

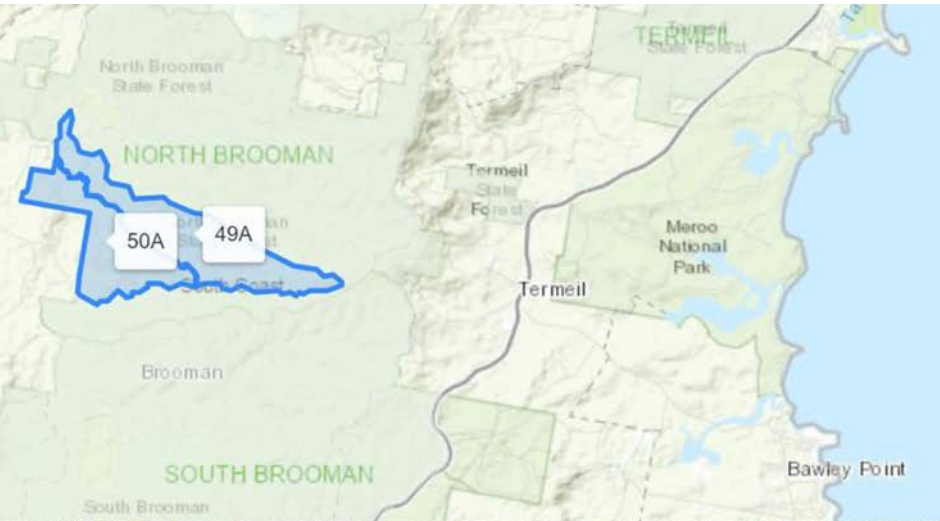
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Proposed native forestry closures threaten more communities

COVER STORY P2

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Exclusive with Cr Brett Steele, Shoalhaven City Council

Shoalhaven's fight for balance: the Great Southern National Park proposal and its local impacts.

IN the forests of North Brooman State Forest, a towering Spotted Gum known as "Big Spotty" stands as a symbol of both natural wonder and intense debate. Estimated at over 72 metres tall and around 500 years old, the tree has long been protected. Yet campaigns to create a "Big Spotty Flora Reserve" have spotlighted a much larger proposal: the Great Southern National Park. This initiative, tied to Australia's commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, raises profound questions about conservation, community access, jobs, and fire management in the Shoalhaven region.

BIG SPOTTY: PROTECTED FOR DECADES, YET AT THE CENTRE OF CONTROVERSY

In his interview, Cr Brett Steele stated: "Big Spotty has been protected for over 50 years." He continued: "the residents that are going to be most affected as far as their livelihoods, their property rights



CR Brett Steele. Image: Shoalhaven City Council

and all the rest of it, are the ones that have not been consulted. And, if anything, a lot of people have been misled into believing that they were saving Big Spotty from the loggers' chainsaws. And that's what they were using to get people to sign their petitions and whatnot. Whereas, as you're probably aware, Big Spotty has been protected for over 50 years."

Steele explained the history: "The loggers were aware of Big Spotty before Forestry Corp even came into existence back in 1916, yet, with no mandates, no political pressure, and no desire or interest in virtue flexing, these loggers knew there was something special about these trees. So, it was brought to the attention of Forestry by the very same loggers who had themselves protected Big Spotty for decades. Forestry Corp agreed to the importance and declared Big Spotty protected with a 60-metre exclusion zone, known as Compartment 50A. Loggers were already avoiding the area around Big Spotty by a much larger margin."

This is consistent with a letter from the Hon Tara Moriarty MLC to Cr Steele sent on 2 June 2026, which confirms: "The tree known as Big Spotty has for many years been recognised as an important tree and it is well protected. While it is situated within compartment

Cont P 3

“LOGGERS WERE ALREADY AVOIDING THE AREA AROUND BIG SPOTTY BY A MUCH LARGER MARGIN

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From P 2

50A of North Brooman State Forest, it will never be harvested. At present, there are currently no plans to harvest Compartment 50A of North Brooman State Forest... the nearest planned operation in this forest is more than 2.5 kilometres away from Big Spotty."

THE FOUR-STAGE PLAN FOR THE GREAT SOUTHERN NATIONAL PARK

Steele described the Big Spotty campaign as part of a structured plan in an opening council speech as they debated the issue. The campaign is the entry point for a larger vision. He outlined four stages:

Stage 1: 260-hectare Big Spotty Flora Reserve targeting compartment 50A (motions in 2023).

Stage 2: 3,000-hectare Brooman Forest Protected Area / Big Spotty Precinct (March 2026 motion, defeated).

Stage 3: 7,000-hectare strategic habitat links under the Forest Alliance NSW Core Habitat Strategy.

Stage 4: The 400,000+ hectare Great Southern Forest National Park from Nowra to the Victorian border, creating a continuous protected area.

He noted council's engagement with earlier motions in 2023 and the March 2026 effort for expansion, which was defeated.

KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK: THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Steele linked the local push to the international agreement, "This all come about as a result of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agenda, which Australia signed off to back in December of 2022 in Montreal, whereby they agreed... to lock up 30% of land, waterways and marine areas, 30% of all of those areas by 2030 for conservation. And that's not been relayed at all to people who are... going to be affected."

He added, "After the agreement was struck..., the



Mayor Patricia White. Image: Shoalhaven City Council

government consulted with 54 unnamed and unidentified organisations... Why were the rest of the country left out of the conversation?"

Steele shared that after extensive research he was able to find the meeting agenda. The ACIUCN 2024 report documents this engagement with 54 organisations, naming all 54 entities including the National Parks Association.

IMPACTS ON SHOALHAVEN RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Steele highlighted effects on local people, "it will be not just loggers who feed their families and keep a roof over their heads thanks to the forest whose life will be changed forever... There are currently over 50 active apiary sites in North and South Brooman State Forest. That is more than 50 honey producers who earn their living just from Brooman... So, if this National park goes ahead...our honey industry faces uncertainty, our hard wood industry, facing even more uncertainty

with the added stress for community members of continued targeting by activist groups to have their employment disbanded... at least 2 industries directly affected and under risk.

"There's the mechanics, there's the tyre fitters, there's the hydraulic experts, there's the corner store... From everyone that's earning an income there, you can add another full income or half an income going out from them in direct support to the local community."

Steele also highlighted how it will affect access, "With the national parks, well you've got gates that get introduced because national parks have got so much land... you can't go camping... without permission and without paying fees. There's a lot of things that come with national parks that you'd rather not have. And that's why Australians prefer their state forests because you can go camping for free. You don't need to book ahead. You don't need to book entry fees to just get into the forest.

"National Parks receives ~\$1 Billion/year (NSW alone \$297m) and still struggles with maintenance of the lands they control. This often means lack of funding to maintain roads and fire trails, so areas are gated off... The logging industry currently maintains the fire breaks, bush tracks, and emergency exit routes. If Forestry departs, the burden falls on an already stretched National Parks budget... Forestry Corporation operates on a fraction of that (\$32M) while keeping lands productive and accessible."

Steele also addressed the Micro-Climate Homeostasis conservation theory where forest debris is allowed to build up and create a layer of moisture that then naturally protects the forest from fires. However, Steele noted that this takes 80-100 years to achieve and Australia won't make it that long without having a fire, and a fire in that forest would have extensive fuel.

"Proponents for the other side rely heavily on a theoretical concept called Micro-Climate Homeostasis... This is in direct conflict with the stated position of the Uni of Melbourne, Uni of Adelaide, Southern Cross Uni, Uni of Sunshine Coast, Rural Fire Service and Forestry Australia, plus these are supported by our own national authority, the CSIRO all demanding active management to



Information board at Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens. Image: Shoalhaven City Council

Cont P 4

From P 3

maintain fire trails as well as aggressive fuel reduction to protect human life."

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

Council passed Steele's May 2026 motion (CL26.65), which led to Mayor Patricia White's letter to Minister Penny Sharpe on 6 July 2026. The letter formally conveys the resolution seeking commitments on employment stability, fee-free access, maintained roads, and conditions for any future wind-down of logging.

In the interview Steele said of the process, "we actually had our Mayor, just this week, send a letter to Minister Penny Sharpe... explicitly saying that we don't want this to happen in our area and if it is



Spotted Gum Trees on a walking track on the South Coast of New South Wales Australia. If the Great Southern National Park goes ahead there are concerns that public access will be lost. Image: Shutterstock

going to happen in this area we want to look after the community.

"At the end of the day, when it affects our residents, that's when it's... our job is to have our residents' backs."

Kyogle Council opposes the GKNP

KYOGLE Council considered a Notice of Motion on the matter of the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) at its 8 December 2025 Ordinary Meeting.

Kyogle Council provided an extract of the minutes showing the motion and resolution:

9.1. Notice of Motion - Cr Tom Cooper: Transfer of State Forest to National Parks and Wildlife

RESOLVED CO/122025/3 Moved by Cr Tom Cooper, seconded by Cr Robin Harley

That Council:

- 1. Formally oppose the transition of the 176,000 ha of State Forest assessment area on the North Coast to National Parks and Wildlife.*
- 2. Write to The Hon Chris Minns, Premier, The Hon Tara Moriarty, Minister for Forestry and local member The Hon Janelle Saffin, MP outlining how this transfer of forestry product will impact our local timber mills because much of the raw product comes from this area therefore putting local jobs at risk. However, if the Government is intent on continuing down this path, Council*
 - seeks guarantees that effective land management resources and appropriate budgets be allocated for fire, pest and weed management programs in future years.*
 - asserts that just and fair compensation be available for those directly and indirectly impacted by the closure of timber mills in our local government area.*

CARRIED

FOR VOTE - Councillors Danielle Mulholland, John Burley, Brett McNamara, Olivia Taylor, Tom Cooper, Robert Cullen, and Robin Harley

AGAINST VOTE - Councillors Kieran Somerville and Janet Wilson

Timber industry crisis deepens on NSW Mid-North Coast

Job losses accelerate as Great Koala National Park logging moratorium restricts supply.

AS the logging moratorium for the proposed Great Koala National Park continues to bite, the Mid-North Coast timber industry is facing significant job losses and growing uncertainty. The impacts are being felt across workers, families, and local communities. Political leaders and industry voices are calling for certainty as long-term futures hang in the balance.

FCNSW CUTS AND PENTARCH CLOSURES HIT MID-NORTH COAST HARD

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has announced the loss of just over 51 positions as the logging moratorium tied to the proposed Great Koala National Park (GKNP) continues to restrict wood supply. This includes 30 positions from the Coffs Harbour office and another 21 across the state.

The impacts have also rippled through the private sector. Pentarch Forestry has made the difficult decision to close its Green Mill at Herons Creek, retrenching the final 25 workers. The mill was the largest employer in the Herons Creek / Portland Quarry region, supporting a public school and local shops that are now facing an uncertain future. Pentarch also reports ongoing difficulties at its mills in Murwillumbah and Kyogle due



1/ **FCNSW has had to cut 51 positions.** Image: FCNSW

2/ **Pentarch has had to close Green Mill at Herons Creek, putting the final 25 workers out of a job.** Images: Pentarch

to the lack of supply.

Pentarch Executive Director Stephen Dadd told ABC's Samuel O'Brien, "Pentarch's had to make the difficult decision to close the Green Mill at Herons Creek... We haven't had any wood supply coming in from Forestry Corporation since last July... effectively, that mill has now run out of logs."

Dadd noted the challenges for affected workers, "It's a sad day for those individuals... for many of those workers, re-employment in different industries is quite difficult. These are generally people who

have been working in industrial forestry-related jobs for, in many cases, most of their careers."

He highlighted limited redeployment options, citing both skill mismatches with proposed tourism or ranger roles in the GKNP and the geographic distance involved. This closure links back to coverage in Issue #871, which featured an interview with a contact at the Herons Creek mill.

NATIONALS' LEADER GURMESH SINGH ON THE FIGHT FOR THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

New South Wales Nationals leader and Member for Coffs Harbour, the Hon. Gurmesh Singh, described the latest forestry job cuts as "a considerable blow to the local community."

Singh, who has advocated for the timber industry since his election in 2019, said, "I'm very sorry that this has happened. We have fought tirelessly to protect the timber industry... Because it is such a valuable resource, people often just talk about the jobs, but these people are providing a valuable resource for our community. It's an amazing resource to build out of."

Cont P 6

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From P 5

He pointed to the broader context of housing and material shortages, "We still need it to continue building homes. There is a housing shortage, a material shortage at the moment as well, and you know, we do it better here than anywhere else in the world."

Singh also acknowledged the personal toll on workers and families, "They've had a bit of a time to think about it... but yeah, certainly they're still gutted... a lot of them are facing some very difficult life choices... These are very difficult decisions and a difficult time for so many families on the Mid-North Coast as a whole."

This continues coverage from Issues #868 and #869, which included further interviews related to Singh's efforts.

M&M TIMBERS WORKER KIRSTY PARKER ON AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Mill worker Kirsty Parker of M&M Timbers described the situation as "an emotional rollercoaster" following the stand-down of harvesting crews.

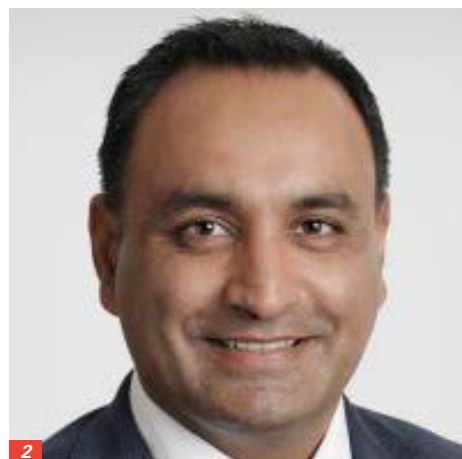
"We've got staff that still don't know what they're doing and we're trying to



1

1/ **M&M Timbers still has staff that are living in uncertainty.** Image: MM Timber

2/ **The Hon. Gurmeh Singh, Member for Coffs Harbour.** Images: Parliament of NSW



2

find a way forward, which is particularly difficult when we don't know what's going to happen after 2028. So, we sort of need some certainty around the industry," Parker said.

With family ties to the industry dating back over a century, she questioned the rationale behind the moratorium, "We've got industry in our family back to 1908, harvesting the same areas periodically over that time. And there's still trees there. There's still plenty of wildlife there. This is just, it makes no sense to me. The

decisions need to be reversed, simple as that. This is not going to protect anybody or anything."

Parker emphasised the challenges for businesses and families, "This is scary times for us, you know. This is what we know. As a business, you need to be able to plan ahead. We don't know how to plan ahead... Now, we're looking for what our plan's going to be and when can we make that plan."

This follows her previous interview in Issue #869.

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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/events/2026-industry-awards/> or contact tahlia@ntha.com.au

AUGUST

7: WCTE 2027 – Call for Abstracts.

Call for abstracts for WCTE 2027 is now open. Submission deadline is 7 August. Visit <https://event.fourwaves.com/wcte27/submission>

11: SAVE THE DATE: WoodSolutions Seminar – Perth, WA, 2.00pm - 6.00pm.

Designed for engineers, architects, building designers, certifiers and builders, this seminar, hosted by Timber Insight, is bringing together the brightest minds in residential construction for an afternoon of practical technical presentations exploring the latest developments in timber framing, engineered wood products, prefabrication and building performance. Full details and ticket sales details coming soon.

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/events/2026-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/events/2026-industry-awards/> or contact tahlia@ntha.com.au

NOVEMBER

8-13: The Gottstein Trust's Understanding Forest Science Course – The Country Club, Launceston, Tasmania.

For those working in, or with an interest or association with the timber and forestry products sector, this unique course will provide an update on core aspects of forest science and aspects of management of the nation's public and private estates. Participants will also gain a better understanding of the national and international forces impacting upon forests. Bookings are now open. For more information, visit <https://gottsteintrust.org/> or phone Helen Murray on 0419 991 424

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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Open letter summary: critique of the INFM carbon offsets method

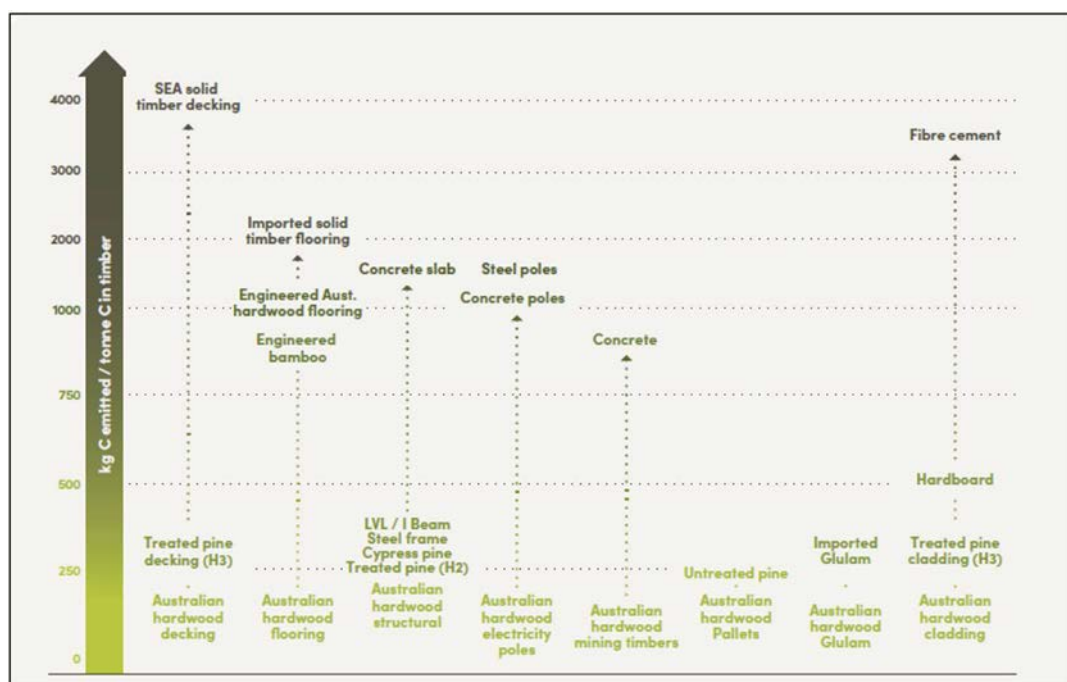
IN an open letter delivered by email on 7 July 2026 to Chris Bowen, Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Dr. John Raison, Former CSIRO Chief Research Scientist, strongly condemns the recently determined Improved Native Forest Management in Multiple-use Public Native Forests (INFM) ACCU method that aims to estimate high integrity carbon (C) offsets. Dr. Raison argues that this method “will create fake carbon offsets and undermine genuine abatement activities.”

The letter highlights widespread opposition from “associations representing the forestry and farming sectors, rural communities whose livelihoods depend on continued sustainable harvesting, trade unions, conservation groups, the Australia Institute, forest managers and many in the science community.” Key concerns include “clear failures to uphold the integrity standards of the ACCU scheme, especially additionality, leakage and ability to verify credits claimed; adverse socio-economic impacts which will greatly exceed any potential C benefit; a lack of transparency around how earlier concerns have been addressed...; and strong concern that low-integrity credits will [be] created and used to off-set (‘greenwash’) pollution from use of fossil fuels.”

Dr. Raison focuses on “key weaknesses resulting from the misuse of science in developing the INFM,” warning that the determined method “will generate bogus carbon credits with serious consequences for the credibility of the ACCU scheme.”

1. LACK OF SOUND SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

The core conceptual flaw, according to the letter, is the assumption that ceasing sustainable harvesting in native forests will deliver net greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. Dr. Raison states, “When a



The emission footprint for Australian hardwood HWP and the products they could replace. SEA refers to Southeast Asia. Image: Open letter Figure 1, sourced from Ximenes et al., 2016

full and accurate life cycle analysis (LCA) approach is applied there is no evidence that this is the case and the reverse is more likely (Ximenes et al. 2016, Raison 2024)."

A proper LCA must account for “changes in forest C stocks; emissions from transport and processing wood products; changes in C stocks in wood products in use and in landfill; emissions avoided by using wood residues to replace fossil energy or by substituting wood products for more emissions-intensive construction materials; and any ‘indirect’ leakage of emissions that will result from increased production of wood products in other jurisdictions.”

He cites the only comprehensive Australian LCA study (Ximenes et al. 2016), which examined case studies in NSW native forests and “concluded that sustainable harvesting of native forests and the subsequent use of forest biomass to produce harvested wood products

(HWP) or energy can make a positive contribution to mitigating national net C emissions.” Studies advocating cessation of harvesting, such as Keith et al. (2014, 2015), are critiqued for being “incomplete, [using] inappropriate parameters... or [overestimating] the rate of C gain in older forests,” leading to “the incorrect conclusion that cessation of harvesting would provide better long-term C outcomes than sustainable management for wood production.”

“It is thus not possible to create reliable C credits by the cessation of native forest harvesting.”

2. HIGH UNCERTAINTY IN FULLCAM CARBON STOCK ESTIMATES

The method relies heavily on the FullCAM model for estimating carbon stock changes. However, “FullCAM estimates of long-term C stock change following disturbance by either harvesting or fire in highly heterogeneous... native forests remain uncertain.” Dr. Raison references calibration efforts (Forrester et al. 2025) that “found that the model has very low



THE PROPOSED INFM METHOD LACKS SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY

From P 8

precision and some bias.” The model “has not been independently tested for its reliability in estimating temporal change in C stocks following forest disturbance by harvesting or fire.”

Given these issues, the letter insists that “it is essential that the INFM method include a requirement for independent estimation of stock change based on solid field inventory.”

3. UNVERIFIABLE CREDITS

The method’s approach to verification is inadequate. It calls for “representative” forest plots but provides “No guidance... on how representativeness can be determined, only a recipe on how plots that are used for modelling should be constructed in FullCAM.” Spatial data inputs are imprecise, and the “validation” process, requiring an iterative match of “+ or – 5% between model outputs and prior records of harvest area and wood harvest”, lacks clear instructions.

Dr. Raison warns that “tweaking” model parameters to achieve this may well compromise the ability of the model to make reliable forward predictions.” Essential parameters (e.g., percentage of harvested stems going to various wood products, tree ages) “are usually poorly known.” Overall, “These issues mean model predictions will be very uncertain and there is no process in place to verify them.”

4. UNRELIABLE AND UNVERIFIABLE BASELINE EMISSIONS

The baseline (what would happen without the project) is “critically” flawed. It uses “the latest modified sustained yield” based on correlations with historical harvest data, applying “Arbitrary adjustments (reductions)” depending on R² values. A correlation of 0.7 or higher is deemed sufficient, yet “This is a very low correlation to be used to predict future wood harvest and will result in very imprecise estimates.”

“LOW-INTEGRITY CREDITS WILL [BE] CREATED AND USED TO OFF-SET ('GREENWASH') POLLUTION

The 15-year crediting period and handling of wildfires (arbitrarily excluding 3 years of data) are also criticized as leading to “over-crediting.” Requirements for modelling cleared areas are deemed unrealistic, “Many of the requirements to describe these are impossible to meet e.g. the average C density of areas cleared during the last 5 years!” Rules assuming “no removal of wood, and that there is no regeneration” contradict real-world practice. Consequently, “estimated baselines will be very uncertain and thus also estimated abatement.”

5. POOR TREATMENT OF LEAKAGE AND LACK OF CONSERVATISM

International evidence shows leakage is “markedly underestimated” in such methods. The INFM repeats this error. Industry Edge’s review (FWPA 2025) highlighted ignored leakage to interstate forests and plantations, concluding that leakage “could result in emissions greater than any abatement created.”

Data shows reduced native forest access has driven “A 4.7% annual increase in import of wood products,” with “Imports of hardwood from Asia... increased by 5.6%/yr” and 62% of imports from Asia in 2023-24. There has also been “A large increase in imports of Engineered Wood Products which have a higher C footprint” and “A 16%/yr increase in the use of steel framing” and other high-emission substitutes.

Research by Venn et al. (2026) found “81% of the reductions in harvest of Australian native forest hardwood has ‘leaked’ straight to imports of hardwood,” much of it to high-risk regions for illegal logging. The method’s 40% cap on abatement for indirect leakage is called “ridiculously low,” given evidence from Gan and McCarl (2007) and recent analyses showing 42–95% leakage rates internationally, with Australia experiencing substantial transfers to higher-emission sources.

6. FAILURE OF ADDITIONALITY

The method credits activities likely to occur anyway. Long-term trends show reductions in harvesting due to stricter regulations and transfers to conservation tenures. Specific examples like the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) in NSW are political decisions for biodiversity protection, not carbon abatement. Dr.

“ANY RESULTING ABATEMENT CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS ‘ADDITIONAL’

Raison notes, “This area was clearly not transferred to the park for the purposes of C abatement and thus any resulting abatement can not be considered as ‘additional’.”

Claims of temporary cessation are dismissed as “political manoeuvring,” given mill closures, worker displacement, and government commitments. Approving INFM projects in such areas would be “a serious violation of integrity standards.”

CONCLUSIONS

Dr. Raison summarises that the INFM method “has a poor conceptual basis, ignoring major Australian research that shows sustainable harvesting of native forests and use of wood products does not result in increased net GHG emissions when assessed using a complete LCA over a full forest rotation at the scale of the forest estate.” It lacks justification for its assumptions and provides “Insufficient guidance... on how to conduct key FullCAM modelling steps.”

FullCAM’s limitations are unaddressed, with no requirement for field verification. Leakage is “unrealistic and would lead to major underestimation.” Additionality assessments are “flawed and appear to be politically motivated.”

OVERALL VERDICT

“The proposed INFM method lacks scientific validity, will generate very uncertain estimates of carbon abatement and fails to meet key integrity standards. Its use will produce bogus carbon offsets and will undermine genuine abatement activities.”

Dr. Raison draws on his 40-year CSIRO career studying native forest ecology and carbon cycling, contributions to FullCAM’s development, and authorship of IPCC Good Practice Guidance and GHG accounting guidelines for the land sector. His critique underscores the risks to the ACCU scheme’s credibility and calls for methods grounded in robust, comprehensive science rather than assumptions that fail under scrutiny.

To view the open letter and references including reports for FWPA, click here.

Labor's net zero land grab threatens regional jobs and timber supply

THE Nationals have taken a firm stand against what they describe as Labor's aggressive push toward net zero targets, which they argue will lock up vast tracts of productive land and devastate regional economies. The party plans to lodge a Notice of Motion in both the Senate and the House of Representatives to disallow the Carbon Credits Methodology Determination 2026. This determination would enable payments to state governments to permanently halt commercial timber harvesting across entire Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) areas in exchange for carbon credits.

Nationals Leader Senator Matt Canavan has been vocal in his opposition. "Labor's new carbon credit approval will cause irreversible damage to Australia's sustainable native forestry industry, sovereign timber supply capability, agricultural land and regional communities; locking up productive forest land for 100 years," he said.

"This will mean less timber to build Australian homes, which, in turn, means less Australian jobs. It will shut down another regional industry and end regional forestry jobs, hurting our economy and making our country weaker," he continued. He highlighted the industry's significance, noting that it directly employs about 80,000 people and supports another 100,000 indirect jobs, mostly in regional communities. "This is a crucial industry that we must protect."

The scale of the proposed land restrictions has raised widespread alarm. At the same time as targeting forestry areas, Labor is reportedly planning to lock up another 39 million hectares of land to meet its 2030 emissions target. To put this in perspective, Victoria covers around 22 million hectares, meaning the plan equates to restricting an area nearly twice the size of the state. Senator Canavan expressed concern about the involvement



1/ **The Honourable Matthew Canavan, Senator for QLD and leader of the Nationals.** Image: Parliament of Australia



2/ **The Honourable Darren Chester MP, Member for Gippsland and deputy leader of the National Party.** Image: Parliament of Australia



3/ **Dominic Lane, Acting Deputy CEO for Australian Forest Products Association.** Image: AFPA

of large corporations. "Australians should be concerned about multi-million dollar companies locking up Australian land for their carbon credits, to appease a woke box-ticking carbon credit offset. This will set a dangerous precedent of what is to come, if approved."

Shadow Minister for Agriculture Darren Chester, who represents communities affected by previous forestry closures, drew on Victoria's experience. "I represent the communities that lived through the shutdown of native forestry in Victoria, and I know this leads to mills closed, skilled workers gone, and proud towns left to pick up the pieces," Mr Chester said.

He emphasised the choice facing Australia: "When it comes to timber, you either use your own in an environmentally sustainable way, or you source timber from countries with worse environmental standards than ours." Such shifts, he noted, accelerate reliance on imports and push construction toward higher-emission materials like steel and concrete.

Industry voices have also criticised the move. Australian Forest Products Association Acting Deputy CEO Dominic Lane argued that the decision puts politics ahead of science. "This short-sighted decision risks undermining Australia's sustainable multiple-use public production forests, which already

deliver environmental, economic and climate benefits through active forest management," Mr Lane said. He suggested the primary beneficiary appears to be the NSW Government, which could use the arrangement to fund its election commitment to establish the Great Koala National Park without bearing the full cost.

The Nationals' push to disallow the methodology determination aims to prevent what they see as a precedent-setting "land grab" that prioritises carbon accounting over productive land use, job security, and domestic resource sovereignty. Critics argue that permanently removing productive forests from commercial use for a century not only threatens the forestry sector but also weakens Australia's overall economic resilience and housing supply.

As debates intensify in Parliament, the outcome could have profound implications for regional Australia. Supporters of the carbon credit scheme view it as essential for meeting climate targets, while opponents like the Nationals see it as an attack on sustainable industries that already balance environmental stewardship with economic contribution. The coming weeks will determine whether these policies proceed or face meaningful checks in the interest of protecting jobs and communities.

Nationals move to block Labor's Carbon Credit Scheme

NATIONALS Senator Ross Cadell has launched a direct challenge to Labor's latest carbon credit rules, warning they threaten to destroy Australia's native timber industry and the regional communities that depend on it.

Senator Cadell has lodged a disallowance motion against the controversial Improved Native Forest Management (INFM) Methodology Determination 2026. He described the rules as a "death knell" for the native timber sector.

"Australia's forestry industries employ tens of thousands of people and sustain regional communities across Australia," Cadell said. "Under Labor, transparency has disappeared from the forest floor and instead is now hidden in the halls of bureaucracy."

He argued the changes would effectively lock up productive native



Senator Ross Cadell, Nationals Party.
Image: Parliament of Australia

forests for 100 years, ending sustainable timber harvesting. "My disallowance motion is seeking to reverse the change to the Improved Native Forest Management (INFM) Methodology Determination 2026 that would have otherwise written the final page in our rich timber history," Cadell stated.

The Senator rejected framing the debate as industry versus environment, instead calling for greater transparency. "This is not about industry versus environment. It is about transparency in policy that affects real people in real communities outside of the Canberra bubble."

Senator Cadell also criticised Labor and the Greens for using the carbon credit scheme as a "political football," pointing to a lack of proper consultation and withheld documents.

"If these rules are not overturned, Australia's native timber industry will be lost forever."

Leader of the Nationals, Senator Matt Canavan, echoed these concerns, describing the policy as Labor's "net zero land grab."

"Labor's new carbon credit approval will cause irreversible damage to Australia's sustainable native forestry industry, sovereign timber supply capability, agricultural land and regional communities; locking up productive forest land for 100 years," Senator Canavan said.

"This will mean less timber to build Australian homes, which, in turn, means less Australian jobs. It will shut down another regional industry and end regional forestry jobs, hurting our economy and making our country weaker. The Australian forest industry directly employs about 80,000 people with a further 100,000 indirect jobs, concentrated in regional communities. This is a crucial industry that we must protect."

The disallowance motion is scheduled for debate in the Senate on 18 August.

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Stop-work powers are live: native forestry next in the firing line

Australia's new EPA gains broad powers; native forestry protections expire in 12 months.

FOREST and Wood Communities Australia say the forestry sector now has just twelve months to prepare for the most significant expansion of federal environmental enforcement in a generation, after the National Environmental Protection Agency commenced on 1 July.

"From 1 July, the clock started ticking for every native forestry business still operating under the Regional Forest Agreement framework," said Steve Dobbyns BSc (Forestry), Chairman of Forest and Wood Communities Australia.

"The sector has been told it has twelve months, but twelve months is not long when you are talking about federal approvals, accreditation, legal risk, wood supply contracts, contractors, mills and regional jobs.

"Australian native forestry is not an environmental free-for-all. It is already managed through state forest practice systems, detailed environmental prescriptions, regeneration obligations, threatened species protections, audits and decades of scientific assessment under the RFAs. The danger is that Canberra builds a duplicate approval system that treats one of the most heavily regulated industries in the country as if none of that regulation exists."

Launched by Environment Minister Murray Watt and led by inaugural chief executive John Bradley PSM, the agency can now issue urgent environment protection orders where serious environmental harm is alleged, expand compliance audits and pursue breaches through the courts. The most serious penalties can reach \$16.5 million per company and may be linked to the



Steve Dobbyns BSc (Forestry), Chairman of Forest and Wood Communities Australia. Photo FWCA

benefit gained from breaking the law.

Native forestry conducted under a Regional Forest Agreement remains outside the full reach of these new arrangements until 1 July 2027. Operations outside an agreement have already required federal approval since December 2025, and current agreements allow approved harvesting to continue only until 30 June 2027, after which the exemption falls away.

National Environmental Standards are now being developed and consulted on. Those standards will determine how forestry operations are judged under Commonwealth law and whether existing state systems are properly recognised or overridden by another layer of federal control.

The five remaining Regional Forest Agreements across New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia have underpinned native forest management for a quarter of a century. They were built on regional scientific assessments, conservation reserves, sustainable yield modelling and state-based forest practice systems. When the exemption ends, thousands of regional workers and the communities built around them will face a federal regulator armed with stop-work powers for the first time.

"This is the point where government must decide whether these reforms are about genuine environmental outcomes

or whether they become another political weapon against Australian forestry," Mr Dobbyns said.

"You do not protect forests, jobs or the climate by strangling Australian production with duplicate green tape and then importing more timber from countries with weaker environmental standards. That is not conservation. That is environmental outsourcing."

Conservation groups are already pressing the new regulator to use its powers harder, including on land clearing and activities they claim threaten species such as the koala. It leaves the timber sector caught between a countdown clock and mounting political pressure to bring the full force of the new laws to bear the moment the exemption lifts.

Forest and Wood Communities Australia say the federal government must guarantee that the new standards recognise the world-leading regulation Australian forestry already operates under, rather than treating sustainable domestic timber production as the problem.

"The Commonwealth must not use these reforms to pretend that native forestry is unregulated, unscientific or unmanaged," Mr Dobbyns said.

"Our industry grows and regenerates forests, supplies renewable building materials, supports regional families and operates under rules that many imported products would never meet.

"If the new system rewards activist pressure over evidence, the losers will be regional workers, local mills, Australian builders, housing affordability and the global environment."

The Australian Forest Products Association has warned that losing the RFA framework would bury native forestry in green tape and drive greater reliance on imported timber, including products from jurisdictions with weaker

“

YOU DO NOT PROTECT
FORESTS, JOBS OR THE
CLIMATE BY STRANGLING
AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION

Rob Fish slams virtue signalling over forestry

“So, everybody just follow me, 'cause we need a little controversy.”

ROB Fish brings a lifetime of expertise to debates on natural resource management. After studying Marine Biology in Edinburgh and Fisheries Management in Tasmania, he worked with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority in the late 1990s. For over 20 years, he has collaborated with the Australian fishing industry, managing operations in northern Australia and chairing the NT Seafood Council for more than a decade. Today, he works with fishers and stakeholders to improve fisheries management from allocations to harvest strategies.

Fish applies this practical perspective to another rural industry under pressure: native forestry. In a recent LinkedIn post, he challenges the narrative surrounding the expansion of the Great Southern Forest National Park in southern NSW.

“Articles celebrating the expansion of the Great Southern Forest National Park; read the fine print, and it means removing local native forestry,” Fish writes. He notes the similar tone in programs like *4 Corners’* Timber Turmoil, which he sees as targeting the same outcome.

Fish’s concern is the ease with which rural industries are dismantled and the failure to address the real costs. “My interest isn’t forestry itself. It’s how easily rural industries are removed now, and how rarely anyone addresses the cost, to regional communities, to people, to Australia, and even to the environment.”



Healthy, tall native forests are managed for sustainable hardwood production, the reality Rob Fish says is often missing from the public debate. Image: Shutterstock

He points to scale: “About 65,000 hectares of native forest are used for native forestry each year, not clear-felled, not bulldozed, but selectively harvested for hardwood sawlogs. Australia has roughly 132 million hectares of native forest, so this is around 0.05% of the estate.”

Despite this tiny footprint, Fish says campaigns treat it as a major threat. These operations support regional sawmills, local jobs, and long-standing communities. Yet proposals for expanded reserves frame the industry as something that “has to go,” citing tourism, protection, and the 30x30 target. “Native forestry isn’t limiting tourism in national parks, and 30x30 calls for 30% protection,

**“AUSTRALIA HAS BECOME
“DISCONNECTED FROM
PRIMARY PRODUCTION...”**

not the elimination of sustainable use,” he argues.

The bigger issue, according to Fish, is what happens to demand. “The choice was never harvesting versus no timber. It’s Australian timber, produced under some of the world’s highest standards, versus timber from countries where standards are often far lower.”

He sees a recurring pattern across primary industries: “The activity disappears from sight, the product stays on the shelf, and the footprint moves elsewhere. We feel good about our credentials while exporting the jobs and the impact overseas. That isn’t sustainability. It’s displacement.”

Fish warns that Australia has become “disconnected from primary production,” preferring total displacement of nature over managed interaction, even when the footprint is minimal. “Destroy local industries. Damage regional communities. Import more. Worsen the footprint. A virtue signal that won’t last.”

“If our strategy is to shut down sustainable industries at home while importing the exact same products from elsewhere,” he concludes, “we’re not reducing impact, we’re exporting it. And history suggests that rarely ends well.”

From P 12

environmental oversight than Australia.

Forest and Wood Communities Australia is calling on the federal government to work directly with forest

scientists, state regulators, workers, contractors, processors and regional communities before the 1 July 2027 deadline.

“Regional communities cannot be treated as collateral damage in another

Canberra deal,” Mr Dobbyns said.

“If the government is serious about timber security, housing supply and better environmental outcomes, it must back sustainable Australian forestry, not regulate it into uncertainty.”

Australia imports \$7 billion of timber a year

That's an economic and climate problem we can fix.

By **PROFESSOR GREG NOLAN**, previous Director at the Centre for Sustainable Architecture with Wood, UTAS

WE have a renewable, carbon-storing Australian-grown building material, produced to world-leading standards. Choosing to grow it and use it is sound economics and sound climate policy.

As an architect, I spend a lot of time thinking about the materials that we use to make our buildings, as the choice has consequences far beyond the building site. Constructing and operating buildings generates roughly 40 per cent of global carbon emissions, and about 40 per cent of these emissions result from making energy-intensive building materials such as concrete, steel, glass and aluminium. However, there are readily available building materials that avoid these emissions, are renewable, and store carbon: timber and wood products.

A growing tree draws carbon out of the atmosphere and sequesters it in its wood. Then, timber used in a building stores this carbon for as long as the building stands. This storage is measurable and considerable. The University of Tasmania's new building, The Forest, cut its embodied carbon by about 44 per cent against a conventional design, in large part by building in large-dimension glulam and other timber components. Recent studies have indicated that to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, Australia's building construction sector needs



Replacing emissions-intensive materials such as concrete and steel with engineered mass timber reduces building emissions while capturing and storing carbon for long-term climate benefits. Image: Shutterstock

to make 30 per cent of its buildings from mass timber. The timber stores atmospheric carbon and the high carbon emissions from alternative materials are avoided.

The market has begun to price the difference: in low-carbon timber buildings, tenants, including ASX-listed companies now obliged to report their emissions, have paid a premium per square metre, because a lower-carbon timber-rich building is a better place to work and this makes for higher productivity and a better balance sheet.

The climate science is unambiguous about wood's role in low-carbon human society. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, founding director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, describes trees as "a technology of unparalleled perfection" and argues there is "no safer way of storing carbon", if we engineer the wood into modern building materials and smartly manage harvest and construction, in his words, "we humans can build ourselves a safe home on Earth." The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

reached the same point: a forest managed for a sustained yield of timber while maintaining or increasing its carbon stocks delivers "the largest sustained mitigation benefit."

In short, growing and harvesting sustainably managed forests as the resources for effective building materials production and building design solutions is

the preferred low-carbon option for Australian construction sector.

Here is where Australia's settings run against its own interests. We don't grow enough material and want to increase restrictions on access to forests that are managed to world's best practice. We import around \$7 billion of timber and wood products a year and run a trade deficit of about \$4 billion. And what we import is increasingly from countries with weaker environmental standards than our own. With tariffs on timber now emerging in major markets and freight costs climbing, that dependence is a growing economic risk, and it flows directly into the cost of building a home at a time when housing affordability is a national emergency. A sovereign supply of a renewable building material is not parochial; it is strategic.

Sovereign supply isn't just about having the raw material. It's about having and maintaining the capability to process it into reliable building

“NATIVE AND PLANTATION FORESTRY HAVE VERY LOW BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

From P 14

solutions. Turning trees into timber and wood products, and into the engineered mass-timber components that large low-carbon buildings rely on is specialised manufacturing, usually found in regional areas. Australia has very little of it. Let that capability wither, or deliberately extinguish it, and the work and the value flows to Europe, China, or others who will harvest their forests. Re-shoring construction's carbon savings means keeping the factories as well as the forests.

There are also issues we tend to avoid in Australia. We want carbon neutrality but won't meaningfully discuss solutions to hard-to-abate emissions like embodied carbon in building materials. Our demand for timber and wood products is rising, not

falling. If we don't grow and harvest the forest here, under some of the most rigorous standards in the world, and maintain the capacity to manufacture products, we simply import it. We offshore the environmental cost to someone else's forest and pass up the regional employment and economic benefits we could have maintained or secured.

Forests can be harvested and successfully regrown in a dynamic landscape. And the assumption that local harvesting must mean ecological loss deserves scrutiny. Research by Tasmanian conservation scientist Dr Marie Yee found species richness in regrown native forest broadly on par with old growth forests, because biodiversity depends on a mosaic of forest ages that landscape-scale planning is designed to sustain. That does not make every outcome benign, as some species need active, science-led protection, and generally receive it, but it does mean responsibly managed native forestry and biodiversity are not opposites. Native and plantation forestry have very low biodiversity impacts when compared to other

economic activities in our landscapes and can actively regenerate biodiversity in degraded areas.

Sustainably managed native and plantation forests are essential to supply Australia's diverse timber needs. They are complements, not substitutes. Each provides a different processing resource and yields products that our building construction sector needs. Pretending otherwise simply sends us back to the import queue and can make us complicit in forest degradation in other parts of the world while undermining regional resilience in Australia.

We can keep importing product, or we can value and expand what we already have: a renewable, independently certified, carbon-storing material, grown to best practice, that builds healthier places to live and work and lowers the emissions of the most carbon-intensive sector in the economy. For a country serious about both its climate targets and its housing supply, that should be an easy call.

“FORESTS CAN BE HARVESTED AND SUCCESSFULLY REGROWN IN A DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE



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- Industry Icon
- Workplace Equity Award
- Trade Store of the Year
- Retail Store of the Year Under 2500sqm
- Retail Store of the Year Over 2500sqm
- Best Off-Site Manufacturing Award
- Building Materials Supplier of the Year
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- Timber Supplier of the Year
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Three Year Wood Production Plan

Harvesting, roading, and regeneration operations.

SUSTAINABLE Timber Tasmania has released the annual update to its Three Year Wood Production Plan 2026-2027 to 2028-2029 to the Tasmanian community for feedback.

The Three Year Wood Production Plan identifies forest coupes in Tasmania's public production forests that are available across a three-year period from which a schedule of harvesting, roading, and regeneration operations will be developed.

The Plan is prepared to demonstrate where and when Sustainable Timber Tasmania could undertake harvesting operations to make available eucalypt sawlogs, special timbers, veneer logs and peeler logs for its customers.

WHY IS THE THREE YEAR PLAN IMPORTANT?

The release of the Three Year Plan provides an opportunity for stakeholders to identify which forest coupes and future operations may be of interest.

Inviting community feedback on the Plan is part of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's commitment to engaging with local stakeholders.



The Tasmanian community has an opportunity to provide feedback to STT on the annual update of their Three Year Wood Production Plan. Image: STT

Your feedback will be considered during detailed operational planning and decision making processes.

HOW IS IT DEVELOPED?

The Three Year Plan is developed from modelling and spatial data and includes coupe names, provisional coupe sizes (not final harvest boundaries), location coordinates, anticipated harvest type and method, and an estimate of anticipated volumes of log products for recovery.

“THE THREE YEAR PLAN IS DEVELOPED FROM MODELLING AND SPATIAL DATA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please note that not all forest coupes listed in the Three Year Plan will be harvested, and final harvesting and regeneration details for each coupe may be different from what is listed in the Plan. This is because Sustainable Timber Tasmania has not yet undertaken its detailed operational planning process.

On occasion, it may be necessary for Sustainable Timber Tasmania to include or remove coupes in its Three Year Wood Production Plan. This may occur because of stakeholder feedback or for specific environmental, social, economic, or temporal reasons. Updated information will be made available through Sustainable Timber Tasmania's website as soon as practicable.

HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

1. Read the Three Year Wood Production Plan
2. View the Access Map to identify which forest coupes maybe of interest to you
3. Contact us at stakeholder@sttas.com.au or (03) 6169 2860

Forestry development to boost sovereign capability

AFPA has welcomed the sale of the Rushy Lagoon property in north-east Tasmania to expand Australia's sovereign capability in sustainable timber production.

The Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) has approved UK-based investment company Gresham House to purchase the large property near Launceston and allow forestry development along with other agricultural production.

AFPA acting deputy Chief Executive Dominic Lane said, "We welcome this important strategic investment to help support and grow Australia's sovereign capability for sustainable timber production and supply.

"During the building boom in COVID, we couldn't rely on imports to meet

our housing needs in Australia, so new opportunities to strengthen our sovereign capability and investment are critical.

"We also know various forms of agriculture can co-exist in Australia to provide long-term and sustainable benefits to regional communities, local jobs, the national economy and wider population."

In recent years, there has been a significant reduction in forestry plantations, with Australia's national plantation estate falling by 264,000 hectares from 1.973 million hectares in 2014-15 to 1.709 million hectares in 2024-25.

Fortunately, a bipartisan national commitment for federal plantation grants in 2022 has helped to reverse this decline, and enabled estates to grow.

"We sincerely thank Federal Agriculture and Forestry Minister the Hon Julie Collins for administering these important grants; however, we are still more than 260,000 hectares below the 2014-15 plantation levels, which remains a concern," Mr Lane said.

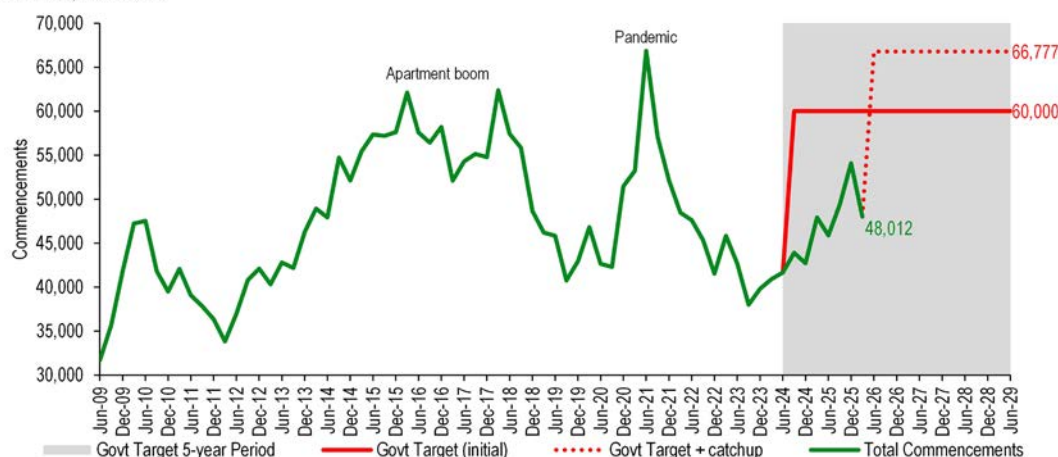
"It was fantastic to see both major parties recognising the importance of growing the total area of production forestry with bipartisan support for this grant program at the 2022 election.

"The choice between wood or steel by a homebuilder also makes a big difference between starting with a healthy carbon credit or a deficit. A typical timber house frame absorbs 9.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."

Home building falls well below Government's target

1.2 million homes: Actual and Target, by Quarter

Source: ABS, HIA Economics



The 1.2 million homes target originally required 60,000 quarterly commencements. After missing that benchmark, the requirement has risen to more than 66,000 homes per quarter to meet the goal Image: HIA

"AUSTRALIA needed to deliver an annual rate of 240,000 new homes to reach the 1.2 million new homes target, but in the 12 months to March, just 197,340 new homes commenced construction," stated HIA Senior Economist, Tom Devitt.

The ABS today released its Building Activity data for the March quarter 2026. This data provides estimates of the value of building work and number of dwellings commenced, completed and under construction across Australia and its states and territories.

"Despite still falling short of target, housing commencements were 12.0 per cent greater than the 176,230 recorded a year earlier," added Mr Devitt.

"There were 48,010 new dwellings that commenced construction in the first three months of 2026, down by 11.2 per cent on the previous quarter. The decline in the commencement of new home starts in the March quarter of 2026 preceded the impact

of rate increases, global uncertainty or the Federal Budget and likely reflects quarterly volatility.

"Home building had good momentum heading into 2026, picking up on the back of declining interest rates, low unemployment and existing shortages of housing across the country.

"Jurisdictions like Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory have been leading the national improvement in home building volumes and have a significant pipeline of new sales ready to commence. This will help smooth out on-the-ground activity through this year's volatility.

"The southeastern state and territory recoveries have been delayed and are more vulnerable but as long as recent disruptions are short-lived, strong population growth and tight labour market fundamentals should support activity here too.

"This trajectory will not be sufficient to meet the Housing

Accord Target, and Australia's housing needs are even greater than this.

"Australia needs to meet housing demand not only from population growth but also shrinking household sizes, increasing knockdown-rebuild activity, ageing population and increasing dependence on overseas migrants who tend to live in smaller households.

"HIA estimates 250,000 home builds each year are required on a sustained basis to meet these demands and start addressing the pre-existing shortage of housing across the country.

"Achieving this depends on governments reducing the cost of delivering new homes to market.

"This includes reducing taxes on housing, not increasing them. Housing is one of the most heavily taxed items in our economy along with the 'sin taxes' of alcohol and tobacco," concluded Mr Devitt.



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