania have been announced, recognising outstanding individuals and businesses across the timber and hardware sector.

As the NTHA team say: "The awards celebrate excellence, dedication, and innovation within the industry, shining a spotlight on those who go above and beyond in their roles. The 2026 finalists represent a diverse group of professionals and organisations who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to their work, their teams, and the broader industry."

The regional winners will be announced at a formal dinner on 15 May at the Arts Centre in Melbourne. Ticket sales close on 29 April, click here for more details and to book. NTHA has also negotiated for discounts on hotel accommodation nearby, see details at the bottom of the booking page.

2026 FINALISTS

Trade Store of the Year

- Cornwell's Mitre 10 Trade Centre – Lilydale
- Provans Mitre 10

“THE AWARDS CELEBRATE EXCELLENCE, DEDICATION, AND INNOVATION WITHIN THE INDUSTRY”



1 & 2/ Jenkins Home Hardware and Earls Hardware are both finalists in the Retail Store of the Year Under 2500sqm category.

3/ Jeff Hitchins and Laura Town of TM&H Mitre 10 are in the running for Retail Store of the Year Over 2500sqm.

4/ Andre Clements, CEO of AAA Advanced Trusses, is delighted to be on the shortlist for the Victoria and Tasmania Best Off-site Manufacturing Award.

All photos: courtesy NTHA

- Hume & Iser Mitre 10 – Bendigo
- Demak Outdoor Timber & Hardware
- Bayside Timber & Truss

Retail Store of the Year Under 2500sqm

- Limos Mitre 10
- Jenkins Home Hardware
- Earls Hardware
- Trotters Mitre 10
- Brighton Hardware Hub

Retail Store of the Year Over 2500sqm

- Lakes H Hardware
- Mt Alexander Timber & Hardware
- Diamond Valley Mitre 10
- Permewans Mitre 10
- TM&H Mitre 10

Best Off-site Manufacturing Award

- Major Timber & Trusses
- AAA Advanced Trusses
- Peuker & Alexander
- Bellbird Building Supplies
- Big River Group (Breakwater)

Supplier Sales Representative of the Year

- Frank D'Assisi – Meyer Timber
- John Flavel – Bremick
- Shane O'Brien – Paslode
- Glenn Brown – Takasho

Timber Supplier of the Year

- Meyer Timber
- Tilling Timber
- ITI Australia
- Wesbeam
- Dindas Australia
- Mortim Australia

Hardware Retail Supplier of the Year

- Selleys
- Sutton Tools
- Bremick
- Ames Australasia
- Makita

Building Material Supplier of the Year

- Cement Australia
- Paslode
- James Hardie
- Haymes Paint

Other regions will be celebrating their finalists through the year. Nominations for the 2026 Queensland Timber & Hardware Industry Awards are the next to close on 1 May. Click here to nominate your local stars.

On the cover: The Provans Mitre 10 store in Clifton Hill is a finalist for Trade Store of the Year. Image: courtesy NTHA

Calls for NZ FSC stakeholder input

New Zealand's revised FSC risk assessment is open for public consultation.

THE revised FSC Risk Assessment for New Zealand, prepared by consulting firm PT Hijau Daun in collaboration with FSC (click here to download), plays a key role in determining risk classifications for sourcing timber and other forest-based materials. The consultation is now open (13 April – 13 May 2026), giving stakeholders a limited window to provide input via FSC's Consultation Platform: <https://consultation-platform.fsc.org/en/consultations/take/c3962f0fd3602>

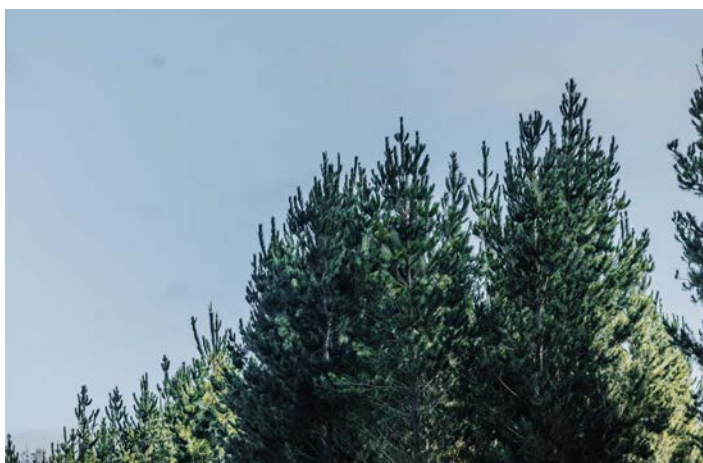
Once finalised, the Risk Assessment will help FSC certificate holders sourcing material from non-certified forests in New Zealand to assess and mitigate the risk of sourcing material originating from unacceptable sources.

In line with FSC's updated Risk Assessment Framework, the revised Risk Assessment for New Zealand expands from five to 12 risk categories and from 32 to 64 Indicators. Most new Indicators represent a more detailed breakdown of existing Indicators, while seven Indicators address new areas of risk. The Risk Assessment evaluates the risk related to each of the 64 Indicators and sets out measures to address risks identified as non-negligible.

To find out more about FSC Risk Assessments, click here.

Key proposed changes:

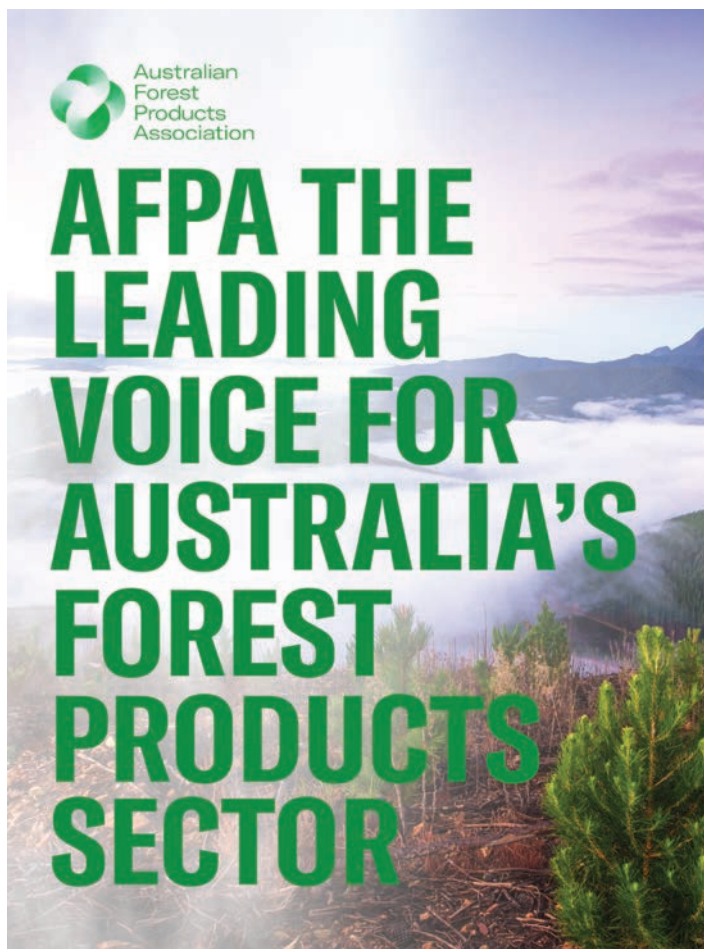
- The revised Risk Assessment identifies non-negligible risk for 18 indicators, up from one in the previous Risk Assessment.
- Only three of these Indicators apply nationwide; the other 15 are limited to very high-risk erosion zones as defined by the



The new Risk Assessment will help FSC certificate holders manage the risk of new inputs. Image: ©FSC Australia and New Zealand/Andreas Weiss

National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry (NES-CF)

As a result of these changes, certificate holders, particularly those sourcing from very high-risk erosion areas, will face increased due diligence requirements.



HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Stakeholders are encouraged to submit feedback via the FSC Consultation Platform between 13 April and 13 May 2026. Click here to log in or register. To ensure the quality of the feedback received, all comments should be supported by objective, verifiable, and reliable evidence. Professional opinions alone are not sufficient.

Following the consultation, all submissions will be reviewed by PT Hijau

Daun and the Risk Assessment amended accordingly. Respondents may be contacted for clarification. All stakeholder feedback will be included in a publicly available Stakeholder Feedback Report, which will detail

how input was addressed or justify any feedback that was disregarded. Anonymity may be requested via the Consultation Platform.

To assist stakeholders, the consultation materials include an infographic summarising risk designations and their geographic applicability, as well as a table outlining justifications for non-negligible risk designations and associated risk mitigation measures.

For further details, refer to the Risk Assessment document provided on the Consultation Platform, in particular the "Assessment of Indicators" and "Risk Mitigation (RM)" tabs.

For inquiries regarding the revision, email Jules Crawshaw, PT Hijau Daun at jjcrawshaw@hijau-daun.com. For process-related questions, email Stefan Jensen, senior policy manager, FSC ANZ at s.jensen@au.fsc.org

TQ releases Grounded 2026

The issue flags policy, housing and supply chain opportunities for Queensland timber.

FOR Timber Queensland, the past 12 months have been a year of significant highs and lows, all covered in the 2026 edition of *Grounded*, the organisation's annual digital partner magazine.

This year's edition is published against the backdrop of the Queensland Government's Future Timber Plan (QFTP), released in October 2025, which sets a 25-year direction for the industry and frames timber as a critical input to meeting the State's target of delivering one million new homes by 2044.

The plan has been a significant highpoint of the past year and Timber Queensland CEO Mick Stephens addresses it directly, including the role of timber in housing delivery and carbon outcomes. The magazine reports that in 2025, around 80% of Queensland's 33,000-plus new home completions used renewable pine framing, removing an estimated 265,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The lows are acknowledged by Queensland Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Tony Perrett MP. Widespread flooding has affected much of the State and he notes the impact of soaring fuel costs on industry operations, too. But the Minister also celebrates work done with TQ members to deliver the QFTP and outlines implementation measures such as work to deliver new timber sales permits from available state forests in 2027.



A snapshot of articles in this issue of *Grounded*. Image: supplied

Other articles feature policy commentary, housing and sustainability insights, workforce development stories and recognition of industry excellence, including the establishment of the Colin MacKenzie Award for Technical Excellence in Timber Application and Use.

Timber Queensland Strategic Relations and Communications Manager Clarissa Brandt said *Grounded 2026* reflects a sector at a genuine turning point.

"There is a lot happening right now in policy, markets and workforce and *Grounded* gives people across the supply chain an opportunity to step back and see the bigger picture," Brandt said.

"From government direction and housing demand through to the people and projects delivering outcomes on the ground, this edition speaks to issues that directly affect how the industry plans, invests and operates."

Designed as a resource for the entire forest and timber sector, *Grounded 2026*, also profiles Timber Queensland's valued annual partners — Australian Retirement Trust, Responsible Wood, Komatsu Forest, Rivers Insurance Brokers, Choice Energy and IVS Labs — highlighting their role in supporting industry capability and resilience.

"Whether you work in plantations, native forestry, processing, construction, transport or training, the themes explored in *Grounded 2026* connect directly to real-world challenges and opportunities facing the industry," Brandt concluded.

To read *Grounded 2026*, click here.

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for our industry here.

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appointment directly on a day and time that suits you based on their listed availability. The initial appointment is free for a confidential chat. Go online to book: <https://calendly.com/profshell/introductory-session>

Electric Vehicle Fleets Incentive

THIS timely grant provides funding for eligible businesses to help purchase battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and smart chargers.

The NSW Government is helping businesses fast-track the transition of their fleet to electric vehicles. Two funding options are available under the EV Fleets incentive:

- Kick-start funding for smaller fleets or piloting a few EVs. Kick-start funding for financial year 2026 is now open and will close on 29 May 2026. This includes delivery trucks for timber businesses as well as corporate vehicles.
- Competitive bid is for larger fleets, looking to scale their transition. The next round is planned for late April 2026, and the updated guidelines will be published at that time.

Transitioning to an EV fleet will help business owners save on running costs as well as reduce carbon emissions. EVs are also considered by experts and users to have greater technical performance than traditional internal combustion engine vehicles.

Kick-start funding is designed for businesses that are interested in piloting a few BEVs or for smaller fleets that want to start their electrification journey. Kick-start funding supports eligible organisations to transition to EVs by providing financial assistance for up to 15 BEVs and smart charging ports in



Shifting corporate and delivery fleets to EVs means you'll never have to worry about fuel availability again. Photo: Donyale Harrison.

total, across all rounds and allocations of the EV fleets incentive.

The following types of organisations are eligible to apply, provided they hold a valid ABN:

- Private businesses
- Non-government and not-for-profit organisations
- Local councils
- State-owned corporations
- Federal government agencies operating in NSW
- Truck operators (with at least one truck and a valid ABN).
- Car rental companies
- Car ride-share companies
- Car subscription companies
- Taxi owners (individuals or organisations operating one or more taxis)

Note: Organisations may be headquartered outside NSW, but all incentivised vehicles must be registered and used predominantly in NSW.

Your organisation must operate a fleet of at least three registered vehicles in NSW (any type: petrol, diesel, hybrid, electric) at the time of application. These vehicles must have been operational in your fleet for at least six months prior to the application submission. The department expects your organisation will continue operating a fleet of at least three vehicles for at least three to four years after your application.

Truck operators must operate at least one truck registered in NSW.

Click the URL in the Grant Details box for more information.

GRANT DETAILS

Provider: NSW Climate and Energy Action

Amount: Unspecified

Round 4 Closes: 29 May 2026

Location: NSW and national with vehicles registered in NSW

Who Can Apply:

Government
Non-Government
Education
Health
Community Groups
Sporting Clubs
Businesses
Other

Co-Contribution Required: Unspecified by Provider

<https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry/programs-grants-and-schemes/electric-vehicles/ev-fleets-incentive>

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.sydneymbuildexpo.com/>.

MAY

6: Timber Queensland Webinar – ONLINE, 11.00am. Explore the versatility of locally-grown cypress. Learn how cypress is naturally durable, termite resistance and has strong sustainability credentials including technical experts and designers providing international case studies. To register, click here.

15: Victoria & Tasmania Timber & Hardware Industry Awards – Arts Centre Melbourne, 6.30pm - 11.30pm. Join us in celebrating the Victorian/Tasmanian Timber and Hardware Industry. For more information, visit <https://www.ntha.com.au/eventdetails/37604/2026-victoria-tasmania-timber-hardware-industry-awards> or contact Tahlia at events@ntha.com.au

17-19: SAVE THE DATE: Professional Woodworking Expo – NEC, Birmingham, UK. Dedicated event for woodworking professionals, the Professional Woodworking Expo is the essential platform for joinery and installation businesses. For more information, contact Jess Hardisty: jess.hardisty@montgomerygroup.com

18-19: FTMA National Conference – Sunshine Coast Convention Centre, Novotel Twin Waters, QLD. The conference theme, At the Crossroads – Reframing for Growth, reflects the pivotal decisions facing our sector as we navigate a rapidly evolving housing market, new technologies and changing material preferences. Delegates will

hear from internationally renowned futurist and best-selling author Michael McQueen along with long-time industry expert, Tim Woods, who will provide his comprehensive housing and market update. For more information, contact kersten@ftma.com.au

20-21: SAVE THE DATE: 5th International Forest Business Conference – Sheraton Sopot Hotel, Poland. A two-day conference on megatrends that shape responsible forest and wood industry investments. The conference aims to bring together leading timberland investment management organizations, investors interested in forestry asset class and sustainable wood industry representatives in order to exchange and share experiences and ideas about new forest business frontiers. Register at www.fba-events.com or contact rafal@forest-analytics.com

JUNE

9-11: SAVE THE DATE: Woodex Trade Exhibition – Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa. Africa's premier trade exhibition for timber, woodworking machinery, tools, and forestry. WoodEX for Africa has evolved into a true international event, consistently attracting visitors and exhibitors from more than 20 countries. Visit www.woodexforafrica.com for more information.

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

JULY

18: Queensland Timber & Hardware Industry Awards – Rydges South Bank, Brisbane 6.30pm - 11.30pm. Join us in celebrating the Queensland Timber and Hardware Industry. For

more information, visit <https://www.ntha.com.au/eventdetails/37606/2026-queensland-timber-hardware-industry-awards> or contact Tahlia at events@ntha.com.au

SEPTEMBER

4: New South Wales & ACT Timber & Hardware Industry Awards – Doltone House, Sydney 6.30pm - 11.30pm. Join us in celebrating the NSW Timber and Hardware Industry. For more information, visit <https://www.ntha.com.au/eventdetails/38006/2026-new-south-wales-act-timber-hardware-industry-awards> or contact Tahlia at events@ntha.com.au

12: SAVE THE DATE: 2026 WFTN Cocktails for Charity – Cloudland, Brisbane, 1.30pm - 6.00pm. In support of Zephyr Education Limited. Further information, and ticket sale 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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Cultural burn lowers fire risk

Community rekindles cultural burning on Country in Cowarra State Forest.

ONE of the significant changes post-Black Summer was the recognition that standard methods of fire risk mitigation could sometimes worsen rather than improve the situation. During that awful season, failed backburns in the Southern Highlands and Blue Mountains destroyed homes in Balmoral, Bilpin and Mount Wilson.

Traditional owners spoke up during the post-fires analyses, reminding investigators that they had been practicing cultural burns as part of their land management for thousands of years, and that the practice was highly applicable to many of the NSW and Victorian forests that had been affected.

Forestry Corporation of NSW was listening. Recently it participated in the Bunyah and Biripi cultural burn on Biripi Country in Cowarra State Forest, near Port Macquarie. It is the first of several cultural burns in NSW State Forests being led by Aboriginal communities under the Fire, Country and People program.

Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) community firefighters led the cultural burn, marking a significant milestone in the return of traditional Aboriginal fire practices to State Forest management.

The burn brought together 15 community members, Elders, knowledge holders and young people, working alongside Forestry Corporation fire crews, to apply traditional fire knowledge passed down through the generations.

Amos Donovan, local Biripi man and CEO of Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land



1/ Cultural burns are slow and leave areas of unaffected growth for wildlife.
2/ Channel Seven journalist Medinah Wells interviews Amos Donovan, CEO of the Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council (centre) and Biripi Elder Uncle Bill O'Brien.
3/ Members of the Bunyah LALC community firefighters and Forestry Corp team who managed the cultural burn. All images: Forestry Corporation of NSW

Council, led the burn, in partnership with Forestry Corporation.

He said: "This is not a hot burn, it's a slow-moving, cool burn in the right conditions. Cultural burns do not harm the environment or wildlife.

"Each time our rangers do a cultural

burn they are learning and the knowledge we hold is being passed down to our young firefighters."

The Cowarra State Forest burn forms part of the Fire, Country and People: Aboriginal Community Disaster Ready Partnership Project, a three-year, \$2.96 million initiative funded under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund with \$1.48 million provided by the Australian Government and \$1.48 million from the Forestry Corporation of NSW.

The project has been co-designed with Aboriginal communities, including the Bunyah LALC, to ensure community aspirations for cultural burning, disaster readiness and land stewardship are central to all activities.

John Shipp, FCNSW's Aboriginal heritage and partnerships manager, said cultural burning plays an important role in caring for Country and building long-term community resilience.

"Cultural burning aims to apply fire to the landscape in the right place, at the right time and under the right conditions," he said.

"Fire is applied at a scale that thins out mid-storey plants, without burning broad areas all at once as we see in high intensity bushfires.

"Burns are carried out when conditions allow for a low intensity, slow-moving and

cool fire, allowing people and animals to move safely away from the flames, minimising harm to the forest canopy and maintaining healthy landscapes. The landscape can't be too damp or too dry,

From P 8

and the burn may be deliberately patchy with some areas left unburnt to provide shelter and habitat for fauna.

“Burns are timed for when Country may trend toward being unwell if it is not treated through the re-introduction of traditional fire,” he added.

TEACHING OLD METHODS

Ecological benefits of cultural burning include reducing heavy fuel loads, opening the forest understorey, promoting grass growth and encouraging the return of native plants and animals not seen on Country for many years.

Traditional lighting methods are commonly used, including hand lighting with matches or traditional firesticks, particularly in open grassy forest types along ridges and mid-slopes.

Burn plans are prepared under Reviews of Environmental Factors or the Bushfire Assessment Code, with cultural context and knowledge added by each community. Cultural burn sites are prioritised with communities often along traditional pathways based on proximity to fire-affected communities,



Because the cultural burn is ‘cold’, it’s easily managed on the ground, with minuscule risk to trained personnel.

public infrastructure, important cultural locations and existing protection zones.

A formal research program is being established to build an evidence base for traditional Aboriginal fire management and its influence on the intensity and extent of bushfires. Photographic

monitoring will be used to track changes in forest condition over time.

More than 60 Aboriginal people across the north coast have already received accredited fire training through the program, with dedicated cultural burning contracts negotiated with Aboriginal partner organisations to support employment and economic participation.

The partnership represents formal recognition that traditional fire knowledge has a critical role to play in managing Country, protecting communities and building resilience to major bushfire events.

Members of the Bunyah LALC Community have committed to returning to Cowarra State Forest on a seasonal basis to continue treating Country through ongoing cultural burning, ensuring the practice remains a living cultural tradition and an ongoing land management responsibility.

Uncle Bill O’Brien, who was part of the event, said, “Cultural burning has been happening for thousands of years, and we need to make sure it continues on, under the watch of future generations.”

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Tasmanian forests and fires

Research shows a more complicated relationship than recent news articles suggest.

TODAY'S media environment is governed by clicks. Get the eyes on the headline, get the fingers clicking the link: you're a winner. Sadly, this means headlines have become more declarative and sensational, and nuance within the story, including information that might contradict a great clickbait headline, is often lost.

A good example of this phenomenon has played out in the national media this month.

In late March, Laureate Professor David Bowman et al. published a letter in *Environmental Research Letters*, Volume 21, Number 6 titled 'Landscape-scale experimental proof that tall wet Eucalyptus regrowth burns more severely than mature forest'. (Click here to read the whole article.)

Professor Bowman, who is also director of the University of Tasmania Fire Centre, and his team described the 2019 naturally ignited fire in the Riveaux Road area, a 5626-hectare site on public land. The fire affected a range of forest types including regrowth following clearfelling and burning, as well as unlogged mature forests. The area had previously been surveyed by airborne lidar in May 2014 and another lidar survey was carried out in May 2021, allowing the researchers to detect structural change at these sites following the fire.

Understorey temperatures and fuel loads were measured pre- and post-fire at four permanent 'chronosequence plots', located in three burned mature sites and one burned regrowth site. Because the same site had been used for various ecological and biodiversity studies, including fuel and understorey temperature measurements conducted before and after the fire, there was a significant quantity of reliable data available.



Regrowth forest does present risks, but media reports blaming forest harvesting misunderstand the research. Image: Shutterstock/Anna LoFi

Fire severity patterns in the study were mapped using differenced normalised burn ratio (dNBR) calculated from Sentinel-2 imagery. Imagery acquired on 1 December 2018 was selected as the pre-fire scene, while the post-fire scene was dated 24 February 2019. The short time period chosen limited the effects of natural changes outside the fire.

The specific area that was selected burned over a shorter period than the whole fire event, and paired areas (one-hectare cells) on either side of the fire perimeter were sampled.

To quote from the Results section of the article: "The study area was dominated by mature forest (89.4%) with a smaller proportion of regrowth (10.6%). The Riveaux Road fire burned 60.5% of the study site on 30 January 2019. 83.3% of the burned area was mature forest, with small, scattered areas of regrowth comprising 16.7% of the burned area. Regrowth was highly flammable

compared to the mature forest, with only 4.9% of the regrowth (in an isolated patch to the south of the fire perimeter) in the study area remaining unburned, whereas 43.6% of the mature forest was unburned.

"The fire perimeter was not influenced by logging roads nor the Huon River and its many side creeks. On the burned side of

the fire perimeter, 7.4% of the 1 ha cells contained regrowth forest, compared with only 1.6% of the paired cells on the unburned side. This difference was due to fire moving from regrowth forest and self-extinguishing in mature forest (32 pairs of 1 ha plots); by comparison, there were only 3 instances of fire moving from mature forest and self-extinguishing in regrowth forests. This disproportionate difference in vegetation type where the fire self-extinguished was highly significant."

The study also noted that "The dNBR fire severity patterns were very strongly controlled by canopy height, with fire severity decreasing as canopy height increased."

These highly specific results were reported on the ABC News website with the banner heading "Study finds decades of 'intensive' logging worsens bushfire risk", a claim that was widely repeated on social media and in other news reports.

FACTS TELL A DIFFERENT STORY

Professor Bowman has since published an opinion piece clearing up

“THE TRUTH ABOUT FORESTRY AND BUSHFIRE LIES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OPPOSING VIEWS

Cont P 11

From P 10

misrepresentation of the original article. In it, he wrote: "My day job is trying to reduce bushfire risk. It was of great interest to me that some forest scientists suggested that forestry was a key reason for the massive bushfires that burned across NSW in the summer of 2019-2020.

"Their idea was that areas of regrowth established after intensive forestry (clear-felling) burned so severely that they acted as 'detonators', igniting entire landscapes.

"My team disputed this claim based on various satellite analyses, and especially the vast areas of national parks that burned severely, far from any forestry activity."

Bowman said his team believed extreme fire weather was the overriding cause of the severe fire season because any forestry effect was very localised. However, at that time, satellite analyses could not conclusively disprove any forestry effect.

The "detailed study based on the unique opportunity of very detailed data collected before and after a bushfire" in the recent Tasmanian study gave the chance for them to show effects during a bushfire that occurred during moderate fire weather conditions.

"Our study found two important things, showing the truth about forestry and bushfire lies in the middle of the opposing views of a massive or negligible effect," Prof Bowman said.

"We found beyond doubt that dense regrowth on logged sites burns more fiercely than surrounding forests. However, we also showed that intense regrowth fires do not ignite the surrounding landscapes; indeed, the mature forests often acted as a barrier to fire spread.

"This effect breaks down under more extreme fire weather conditions, when both mature and regrowth forests can burn severely."

In the piece (click here to read the whole article), Bowman said that his concern was with flagging the risks of regrowth forest, which are particularly common in areas around Hobart after the 1967 bushfires and other disturbances.



Professor David Bowman, director of the Fire Centre bushfire research hub and Professor of Pyrogeography and Fire Science at the University of Tasmania. Image: Utas

As he put it: "An urgent fire management challenge is separating our suburbs from this fire hazard." Understorey removal and thinning of regrowth eucalypts might be the answer, "but we need to do some trials to work out what is going to be a socially acceptable and cost-effective solution."

Bowman suggested additional interventions such as cool burning, which does not damage remaining trees (see story p8 this issue) and maintaining mature forests as green-fire breaks.

"To be clear, the need for managing regrowth to protect life and property and to sustain a native forestry industry is an obvious and urgent task given the increasingly large bushfires caused by droughts and dry lightning storms," Bowman concluded. "Relying on firefighting alone is not a realistic option. The massive fire seasons in 2016, 2019 and 2025 make the limitations (and exceptionally high costs) of firefighting painfully obvious."

Dr Shaun Sutor, Adjunct Senior Researcher at the University of Tasmania and manager of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's research and innovation team, published an article in *The Mercury* last week that also addressed

the manner in which the specific data had been too broadly generalised and important messages missed (click here for a downloadable link from STT).

He wrote: "Forest scientists and land managers, including Sustainable Timber Tasmania, have long recognised that younger regrowth can contain denser lower canopies and more continuous 'ladder fuels', which can influence how fire moves vertically through a forest under certain conditions – acknowledging that reality is an important part of responsible forest management.

"One needs to be careful not to conflate this site-specific result with a general explanation for large bushfires.

"Crucially, the research does not support the claim that forestry causes megafires, nor that regrowth forests, in themselves, drive bushfire spread at the landscape-scale.

"A substantial body of peer-reviewed research, including work by Prof Bowman and colleagues, demonstrates that while some regrowth areas can experience higher fire severity under certain conditions, regrowth forests do not increase fire contagion, do not increase fire spread, and are not associated with elevated landscape-scale bushfire risk, particularly where regrowth occurs as patches embedded within a broader matrix of mature forest."

Dr Sutor noted that regrowth from harvesting and from severe bushfires creates similar risk, and that climate change has dramatically increased the risk of severe fires driven by extreme weather.

"One practical outcome of this research effort has been a major investment in early fire detection," he wrote. "Sustainable Timber Tasmania is now a national leader in the operational use of AI-enabled fire cameras, with 11 cameras fully embedded in day-to-day fire operations, integrated with satellite-based detection systems."

This message has been lost in the click-bait forestry-bashing headlines. After decades of record fires extending vastly beyond forestry harvesting areas, much of NSW and Victoria's forest area is regrowth. Now is the time to use good science accurately, to help mitigate that risk.

“ONE PRACTICAL OUTCOME HAS BEEN A MAJOR INVESTMENT IN EARLY FIRE DETECTION

Biological hazards: the risks timber businesses may be missing

By **VICKI STABLEFORD, MEMBER WHS/HR MANAGER NTHA**

A NEW Code of Practice from Safe Work Australia is putting a spotlight on a workplace risk that many timber and hardware merchants may not have fully considered: biological hazards.

It is easy to associate these hazards with hospitals or farms. But the reality is they exist in timber yards, warehouses, and manufacturing facilities across the supply chain. And in many cases, they are part of everyday operations.

WHAT ARE BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS?

Biological hazards include bacteria, moulds, fungi, viruses, parasites, and contaminants produced by living organisms. In timber environments, exposure typically happens through inhaling airborne particles, touching contaminated materials, or poor hygiene practices during handling.

What makes the risk relevant to this sector is how timber is stored and moved. Outdoor storage, moisture exposure, and frequent handling create the perfect conditions for contamination to develop, often without obvious signs.

Mould is one of the most visible examples. Timber stored in damp or poorly ventilated areas can develop fungal growth, and when that material is cut or shifted, spores can be released into the air. Workers may not notice it immediately, but repeated exposure can lead to respiratory irritation or trigger allergic reactions.

Less visible, but just as common, is contamination from animals. Open yard storage means timber packs can be exposed to bird droppings, rodents, and insects. Without good hygiene practices,



Mouldy timber boards represent an often overlooked risk to workers. Image: Shutterstock/Stoatphoto

workers handling these materials can be exposed to bacteria through hand-to-mouth contact or inhalation of fine particles.

Even treated timber carries a level of risk. Preservatives used to protect against decay and pests can become airborne during cutting or machining. Without proper dust control or personal protective equipment, that exposure can irritate the skin, eyes, and respiratory system.

HEALTH RISKS OF BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

According to the Code, the health impacts can range from mild to more serious. Respiratory irritation, asthma flare-ups, skin conditions like dermatitis, and even gastrointestinal illness linked to contamination are all identified risks. The outcome depends on the level of exposure and the individual worker.

For timber businesses, the key message is not alarm, it is awareness. Under Work Health and Safety laws, these hazards sit alongside more familiar risks like manual handling and

machinery. They are expected to be identified, assessed, and controlled as part of normal operations.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

The reality is many businesses are already doing part of the job. Ventilation systems, dust extraction, housekeeping, and pest control all play a role in reducing exposure. What is now changing is the need to recognise biological hazards as a defined risk, rather than

an incidental one.

That shift matters. When risks are clearly identified, they are more likely to be monitored, discussed, and managed consistently, whether through routine inspections, updated risk registers, or simple conversations on the floor.

The release of the Code is a reminder that not all workplace hazards are obvious. In an industry built around natural materials, exposure to biological risks is part of the environment. The difference now is that it's being formally recognised.

For timber and hardware merchants, the takeaway is straightforward: the risks may already be there, the focus now is making sure they are not being overlooked.

For more information click here to download the new Code of Practice on 'Managing the risks of biological hazards at work'.

Alternatively, you can reach out to the NTHA safety team on 1800 822 621 for assistance.

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FCoE's first annual showcase

THE Forestry Centre of Excellence (FCoE) is settling into its purpose-built new home at Adelaide University's Mount Gambier Campus (see *Enews* 886) and it's inviting the sector to come and celebrate next month.

The first FCoE Annual Showcase will be held on 13–14 May with two days of learning and discussion in the Green Triangle Region, plus a networking dinner. Best of all, the entire event is free (bookings are required).

Activities on Wednesday 13 May will start at 8.30am with demonstrations of the silvicultural work underway through the Centre, then continue with field sessions in the Mount Gambier and Blue Lakes area. These will include hands-on demonstrations of plantation management and technologies in forest assessment including LIDAR/drones, water monitoring, Resi-tool, and virtual reality. Attendees will need to supply their own PPE and lunch will be served in the field (dietary restrictions can be accommodated if FCoE



The free events at the first Forestry Centre of Excellence Showcase are designed to share research and encourage feedback from stakeholders. Image: supplied

On the Thursday, an Industry Research Showcase will run all day at FCoE. Current research projects will be highlighted and the program is structured to encourage feedback from stakeholders on their future expectations of the FCoE.

The event includes breakout sessions on tech for growers, including drone-based remote sensing and fatigue risk management systems in forestry; information for processors, including investigating alternative fibre resources and 'Tech in the Cab: Lessons from Log-truck Incidents'; a focus on growers including silviculture trials, assessing glyphosate exposure during forestry management and opportunities and challenges for biochar technology; plus forest health, including biosecurity and the history and future of surveillance.

The cut-off date for bookings is Tuesday 28 April, 2026.

Click here for more details and links to book each session (each is ticketed separately).

is notified in advance).

That evening, a tapas-style dinner will open at 5.30pm for a 6pm start in the Bob and Gayle Cowan Auditorium, with opportunities for networking and connecting with FCoE researchers.

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Timber skis winning fans in the Snowy

A passion project for two keen skiers has seen Jarrah hit the slopes.

STEPH and Jonathan (JP) Paige love skiing and Australian timbers, so it was only natural they combine the two in their Jindabyne-based business, Desert Skis.

The snow sports-loving couple met in New Zealand's high country and had been enjoying married life together in Perth when JP decided he wanted to try his hand at making a set of skis. A mechanical engineer by trade, with Steph an industrial electrician, they thought they had the range of skills needed.

As he told ABC's *Landline* program, "The first one was a total bodge job, but I was so proud holding that ski."

Since then, they've moved to the Snowy Mountains, built their own ski press and JP has continued honing his skills, with the couple and their friends trialling the final products. Each ski is laminated from 100% Australian-grown timbers, using Alpine ash and paulownia cores, with Jarrah sidewalls and other native timbers as topsheets plus a plastic base.

"The reason we chose [Jarrah] is that it's really good at taking an impact," said Steph. "The grains are so tightly packed and it is naturally water and rot resistant."

The Alpine ash is sourced from South Coast Timber mill in Eden on the NSW Far South Coast, where the owners have worked with the Paiges to meet their specific length and grade needs in the small quantities they require.

Mill general manager Damien Bunting told *Landline*, "You've got to search for the right quality boards, because it is quite specific; they can't have any knots or any imperfections at all."

Bunting dries the timber slowly in a 40°C kiln and works with his timber suppliers to ensure sustainability of supply. Jarrah, which was previously sourced from a small mill in WA, has been purchased as salvage timbers since the ban of WA native timber harvesting.

After taking delivery of the timber, the manufacturing process takes weeks, including cutting, shaping, laminating, grinding, oiling, waxing and finishing.


Each pair of skis takes about 15 hours of work spread out over months, but the final product is as beautiful as it is enjoyable to use.

After five years of development, the couple are now selling to the general public and have a loyal customer base. Click here to see the Desert Skis range.

To watch the full *Landline* story, click here.




- 1/ JP and Steph Paige in the US – JP is originally from Oklahoma.
- 2/ A background in mechanical engineering gave JP the confidence he needed to start his handmade ski mission.
- 3/ The skis are as enjoyable to use as they are to look at and have attracted a loyal customer base.
- 4/ The skis are made from Australian-grown, mostly native timbers, with a range of options for the topsheet. All images: © Desert Skis, used with permission.



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Timberlink launches second RAP

Earlier this week, Timberlink launched its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and guiding the company's reconciliation journey through to December 2027.

The Timberlink announcement said: "Building on the foundations of our Reflect RAP, the Innovate RAP provides a clear roadmap to strengthen relationships, foster respect, and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It reflects our commitment to listen, learn and walk alongside communities as part of our ongoing reconciliation journey.

"Guided by Timberlink's purpose – to care for people and timber – and our values of respect, kindness and care, the plan is supported by original artwork created by First Nations artist Reuben Oates for our Bell Bay site, symbolising connection, growth and shared futures.

"Through this work, our vision is to contribute to workplaces and communities where Aboriginal and



Timberlink's Innovate RAP with original artwork created by First Nations artist Reuben Oates. Image: courtesy Timberlink

Torres Strait Islander Peoples feel respected, empowered and included – today and into the future."

Over the past two and a half years, Timberlink has taken meaningful steps forward in its Reconciliation path, building and nurturing relationships with the Boandik, Palawa and Pakana, and Wurundjeri communities through cultural education sessions, support for local programs including land rehabilitation, and engagement in community events.

Through continuous engagement, education, and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Timberlink has committed to helping:

- Build strong and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Protect and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- Promote cultural awareness within the company's sphere of influence.
- Create opportunities that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The cover artwork, titled *Meeting Place – Together We Grow* showcases the artist's ancestral ties to the River Tamar and the enduring connections of Aboriginal culture in Tasmania's North East Country, sharing a story of growth, connection, and cultural unity.

Click here to download the Innovate RAP and read more about Timberlink's Reconciliation journey.



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2026 Tasmanian Architecture Award finalists

This year's shortlist is filled with clever, beautiful and sustainable design.

TIMBER buildings feature strongly among the entrants for the 2026 Tasmanian Architecture Awards. The complete set of projects spans nine primary categories with a total of 28 individual entries that showcase the range of diverse and exemplary new architecture produced across the state. Among these, the natural beauty of timber shines out in several of the shortlist.

The Forest by Woods Bagot (see *Enews* 885) is a finalist in the Educational Architecture category. The re-imagined Forestry Building at the University of Tasmania centred its redesign on sustainable materials including timber and hempcrete and features an indoor mini forest in its heritage domed entrance.

Small Project Architecture finalist Picnic Island Cabin, Freycinet, by ALIGN architecture & Interiors, is designed as a fully off-grid, self-sufficient retreat. The design includes a 100% rainwater harvesting system and a 54kW solar/battery array, with an onsite composting system all interacting to protect local shearwater and little penguin populations. The stepped arrangements of the sections of the build are designed to reflect the Hazards Mountain Range which dominates its southern vista.

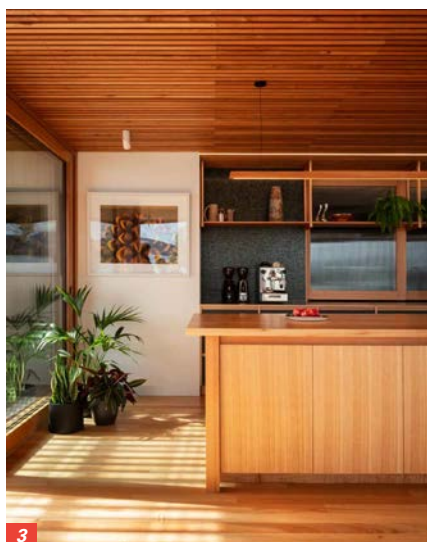
In the Residential Architecture – Houses (New) category, Sandford by 1+2 Architecture is a glowing timber gem of an interior that celebrates a century-old



1



2



3



4

1/ **Picnic Island Cabin, Freycinet, by ALIGN architecture & Interiors.** All images: courtesy Australian Institute of Architects. Photographer Adam Gibson

2/ **Spring Beach House by Scale Architecture.** Photographer: Tim Clark

3/ **Sandford by 1+2 Architecture.** Photographer: Adam Gibson

4/ **The Forest by Woods Bagot.** Photographer: Peter Bennetts

connection between one family and a site. Simple pavilion-based design recalls the shacks that were previously there, as do the reclaimed materials used in construction. The house provides a seamless connection to the owners' beloved sea and tress, just outside the walls.

In the same category, Spring Beach House by Scale Architecture has a similarly strong connection to its environment, with the timber-clad exterior designed to fade into its surrounding bush over time. Large doors that open through the building seek to connect it

even more strongly to its landscape, with a process of native planting and fence removal around the structure removing the barriers between the house and a nearby creek and reserve.

Again sharing the category but with a very different vibe are Isabel and Elsie by Christopher Clinton Architect with Core Collective Architects. These two replicable prototypes of social housing for women and children in Tasmania feature low-cost materials such as plywood, which are yet suitable for a safe, welcoming, child- and pet-friendly interior. The homes were funded by community donations, philanthropists and industry support and are designed to be low-energy and low-maintenance, giving space for families to heal and recover.

The 2026 Tasmanian Architecture Awards are the pinnacle event for the Tasmanian

profession and represent a chance for the public to see the best of new designs in one place. Tasmanians are invited to vote for their favourite project in the People's Choice for a chance to win Tasmanian prizes. Click here to see the full entry list and find the voting form at the bottom of the page.

Daniel Lane, president of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, said, "Architecture is for everyone. It shapes our towns and

Biofuels from woodwaste?

WITH oil tankers' passage through the Strait of Hormuz less certain than a Netflix series making it to its second season, alternatives to fossil fuels are in hot demand.

Brian Cox, executive officer at the Bioenergy Association of New Zealand, has recently published an opinion piece calling for the country to look at bioenergy as a cornerstone of energy production in the country.

Noting that forestry slash remaining in harvested areas has caused severe problems in recent years, Cox proffers a better use of the material.

He writes: "Bioenergy Association's proposal aims to coordinate the collection of forestry residues and organic waste, link them to energy users, and build regional supply chains so biomass becomes a dependable part of the national energy mix.

"It's not experimental



Wood waste currently left on forest floors could be a valuable fuel source. Image: CC/USDA Forest Service photo by Deborah Page-Dumroese

technology. Biomass boilers already operate across New Zealand. More than 400 megawatts of biomass heat capacity are already installed. That is around 8% of total energy demand.

"The challenge, industry leaders say, isn't technical, it's coordination. Projects often stall because fuel supply and energy demand are developed separately.

"Investors hesitate without long-term supply certainty. Suppliers hesitate without guaranteed demand. The programme aims to solve

that "chicken and egg" problem by integrating planning at a regional level."

The plan is estimated to cost less than a quarter of the proposed LNG investment currently being pursued by the NZ government.

The same forestry waste is also valuable in the production of biochar, which is both an exemplary green catalyst for biofuel production and a soil supplement, making collection even more economically sensible.

To read the whole article, click here.

Forestry Australia is holding a webinar titled Forest Biomass: Bioenergy, Biochar and Beyond on 28 April from 1–2pm AEST. Click here for full details and to book.

From P 16

cities, and contributes to better outcomes for our health, our education and our communities, as evidenced by the projects entered in the awards."

He congratulates all entrants who have produced the work that is entered and commends them for the contributions they are making to Tasmania.

The award recipients in each category will be announced at an awards presentation event on 30 May, in Hobart. The same event will include the announcement of several other awards including the Henry Hunter Triennial



Isabel and Elsie by Christopher Clinton Architect with Core Collective Architects Photographer: Adam Gibson

Prize, which considers all the award winners in the heritage, interior architecture and small projects architecture categories from the three preceding years; the Award for Enduring Architecture, which considers buildings of merit that are over 25 years old; the SWT Blythe Student Prize, for projects completed

by students from the University of Tasmania; the EmAGN (Emerging Architects and Graduates Network) Project Award, which recognises a project of merit in which members from the EmAGN demographic have made a substantial contribution to the project; the President's Prize, which is presented to a person who has shown considerable commitment to the profession; and the Tasmanian Architecture Medal, which considers projects across all categories and is considered the best-of-the-best for the year.



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