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Celebrating the best of timber and hardware

Industry icons and hardware heroes were celebrated at these awards.

By NTHA

THE 2026 Victorian and Tasmanian Timber & Hardware Industry Awards lit up Arts Centre Melbourne on Friday, 15 May, bringing together businesses and industry leaders from across both states for a night dedicated to industry excellence.

Set against the stunning backdrop of Melbourne's skyline, St Kilda Road and the Queen Victoria Gardens, the evening showcased the strength, diversity and resilience of the hardware and timber industry.

Award categories highlighted achievements across safety, retail, trade, off-site manufacturing, supply and individual sales performance.

NTHA Chief Executive Officer David Little presented the awards, alongside renowned 3AW broadcaster Darren James, who kept the audience



Provans took home the night's first award: Trade Store of the Year. Here, NTHA CEO David Little celebrates Provans' general manager Jamie Sloan (centre) and director Marnie Rosenberg. All images: courtesy NTHA/Ian Wilson Photography

support from people who understand the industry and their businesses."

As the room celebrated the importance of industry support and partnership, the spotlight soon shifted to the outstanding achievements of this year's award winners.

The following businesses and individuals were recognised:

- **Trade Store of the Year:** Provans Mitre 10
- **Timber Supplier of the Year:** Meyer Timber
- **Retail Store of the Year Under 2500sqm:** Brighton Hardware Hub
- **Retail Store of the Year Over 2500sqm:** TM&H Mitre 10
- **Best Off-Site Manufacturing Award:** Major Timber & Trusses
- **Building Materials Supplier of the Year:** Paslode
- **Retail Hardware Supplier of the Year:** Selleys
- **Supplier Sales Representative of the Year:** Glenn Brown – Takasho
- **Safety Champion Award:** Patrick Moseley – Murphy's Mitre 10

entertained throughout the evening with his trademark humour and engaging interviews with winners.

Major sponsors including ITI Australia, Total Tools Hardware Group (TTHG), Big River Group, Parkside Timber and HBT National Buying Group who were thanked for their continued support of independent businesses across the industry.

"Also supporting tonight are our category partners NCI, First Super and Sage Insurance," David said before the much-anticipated awards were announced. "These sponsors are crucial to our members, particularly the smaller 'mum and dad' independents who need

“ WE WORK HARD AND PRIORITISE OUR CUSTOMERS AND THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE BUSINESS ”

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From P 2

WINNERS' JOY

Director Marnie Rosenberg and general manager Jamie Sloan from Provans Mitre 10, Trade Store of the Year, said they were thrilled to be recognised among such incredibly strong competition.

Marnie reflected on the store's proud history, saying, "Originally established in 1903, the business was taken over by the Rosenberg family in 1966 and is still run by my brother Jarrod and myself today."

Presenting the award, David Little praised the business's legacy and reputation within the sector, saying: "You are the real thing – a multi-generational store that is highly respected throughout the industry."

Meyer Timber claimed the Timber Supplier of the Year Award, with Stephen Meyer saying he and his brother David had proudly run the business for more than 28 years after it was founded by their father, Mel Meyer, in 1975. The company now employs more than 200 people.

"We work hard and prioritise our customers and the people within the business, and we are very proud of what we do," Stephen said. "We service hard-working people and do our best to help them through tough times."

Retail Store of the Year (Under 2500 Square Metres) was awarded to Brighton Hardware Hub, with owners Dave and Karena Moore recognised for creating a highly community-focused business.

Mr Moore said he purchased the store five years ago after spending more than 30 years in the horse industry.

"We have a great community. They really get behind us and support us, which is fantastic," he said. "We only want to keep getting better."



- 1/ **The Meyer Timber team were delighted to be named Timber Supplier of the Year.**
- 2/ **Members of the NTHA team behind the evening: (L-R) Vicki Stableford, Christine Bannister, David Little, Alicia Langfield and Tahlia Bellotti.**
- 3/ **Retail Store of the Year (Under 2500 sqm) award winner, Brighton Hardware Hub owner Dave Moore with NTHA CEO David Little.**
- 4/ **Laura Town and her father Jeff Hitchins credited their whole family and team for TM&H Mitre 10 winning Retail Store of the Year (Over 2500 sqm).**
- 5/ **Best Off-Site Manufacturing Award winner Major Timber & Trusses, with the award received by Nathan Worner (operations manager, centre) and Mark Holmes (general manager).** All images: courtesy NTHA/Ian Wilson Photography

Retail Store of the Year (Over 2500 Square Metres) was awarded to TM&H Mitre 10, with Laura Town and her father Jeff Hitchins accepting the honour on behalf of the business.

Mr Hitchins said the key to the success of the family-run business was continuing to work hard through both the good, and challenging times.

"We are always trying different things and creating a store customers want to come into – something that stands out from the norm," he said. "Our staff are fully on board and help our family achieve what we need to. I'd like to thank my son James, who looks after the trade side of the business, my daughter Laura, who manages retail, and Belinda, who oversees the financial side of the business."

Retail Hardware Supplier of the Year was awarded to Selleys in recognition of the company's outstanding service, support and trusted range of quality products.

Selleys representatives, Ben Routledge and Allan Cook, have been with the business collectively for 43 years. They said while Selleys continues to back products tradespeople and customers know and trust, the company also remains focused on innovation, including the release of products such as Liquid Nails Flex.

"It's a tough, competitive job, but we do the best we can," they said.

Best Off-Site Manufacturing Award winner Major Timber & Trusses was recognised for consistently delivering high-quality products while maintaining best practice across safety, sustainability and workforce development.

Representatives Mark Holmes (general manager) and Nathan Worner

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From P 3

(operations manager) said the business, which employs 38 staff across two sites, has built a strong reputation for its trusses and, more recently, wall framing solutions.

“It’s all about hard work and teamwork – you can’t have one without the other, which is why we are here today,” Nathan said.

Building Materials Supplier of the Year was awarded to Paslode in recognition of the company’s commitment to supporting the trade industry through innovation and collaboration with retailers and trade professionals.

Lachlan Walker from Paslode said innovation remains at the heart of

the business, with a strong focus on understanding the challenges faced by local builders and developing products locally to meet their needs. “We try to be customer-centric and that has been our focus, along with recruiting a new team, which is also making a difference,” he said.

the true heart and soul of Australia’s independent timber and hardware industry.

While some winners may have surprised people on the night, the judges said every business recognised had earned its place through hard work, innovation, resilience and an unwavering commitment to customers, staff and their local communities.

“The independent sector is built on passionate family businesses and hardworking teams who show up every day, adapt to challenges and continue backing their communities,” the panel said. “This year’s winners represent everything that makes this industry strong – authentic, dedicated, hardworking people who have a genuine, life-long commitment to what they do.”

The next major industry awards on this year’s calendar will be the Queensland Timber and Hardware Industry Awards, set to take place at Rydges South Bank Brisbane on 18 July.

Tickets are already selling fast ahead of the 30 June deadline, with industry members encouraged to secure their seats early for another night celebrating excellence across the sector. (Click here for details.)



1/ Sound checks and last-minute tweaks before the evening saw a seamless event follow.



2/ After the ceremony, live music gave attendees the chance to get up and dance off some of the dinner.

All images: courtesy NTHA/Ian Wilson Photography

always supporting us.”

The Safety Champion Award was presented to Patrick Moseley of Murphy’s Mitre 10 for consistently going above and beyond in workplace safety and inspiring colleagues to remain vigilant and committed to safe work practices.

JUDGING EXCELLENCE

Speaking on this year’s winners, NTHA’s judging panel said the awards showcased

On the cover: The winners from the 2026 Victorian and Tasmanian Timber & Hardware Industry Awards at Arts Centre Melbourne last Friday. Image: courtesy NTHA/Ian Wilson

ForestrySA announces new CEO

Nathan Paine will take over the reins at the SA powerhouse.

FORESTRYSA announced last Friday the appointment of Nathan Paine as its new Chief Executive.

Paine will take up the new role on 22 June. He comes from a five-year stint as CEO of the South Australia Forest Products Association (SAFPA), where he has been highly successful in raising the profile of the state's sustainable plantation industry.

ForestrySA said they had been able to select from a significant field of highly qualified candidates.

"The Board of ForestrySA is delighted to announce the appointment of Nathan Paine as our new Chief Executive," said Ric Sinclair, chair of ForestrySA.

"We look forward to Nathan joining the organisation and bringing his extensive experience and enthusiasm to put the organisation on a growth trajectory.

"As chair, I would like to thank Dean Anderson for his hard work as interim CEO during the recruitment process and for providing strong leadership, especially during the fire season."

Paine said that he was looking forward to beginning in the new role. "ForestrySA plays a critical role in the management of



Nathan Paine with SA Forest Industries Minister Clare Scriven. Image: supplied

South Australia's forest industries, from the Adelaide Hills where pine forests are both valued recreational spaces and productive plantations, to the forest industry powerhouse of the Limestone Coast region," he said.

"With forecast demand for wood fibre expected to quadruple over the next 25 years, there is a need and an opportunity to grow ForestrySA's plantation estate in order to meet that demand.

"The opportunity for the state's forest industries is not just to grow the forest

estates that will build the houses of tomorrow, but also to educate the community about the vital importance of timber products in our economy," he concluded.

The organisation manages more than 10,000 hectares of sustainable pine plantation in the Mount Lofty Ranges, and stewards and protects more than 16,000 hectares of native forest in the Mount Lofty Ranges and Limestone Coast regions.

Minister for Forest Industries, Hon Clare Scriven MLC, said: "I warmly congratulate Nathan Paine on his appointment as ForestrySA's new Chief Executive and look forward to continuing our work together in growing our forest industries.

"Nathan has been outstanding in his five years as CEO at SAFPA, and his depth of knowledge of timber industries and insights into forest industries more broadly will be of significant value when it comes to managing the state's pine plantations.

"As South Australia continues to grow both its economy and its ambition into the future, I am confident Nathan will be an effective and reliable partner in the delivery of stronger and more prosperous forest industries across the state."

“WE LOOK FORWARD TO NATHAN BRINGING HIS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE AND ENTHUSIASM

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Payday Super starts 1 July

It's time to get your processes in place for the new scheme.

By TMA PUBLISHERS

THE new Payday Super (PDS) regime begins soon on 1 July, 2026. Under PDS, employers will be required to pay superannuation contributions, such that the superannuation funds receive the money and employee data within seven business days of each 'payday'.

This replaces the current quarterly payment requirement for all but very large employers, who were previously every month. Many businesses will need to change their processes and may need to navigate challenges.

The first issue for businesses is cashflow. Simply put, you will need to pay the cash sooner, rather than process an accrual.

PDS was first announced in the 2023-24 Federal Budget (Securing Australians' Superannuation package). The Government's purposes in implementing PDS include:

- enabling employees to benefit from higher retirement savings.
- empowering employees to track entitlements.
- deterring superannuation theft.
- enabling the ATO to take quick action in cases of non-compliance.
- making employers' payroll management smoother.



No matter what size your timber business, it will be affected by the PDS changes. Image: Shutterstock/Miljan Zivkovic

It's estimated that PDS will affect approximately 8.9 million employees, who will be less likely to miss out on super entitlements.

For the 2022-23 year, the ATO estimated the net gap between superannuation owed and that collected was \$6.2 billion – and it looks to be growing year on year. Directors remain personally liable for non-payment of the superannuation guarantee (SG), even if a company falls into administration.

It is also worth noting for small employers who may have been using the free ATO Clearance House Service (CHS) that this will also close on June 30 and alternative arrangements made. The ATO online portal does not process payments quickly enough to comply with the new legislation.

On 28 January 2026, the ATO published PCG 2026/1 which sets out its compliance approach for the first year of

operation of PDS (i.e. 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027).

The Treasury Laws Amendment (Payday Superannuation) Regulations 2026 (the PDS Regs) were registered on 23 February 2026.

An employer must pay SG contributions so that they are able to be allocated to the employee's account before the end of the seventh business day after the QE day.

This means the fund must have received the money and accurate data to enable it to allocate the contribution correctly. A 'business day is a day other than:

- a Saturday or a Sunday.
- a public holiday for the whole of any State or Territory.'

Across the Timber and Forestry industries, we have a significant number of employers all working hard and trying to keep up with all the never-ending compliance. Some are very small teams, whilst others have payrolls which extend across multiple states and are categorised as a medium size employer.

Regardless of your payroll size, PDS impacts all employers and you need to have systems in place prior to 30 June. If you are not ready, start with who is processing your payroll now. If this is processed in-house, then seek help from your external accountant sooner rather than later.

Australian Made Week

THIS week (18–24 May, 2026) is Australian Made Week, when we celebrate all things made locally.

The timber sector has long championed local product, and many of our leading names proudly display the well-known Australian Made logo, making it easier for trade and retail buyers to make informed choices.

This is the 40th year of the scheme. Currently, over 4500 Aussie companies are generating over \$8 bn for the economy under the Australian Made scheme. If you've been holding off joining in, click here for licensing details. And look for the logo when you shop this weekend! Click here for a long list of Australian suppliers of everything from baby food to timber beams.



Comedian Andy Lee is the ambassador for this year's Australian Made Week. Image: supplied

MAY

21: WoodSolutions Technical Seminar – Kedron Wavell RSL, Brisbane, 2.00pm - 6.00pm. This seminar is for builders, architects, designers, engineers and certifiers who need clear, practical guidance on compliance, performance and future standards. For more information and to register visit: <https://www.timberqueensland.com.au/event-details/woodsolutions-presents-design-engineer-build-achieving-compliance-and-performance-in-lightweight-timber-frames>

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@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@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/>

19-20: International Woodchip and Biomass Trade Conference – Singapore. The conference will serve as a key meeting point for the global biomass community. For more information and to register, visit: <https://web.cvent.com/event/7fd17c6e-d403-4eb4-a6cd-ab69df757864/summary>

30: SA, NT & WA Timber & Hardware Industry Awards – National Wine Centre, Adelaide, 6.30pm - 11.30pm. Join us in celebrating the SA, NT & WA 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@ntha.com.au

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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Vivid Fire and Timber

Vivid Sydney returns with a timber-rich Fire Kitchen area.

By **CHRIS PARKER**

VIVID Sydney returns tomorrow, Friday 22 May, and runs for 22 nights through until Saturday 13 June. In an exclusive opportunity, *Timber and Forestry Enews* walked through what is sure to be one of the most popular locations with Blake Smith of Motti and Smith – an Events Company that won the tender for the area above Barangaroo Reserve. A few days out, at the time of our visit, Blake and the team were just finishing the final touches on the Vivid Fire Kitchen.

In a unique and large space, the team have made an incredible effort to complete a large stage, now the 'Vivid Fire Pit' featuring three different styles of flame cooking plus a smoker, and a themed walk illuminated by warm timber lighting around individual food stalls – all framed in timber.

The tender required a unique themed design, use of all the available space, and supporting equipment, including an onsite generator to support power consumption. All of this has been brilliantly delivered.

Each week the Vivid Fire Pit will have a new dedicated master chef plus a support team of chefs and cooks who will marinate, prepare and present different meat dishes cooked from the Vivid Fire Pit for your eating pleasure. Scheduled names include Mark Best, Annita Potter, Ben Devlin, Mindy Woods, Jason Roberts and many more. The menu will change with the chefs, so repeat visitors can have multiple fresh experiences of the food, all created through flame, whether that's over an open fire, grill or smoker.



1/ A huge timber sign announces the master chef and team in charge of that night's offerings.

2/ Four flame-based apparatus will be used by the ever-changing list of chefs to prepare meals, including an open fire pit and a giant grill. Huge quantities of firewood lay ready.

3/ Enews's Chris Parker (left) and Blake Smith of Motti and Smith with one of the menu item signs. All images: courtesy of Chris Parker and Betz Frederick

start your themed journey. Stained with a burnt tone, the sign will showcase the name of the master chef and team preparing your food.

As you proceed past the front of the live cooking stage, the over-sized flame-based cooking appliances will be roaring with the delicious smells of wood fire and charcoal, cooking meat to beats from live musicians or DJs, plus a regularly changing MC guiding talks and discussions from the chefs including top tips for you to try later at home. At the top of the stage a large 'Vivid Fire Pit' sign hangs down in the same burnt timber theme.

Keep walking to find the Tonight In The Pit menu, which will list the options available for the evening. Blake was even kind enough to locate one of the interchangeable signs for us to photograph.

While we walked around, a covered seating area with music was being erected where visitors will be able to comfortably sit and eat in the changeable weather. Following the pathway along, you then enter a series of individual food stalls that were being built by Lachlan Brett of Buddy Creative and his team. The front and sides are all housed in timber, adding to the timber and fire experience.

Part of the assembly requirements was the capacity for stalls to easily disassemble and pack away in Vivid storage as a flat pack design at the conclusion, so they can be used repeatedly. The Motti and Smith and

My recommendation is to enter the Barangaroo Reserve from the stairs or the lift on the Darling Harbour side of Barangaroo where a large timber sign 'Tonight in the Pit' will be visible as you

design at the conclusion, so they can be used repeatedly. The Motti and Smith and

Cont P 9

From P 8

Buddy Creative teams were both keen to emphasise there was almost no wastage and were very aware of the benefits of using timber and its benefits regarding carbon capture and storage.

One major item was still in an offsite manufacturing facility at the time I visited: a large 9m stainless steel bar had been prepared as a frame for laser cut timber, which will be placed in a prominent spot for all to see by Friday. Lachlan shared a photo of the structure being prepared but not yet finished or colour matched. He also showed me the places where themed lighting in the appropriate colour will be installed to guide you on your walk as the final part of the full set up.

If you are planning to visit Vivid Sydney, then make sure you get along and see the Vivid Fire Kitchen and the many



1/

2/

1/ A range of other food will be available from the series of stalls surrounding the Vivid Fire Pit, with the stalls themselves timber-covered 'flat packs'.

2/ Laser-cut timber grilles are the last pieces to be fit in this week.

uses of timber here. Vivid light and sound installations will also be in place around the lower area of Barangaroo, from the water and pathway below, so there will be a lot to see and experience as you make your way there.

The wider Food For Thought Program surrounding the Vivid Fire Pit will run to themes with No Taste Like Home Mondays and Tuesdays, focusing on NSW produce and wine; Wednesdays dedicated to Gwianga – the Dharug word for fire – a First Nations showcase presented with the National Indigenous Culinary Institute; and a Dessert Takeover on the June long weekend, with names like Adriano Zumbo, Emelia Jackson and Gelato Messina's Donato Toce. Every Thursday to Sunday night will see live music at the Marquee Stage.

You can catch it all from 6–11pm every night from 22 May to 13 June, with free entry every night. Click here to see who will be cooking and playing, plus special hosts and events.

Special thanks to Betz Frederick for the introduction and assistance with this story.

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Australia's earliest boat comes home

A chance find during the Barangaroo excavations reaches the ANMM.

IN 2018, during the excavation for the Sydney Metro station at Barangaroo, a colonial-era boat was discovered under layers of tidal sand and mud. The nine-metre boat, made from Sydney Blue Gum, Stringybark and Spotted Gum sourced in the Sydney basin, is believed to be around 200 years old – Australia's oldest surviving boat. Waterlogged, but remarkably intact, it spent about 150 years buried under wharves, warehouses and shipyards on what was once a small harbourfront beach.

The boat was built using the 'clinker' technique of overlapping timber planks to make up the hull, then coated in pitch, and is believed to have been used to transport goods around Sydney Harbour and Parramatta River.

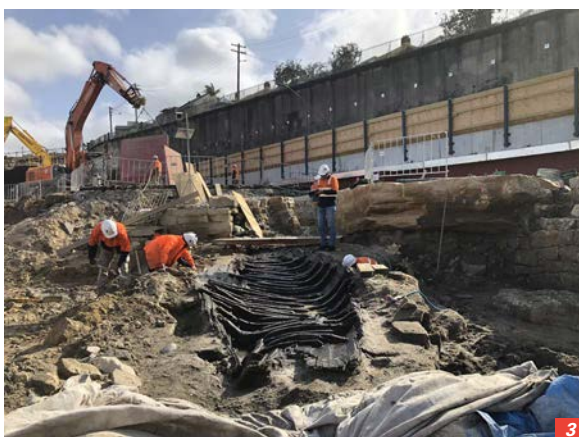
Since its discovery, specialist conservators and maritime archaeologists have worked to document the vessel and associated artefacts, stabilise fragile timbers and plan the long-term treatment needed to prevent shrinkage and deterioration as it dries.

The 294 individual pieces of excavated timber were treated with Polyethylene Glycol over the course of 18 months, which reinforces the cell structure of the wood and reduces further degradation. It has been used on several other notable recovered shipwrecks, including the Mary Rose, the Bremen Cog, Batavia, and the Vasa. The boat was then snap-frozen and transported to Braeside, Victoria, to be professionally freeze-dried.

On Monday this week, it was finally delivered to Australian National Maritime Museum in a refrigerated truck container. Now in the Museum's care, this conservation program will continue through detailed assessment and careful preservation so the boat can be safely researched, interpreted and ultimately shared with the public.

Minister for Transport John Graham said: "Sydney Metro is the most modern form of transport in Sydney, and it is a nice bit of symmetry that it was construction of the metro line that unearthed the nation's oldest colonial era boat.

"This is a piece of Australian history we



1/ The boat in situ, being excavated with the Barangaroo station works carrying on around it. Image: courtesy Casey & Lowe for Sydney Metro

2/ Reconstructing the preserved boat is the next task for conservators. Image: courtesy Australian National Maritime Museum

3/ Each piece was carefully recorded and labelled before being moved. Image: courtesy Casey & Lowe for Sydney Metro

are determined to protect for many more centuries to come.

"I want to thank those who carefully excavated the boat, preserved it and the Australian National Maritime Museum for giving it a permanent home so generations to come can get a unique look at life on Sydney Harbour in the early 1800s."

Daryl Karp AM, Director and CEO of the Museum said, "The vessel is an eyewitness to history – to the first tentative decades of European settlement, when Port Jackson was the conduit for transport and trade and vessels of all types plied its waterways.

"This is the perfect archaeological project for Australia's museum of the sea and the National Maritime Collection. The storytelling opportunities for this are truly exciting; it is more than a Sydney story, it is a national story – it marks a pivotal moment in the country's maritime history.

"I thank Minister Graham and Sydney Metro for their stewardship of this artefact, and we look forward to bringing life back to the vessel over the coming years," she added.

The Museum has continued the conservation process and begun plans for the public interpretation of the vessel and associated items found alongside it.

Paul Nicolaou, executive director of Business Sydney said that the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, which celebrates 200 years in 2026, will outline a corporate support program with the Museum in coming months.

Karp concluded, "We expect to open to the public a permanent exhibition, detailing not only the vessel and associated artefacts but the stories it elicits of this time mid-way through 2027.

"It is a gateway to the past that we know visitors to the museum will enjoy investigating."

FCoE's first Annual Showcase

The Forestry Centre of Excellence shared its work with stakeholders last week.

NOW settled in its new building, South Australia's \$16 million Forestry Centre of Excellence (FCoE) spent two days last week sharing its work with the public, as well as industry, policy and research partners.

The inaugural FCoE Showcase took attendees out into the field, brought them together for shared meals and opened their eyes with a series of demonstrations and presentations that focused on key issues shaping the future of Australia's plantation forestry sector. These included insights into cutting-edge work supporting the sustainability of the forestry sector, with discussions covering new technologies to improve grower productivity, timber processing innovation, climate resilience, silviculture, forest health monitoring, biosecurity, and workforce safety, including a well-received presentation on what industry needs from researchers.

Professor Jeff Morrell, director of the FCoE, said, "Timber remains our most important sustainable construction material. The showcase shows how the Centre is already helping improve sound management and processing of this critical national resource.

"The Centre's first showcase highlights our many industry-supported research projects while providing guidance for future research directions to help the Green Triangle Region remain a leader in plantation forestry."

Field trips to OneFortyOne and Australian Bluegum Plantations included LIDAR and drone demonstrations, while events at the FCoE showcased the centre's research program.

SA Premier Peter Malinauskas was in full support of the event, saying

“THE CENTRE'S FIRST SHOWCASE HIGHLIGHTS OUR MANY INDUSTRY-SUPPORTED RESEARCH PROJECTS



1/ More than 50 people attended the showcase's field trips on the first day.
2/ Talks included industry insights where practical knowledge was shared.
3/ The newly opened centre was a popular hub for the event, with room for networking through the two days. All images: courtesy Forestry Centre of Excellence

"The Forestry Centre of Excellence is an impressive space that will play an important role in the future of our state's forestry sector.

For more information on the Forestry Centre of Excellence, visit forestrycoe.com.au

"This purpose-built precinct demonstrates our commitment to strengthen our multi-billion-dollar forestry sector by supporting innovation, research and skills development. It brings together local, national and international experts across forestry research and development, enhancing the region's role as a global leader in the sector."

Feedback from visitors and participants on LinkedIn has emphasised how important the connections made over the two days of the event were, with ample time allowed for sharing other news and projects to complement what was on the program.

Best of all, the showcase had the lowest possible barriers to entry with all events free to attend. It is planned to now be an annual event, so check *Enews* for details regarding the 2027 iteration.

GKNP arguments don't hold water

FWCA says the Great Koala National Park risks increasing global emissions while sacrificing regional jobs.

FOREST & Wood Communities Australia (FWCA) chair Steve Dobbyns says the NSW Government's justification for the Great Koala National Park is increasingly contradicted by its own scientific evidence and appears to be driven more by carbon credit generation than koala conservation.

"The NSW Government's Environment Minister Penny Sharpe continues to promote the Great Koala National Park as essential for koala conservation, yet its own scientific evidence does not support the claim that regulated native forestry is causing widespread koala decline on the Mid North Coast," Dobbyns said.

"Instead, the proposal is [dependent on] the prospect of carbon credits under the proposed Improved Native Forest Management (INFM) methodology – a scheme that raises serious concerns about carbon leakage, displaced timber production and questionable net climate benefits."

Dobbyns said years of NSW Government-funded research failed to support the political claim that ending native forestry would 'save koalas'.

"Research undertaken by NSW DPI Forest Science and reviewed through the NSW Natural Resources Commission found no statistically significant decline in koala density following selective timber harvesting in north-east NSW state forests," he said.

"The NRC reported koala densities remained stable in harvested forests, koalas continued using harvested areas after operations, and any declines observed during the study period were more strongly associated with drought and climate stress, particularly across the National Park estate."

Published peer-reviewed research reached the same conclusion – regulated native forestry operations in north-east NSW did not reduce koala density. The NSW Baseline Koala Survey further confirmed koalas remain widespread throughout production forests on the Mid North Coast with estimates of 274,000 koalas across the state (with a 95% confidence interval of 231,000–320,000).



Arguments for the GKNP and its timber harvesting moratorium seem to have left science behind.

Image: CC Guillaume Blanchard/Wikimedia Commons

"[The Government's] own science demonstrates koalas and regulated forestry are already coexisting across the landscape," said Dobbyns.

More than half of the 176,000 hectares of state forest earmarked for inclusion in the Great Koala National Park is already managed primarily for conservation through existing environmental exclusions, old-growth reserves, rainforest protections, stream buffers and conservation zoning and reserve systems.

"The public is being led to believe all of this forest is under intensive logging pressure, which is simply untrue," Dobbyns said.

Meanwhile, halting timber harvesting in the area is already having impacts.

"Stopping native forestry in NSW does not stop Australia needing timber," said Dobbyns.

"We will still need hardwood for construction, pallets, poles, flooring, fencing and packaging. Since harvesting has halted across these forests, that demand has simply shifted elsewhere."

This has meant increased logging on neighbouring private property, increased pressure on remaining state forests, interstate harvesting, greater reliance on imports from countries with weaker

environmental standards and substantially higher transport emissions.

"In carbon accounting this is known as leakage – and it can completely undermine the claimed climate benefits of the project."

Last September's GKNP announcement was made with a note that the economic case was contingent on the adoption of the INMF as an accepted Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) scheme method. It was estimated to generate \$300 million over 15 years under this scheme.

"[However], if replacement timber comes from other native forests, imported hardwood products or more emissions-intensive materials like steel, concrete and plastics, then the claimed emissions reductions may be entirely negated," Dobbyns said.

He added that the proposal also ignored the role of sustainably managed native forests and harvested wood products in long-term carbon storage.

"Under sustainable forestry systems, harvested forests regrow, more carbon is absorbed and timber products continue storing carbon for decades," Dobbyns said.

Forest & Wood Communities Australia supports genuine conservation measures based on evidence, not ideology.

"Protecting high-value habitat and improving koala outcomes are legitimate goals," said Dobbyns.

"But the current proposal increasingly relies on a simplistic political narrative – stop forestry, save koalas, generate carbon credits. The evidence does not support that framing."

He added that the existing plan risks undermining regional manufacturing jobs, destabilising timber supply, increasing reliance on imports and reducing Australia's sovereign hardwood capability.

"All while the Government's own science shows koalas remain present in managed forests and that broader threats such as bushfire, drought, disease, dog attacks, cars and habitat fragmentation are more significant pressures."

A century of forestry training

A NEW national forestry education program, built on a century of professional training and designed to meet the demands of a rapidly changing sector, has graduated its first cohort. The milestone is the subject of a perspective piece published in *Australian Forestry*, tracing the arc of national forestry education from its origins in 1926 to the Graduate Certificate in Forestry that welcomed students for the first time in 2024.



The new generation of forestry graduates with trainers at the University of Tasmania's Graduate Certificate of Forestry.
Image: courtesy Prof Julianne O'Reilly-Wapstra

The Australian Forestry School was established at the University of Adelaide in 1926 before transferring to Canberra as a Commonwealth entity in 1927. For most of the 20th century it served not only Australian students but cohorts from across the wider region, including Burma, Malaysia and New Zealand.

"Changes in the structure and funding of Australian higher education have made it difficult to maintain relatively

small, focused professional programs such as forestry," said Julianne O'Reilly-Wapstra, Professor, Forest Sciences and Course Coordinator for the University of Tasmania's Graduate Certificate of Forestry. "The Graduate Certificate in Forestry has been designed with, and is financially supported by, the forest industry.

"This program demonstrates a new era of university-industry collaboration to meet

the need for skilled forestry professionals and support universities' capacity to deliver specialist forestry education. This collaboration provides a sound basis for developing the future education needs to support sustainable forest management."

Forestry Australia kicked off a fresh round of industry and university discussions in 2022, establishing a Committee on the Future of Forestry Education. The result was the Graduate Certificate in Forestry, hosted by the University of Tasmania. Click here for the course's components and academic partners.

Industry partners are financially supporting a minimum of 18 students annually across each course for an initial five-year term, with the Federal Government supporting a program coordinator through the Forestry Workforce Training Program managed by ForestWorks, for the first three years of the five-year term.

For the full article in *Australian Forestry*, click here.

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Tiwi Forestry Workforce Plan released

The plan is designed to strengthen Tiwi participation in forestry and encourage local employment.

Tiwi Plantations Corporation – based 80 kilometres north of Darwin on the Tiwi Islands – has released the Tiwi Forestry Workforce Plan 2026–2030, a coordinated roadmap designed to grow Tiwi participation in forestry and strengthen long-term local employment across the industry.

The plan outlines the stages of forestry on the plantation, the range of jobs and career pathways available and the qualifications and skills required at each stage.

It responds to the scale of upcoming work with the business preparing to replant 30,000 hectares with *Eucalyptus pellita* over the next 10 years.

The Workforce Plan was developed



Tiwi Plantations Corporation chair Gibson Farmer Illortaminni and CDU Northern Institute research associate Alicia Boyle with the Tiwi Forestry Workforce Plan 2026–2030. Image: supplied

alongside the Tiwi Forestry Seasonal Calendar, a first of its kind which supports forestry operations by aligning work programs with Tiwi seasons and ecological knowledge.

Forestry is a crucial part of the Tiwi Islands economy and engaging more Tiwi people, particularly young people, into the workforce has become a strategic priority.

Charles Darwin University (CDU) Northern Institute Research Associate Alicia Boyle, who is the academic lead on the project, said the Workforce Plan was developed to ensure information about jobs, training and progression pathways was clear and accessible.

“The plan provides a practical way for Tiwi people to see what roles exist in forestry and how to move into them,” Boyle said.

“It shows clear training and career pathways for young people, as well as leadership opportunities. When Tiwi people move into supervisory and senior roles, they create visible pathways for others to follow.”

Boyle said the timing of the plan was critical with the first rotation of plantations now harvested and a significant replanting phase recently commenced.

“This was an opportunity to look at what comes next, what we can do differently and how we can better support Tiwi people to build long-term careers in this industry,” she said.

The plan is being shared with schools across Darwin and the Tiwi Islands to help engage Tiwi students early and demonstrate the skills and training needed for a future in forestry.

Tiwi Plantations Corporation chair Gibson Farmer Illortaminni said the plan was a key step towards realising long-held aspirations for a strong, local Tiwi forestry workforce.

“This has always been part of our vision. Now we have a clear plan to support the next generation to step into the workforce and into leadership,” Illortaminni said.

“We’re excited to showcase the plan to our people, because there are jobs on the Tiwi Islands, and we have to get our people into the workforce. In the old days, it was the elders’ vision to get our people in the workforce. The next generation needs to step up.

“The calendar makes sure everyone knows which seasons are for burning, planting and looking after the plantation, while also making sure our people know when not to light fires.”

The Tiwi Forestry Workforce Plan 2026–2030 and the supporting Tiwi Forestry Seasonal Calendar are available online.

Source: Charles Darwin University

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New plantation grants delivering industry growth

AFPA is calling for the successful SPEP program to become permanent.

THE last round of funding for the Federal Government's successful \$73 million Support Plantation Establishment Program (SPEP) has been welcomed on Tuesday by Australia's sustainable forestry sector.

The Government has announced 16 new grants covering almost 9500 hectares of new softwood and hardwood plantations across Australia.

Richard Hyett, AFPA acting CEO, said: "We sincerely thank Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry the Hon Julie Collins MP for this latest funding for plantation grants under the SPEP, which has been highly successful for our industry in recent years.

"We appreciate the Government's continued roll-out of this important program, which AFPA has strongly supported from the outset. The initiative has become a highly effective partnership between industry and government, delivering positive and tangible benefits for Australia's forestry sector and the national economy."

Hyett noted that the funding is delivering concrete results.

"Before the introduction of this program, plantations declined by 23,000 hectares in six years," he said. "This program has been critical in reversing the decline in plantation investment that was occurring before it was introduced. It's now supported nearly 40,000 hectares and is helping to restore confidence and encouraging growth and much-needed investment in our sector.

"Since launching in 2023, the initiative has successfully driven new plantation investment across Australia, supporting regional economies, local jobs, improving future fibre security and contributing to the Government's climate and sovereign capability targets. These sustainable plantations will also help

support the long-term future of the construction industry."

Hyett said it was encouraging to see almost \$26 million in last week's Federal Budget, as part of the final allocation of the SPEP, adding: "Given the importance of this program, we have encouraged the Government to extend the SPEP as ongoing funding so timber plantation establishment and expansion can continue across Australia into the future."

Minister Collins noted that the program will help meet growing demand for domestic timber including for the construction of new homes and support jobs in regional communities across Australia.

"The Albanese Labor Government is committed to a bright future for Australia's



Minister Julie Collins says the SPEP program is part of a wider tranche of supports for forestry from the Albanese Government. Image: supplied

forestry industry which is why we are delivering record investments," said Minister Collins.

"These latest grants will increase our sustainable timber supply and support industry, business and jobs in rural Australia.

"This is helping build a Future Made in Australia – increasing our domestic timber supply to support our domestic manufacturing and value-adding capabilities."

The SPEP program has been part of a \$300 million government investment to back Australia's forestry industry. Additionally, a new \$300 million Forestry Growth Fund will invest in new equipment and facilities to enable industry modernisation and advanced processing, invest in training for the forestry workforce, engineered and wood products innovation, and support housing and construction supply chains.

For a full list of grant recipients through the Support Plantation Establishment program, [click here](#).

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Diversity a win at OneFortyOne

Luci Virgo has had plenty of positivity since sharing her story at last year's Forestry Australia Conference.

LAST year, the 2025 Forestry Australia Conference organisers reached out to people whose lived experience and industry insight could meaningfully contribute to the conversation they planned for the event's inaugural Diversity Breakfast.

OneFortyOne Greenmill operator Luci Virgo was among the few invited to join the panel, an opportunity that recognised her leadership within the LGBTIQ+ community and the authenticity she brings to work every day.

The company supported Luci to attend the conference as a guest speaker and share her story on a national stage. What unfolded was a conversation about diversity, inclusion and the changing face of forestry, a discussion that has resonated far beyond breakfast.

"Joining Kelly Crosthwaite of DEECA; Jacquie Martin from Forestry Australia; and Nora Devoe of Sylvacare International, and our facilitator Christine Briggs, we opened the day two program," said Luci.

"We had such different stories – from confronting issues like sexual harassment, to supporting colleagues, connecting with different groups of people and, my personal experience, being out as transgender at work and what had led to that. I shared the acceptance and support I received at the time when I came out, which has continued for the five years since.

"As we talked, the time allocated for our conversation ran out rapidly, and we



1/ The breakfast panel at the 2025 Forestry Australia Conference. (L-R): Kelly Crosthwaite, Nora Devoe, Jacquie Martin, Luci Virgo and Christine Briggs.

2/ Luci Virgo at her day job as a Greenmill operator with OneFortyOne.

Images: courtesy OneFortyOne

could easily have continued for longer – the entire day! It seemed we had hardly begun."

Luci had already begun making connections with the other speakers when she arrived early for the breakfast and after the panel, people gathered to talk in the break before joining their next session.

"I had the time to network, and I spent a great deal of time talking for much of my day," said Luci. "People frequently approached me, wanting further details about my life as a transgender woman, at

work and outside of it, which I was more than happy to discuss.

"Several people were also asking for more information about OneFortyOne. I did not expect telling my story would generate such interest, reaching people across Australia and overseas. Being out as transgender in the workplace with such a positive experience certainly attracted attention."

Luci noted the range of people at the conference, from plantations to tech support, academia and First Nations: "It was a pleasant diversity – which was a key theme of the conference – readily demonstrating that forestry, sawmilling and the associated professions are certainly changing for the better, with an increasingly diverse workforce.

"A greater surprise to others was discovering that my workplace was a sawmill, known as a traditionally male-majority environment, and wondering how I managed. Quite well!"

Discussions at the event continued to the close at 7pm. Luci described the experience as a pleasure and a privilege and was thankful for her employer's support. "It was no small opportunity for me, as part of the LGBTIQ+ community and as someone 'off the floor'," she said.

"If a similar opportunity arises in the future, I would do it without hesitation and highly recommend it to anyone else!"

This story is an edited version of the original on OneFortyOne's website.



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American hardwood and Australian architects shine

VICTORIANS who missed out on last year's Sydney launch of KEEP: Forever Objects Designed by Six Australian Architects can now catch it locally until 8 June as part of Melbourne Design Week.

Presented by the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), in partnership with Cult, and curated by David Clark, KEEP brings together six leading Australian practices to design furniture intended to endure. The exhibition explores permanence, craftsmanship and material integrity through a series of new works made in Australia from sustainable American hardwoods.

Working with American red oak, cherry and maple – timbers valued for their beauty, strength and longevity – each architect has created a piece that extends their design thinking beyond architecture and into the intimate scale of furniture. The resulting works range from sculptural seating and tables to lighting and experimental objects, each challenging the culture of disposability and asking what makes an object worth keeping.

The exhibition features works by Edition Office, Kennedy Nolan, Lineburg Wang, Neil Durbach, Richards Stanisich with Meg Ashforth, and Virginia Kerridge.

"Historically, and in other places, it is more commonplace for architects to design furniture, for their own projects or for companies by commission," said curator David Clark. "In the nascent Australian furniture industry, it is less so. I thought it would be interesting to see what prominent and successful

architects might design outside their usual focus, and perhaps, in the process and conversation, what they might bring to the texture and layers of the Australian design ecosystem."

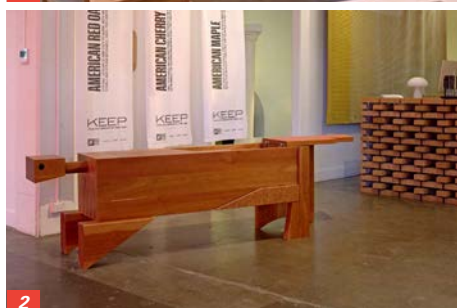
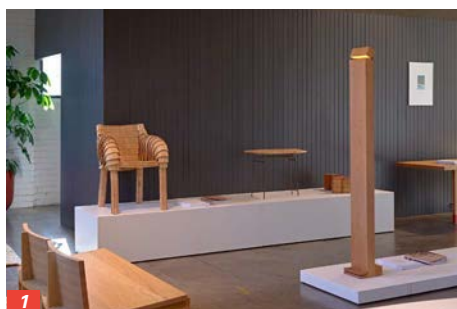
Installed within Cult Design's Melbourne showroom in Abbotsford, KEEP invites visitors to slow down, look closely and consider the value of the objects we choose to live with. For Melbourne Design Week audiences, it is a chance to encounter how some of Australia's most accomplished architects translate their spatial thinking and material intelligence into the intimate scale of furniture.

At the heart of KEEP are three American hardwoods: red oak, cherry and maple. These timbers were selected not only for their performance and expressive qualities, but also for their environmental credentials. Grown in the vast hardwood forests of the United States, all three species are part of a resource where annual growth exceeds harvest.

"KEEP is a reminder that the things we choose to live with can carry meaning and memory. These works are

made to endure, not just in use, but in the stories they can hold," said Rod Wiles, regional director of the American Hardwood Export Council.

KEEP is open daily until 8 June, 2026, with free entry at Cult Design, 16-28 Duke Street, Abbotsford.



1 From front left: the *Twin Bench* by Edition Office, made in red oak, referencing industrial water tanks and structural honesty; Richards Stanisich with Meg Ashforth's *Lamella Chair* in maple, inspired by Japanese armour; the *Small Slide Table* and *Einstein's Hat Vase*, both by Neil Durbach in red oak and cherry; the *Pedal Lamp* by Lineburg Wang, a monolithic block of cherry that transforms with a subtle foot pedal to reveal hidden light, and Virginia Kerridge's *Pax Table*.

2/ The *David Console* in American cherry, an anthropomorphic form with sculptural qualities and layered finishes by Kennedy Nolan Architects.

3/ Neil Durbach's *Small Slide Table* is a playful geometric interpretation of the side table, and his *Einstein's Hat Vase* a bold experiment in timber geometry. Images: supplied, photographs by Graham Alderton



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