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Forestry Australia calls for Board nominations

Replacements are needed for two members reaching the end of their terms.

THE Institute of Foresters of Australia, better known to most of us as Forestry Australia, is calling for nominations for its Board of Directors.

Two Directors will be appointed at the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 7 October. Dr Michelle Freeman will complete her second three-year term and, in line with the Institute's Constitution, is ineligible to re-stand. Dr Bill Jackson's term will also conclude in October and he has indicated that he will not nominate for a second term. If more than two nominations are received, an election will be held.

The term of office is three years and nominees must permanently reside in Australia. The expectations and scope of the role can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

Forestry Australia has a skills-based Board and encourages nominations from enthusiastic, thoughtful individuals who are keen to make a positive contribution to Forestry Australia and the broader forestry and forest management sector.

The Board is looking for a mix of perspectives, professional backgrounds, lived experience and capabilities, and seeks to maintain and enhance Board diversity in gender, age and cultural background as well as increasing geographic representation from New



Outgoing board member and President, Dr Michelle Freeman. Image: courtesy Forestry Australia

South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia or South Australia. RFPs are also strongly encouraged to apply.

The Board has identified the following skill gaps:

- farm forestry or agroforestry;
- plantation forestry;
- forest conservation;
- legal and governance;
- commercial, financial management, or business development;
- marketing and fund-raising, and
- public and science communication.

Nominees are invited to explain how their skills, experience and attributes would contribute to the Board's overall

effectiveness and help address one or more of these identified areas.

You can download Forestry Australia's Director Skills and Attributes form by clicking [here](#).

Nominations close at 5.00pm (AEST), Monday 24 August. They must be:

- made using the Director Nomination Form
- submitted by a current financial member, who is eligible to vote, and in good standing
- accompanied by two Word format documents, each a maximum 200 words. First, a Director nomination statement outlining why you would like to serve as a director and what you would bring to the role. Your statement should identify the relevant skills, experience and personal attributes you would contribute to the Board, including how these would help address the Board's identified skills and attributes gaps. Secondly, a Candidate introduction of yourself and your professional background.
- accompanied by a completed Director Skills & Attributes Form

Form and supporting documentation should be sent to Rhiannon Mazza at hello@forestry.org.au by 5.00pm (AEST), Monday 24 August.

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Celebrating 30 years of National Tree Day

Sunday saw tens of thousands of trees planted around the country.

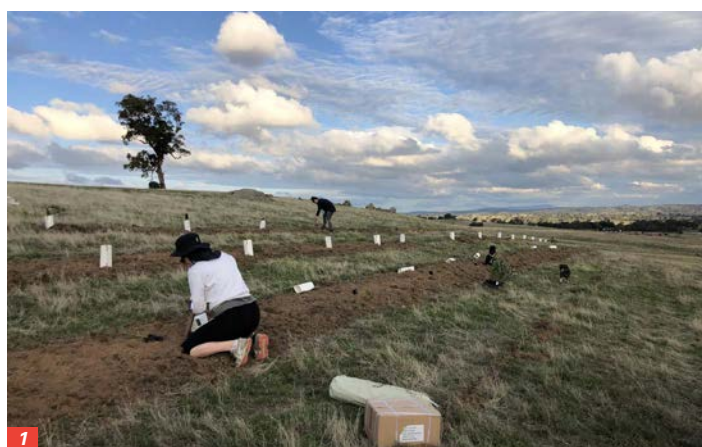
TENS of thousands of volunteers got their hands dirty on the weekend planting trees across Australia for Planet Ark's National Tree Day. Celebrated last Friday for schools and on Sunday for local groups, the day sees kids, residents, councils and community groups come together for plantings. The results are everything from greener urban spaces to stabilised soils and increased wildlife habitat.

For its 30th birthday, this year's Tree Day saw the national tally of trees planted pass 28 million since 1996, along with 5 million volunteers registering and 720,000 school events. The event is timed for winter so seedlings set deep roots before the summer heat, maximising the number that will survive.

Tree Day success stories include the Cremorne-to-Cammeray wildlife corridor, which North Sydney Council has used National Tree Day events to build since 1999. Volunteers have helped to build buffers and connectivity between habitats to expand fauna habitat, supporting the local environment while building relationships with other locals. North Sydney Bushcare coordinator Gareth Debney said, "We've seen fauna moving into areas they haven't usually been, including swamp wallabies and long-nosed bandicoots."

Victoria has several similarly successful programs, including Whitehorse City Council's volunteers at Cootamundra Walk East in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, the latest stage of a green corridors program running since 2023.

This year, Coles has enlisted as major sponsor for the first time. The retailer equipped five hero sites across the country with \$2500 in seedlings and \$500 refreshments voucher to keep the volunteers fuelled, plus site coordinator



1/ Volunteers plant rows of guarded native seedlings across a paddock over the weekend.

2/ A native wattle seedling goes in at the correct depth, following Forestry Australia's tips. All images: supplied by Forestry Australia

resources and materials. It also funds the annual Coles & Planet Ark Sustainable Schools Competition, which awards 20 schools across Australia with \$5000 each to help fund sustainability initiatives that benefit their environment and local communities (click here for more).

Other sites attract local sponsorship, with input coming from councils and forestry groups around the country, including Forestry Australia. Planet Ark's own seedbank has donated nearly 191,000 seedlings since it began in 2019.

"National Tree Day has inspired millions of Australians to take positive environmental action," Planet Ark chief executive Adam Culley said.

Planting sites from Mount Barker in SA to Innisfail in FNQ were listed this year. Victoria's Hepburn Shire Council saw plantings at Creswick, Clunes, Daylesford, and Smeaton, with more still to come,

including at the Ullina Avenue of Honour. Greater Dandenong Council hosted tree-planting activities at Somerfield Reserve on 25 July and Tirhatuan Reserve the following day. More than 220 people attended, with more than 750 plants given away to residents to plant at home.

In NSW, Bayside Council planted 1000 native seedlings in Scarborough Park as part of the new M6 cycleway. Wagga Wagga City Council supplied 2099 native seedlings to 20 schools and preschools for Friday's Schools Tree Day as part of the One Tree for Me program's 65,000-seedling target across the city's urban area.

"Students enjoy a fun, hands-on experience and can see the results of their efforts," the council's environmental education officer, Christina Reid, said.

In Queensland, Logan City Council ran three morning sites at Eagleby Wetlands, Bega Park, and Riverside Park, part of thousands of natives going into the ground across the region this month. Further north, Noosa Council put more than 2000 native trees, shrubs, and groundcovers on its list for Bagnalls Bushland Reserve in Cooroy, extending a revegetation project inside the Mary River catchment.

Industry groups were also involved, with Forestry Australia releasing top tips for keeping the weekend's seedlings alive (click here), emphasising species choice and the years of care after planting.

Some areas are running delayed planting days, so if you missed out, check your local region on the map (click here), or wait for Tropical Tree Day on 6 December.

On the cover: Forestry Australia Director and tree grower Leon Holt plants a native seedling with his child. Holt was also responsible for Forestry Australia's seedling growing tips. Image: supplied by Forestry Australia

Drew Freeman takes TFPA reins

The new CEO brings extensive industry experience and political nous.

THE Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) has announced Drew Freeman appointment as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Freeman brings extensive executive leadership experience across several of Tasmania's key industries, including retail, transport, logistics and forestry. Most recently, he served as Chief Executive Officer of Tasmanian Independent Retailers, where he led statewide advocacy, policy engagement and industry representation on behalf of more than 150 retailers.

TFPA Independent Chair Sarah Courtney welcomed Drew's appointment following an extensive national search, saying he brings a wealth of experience in political engagement, policy development, stakeholder management, leadership and industry advocacy.



New TFPA CEO Drew Freeman brings a wealth of experience across multiple sectors. Image: TFPA

him with a strong understanding of the forestry value chain, market dynamics and regulatory environment: "Drew has demonstrated an exceptional ability to build trusted relationships

with government, industry, regional communities and peak bodies. His experience and leadership make him exceptionally well placed to lead TFPA into its next chapter."

Freeman will work alongside outgoing CEO Nick Steel from the end of July in a planned transition period. Steel will conclude his tenure with TFPA on 21 August, following a structured handover that will ensure continuity for members, stakeholders and the organisation.

Posting on LinkedIn, Steel wrote: "Leading TFPA has been a great privilege. Together with our members and the broader industry, we've navigated some genuinely complex terrain, strengthening TFPA's standing as the trusted voice of Tasmania's forest industry, building durable relationships across government, industry and community, and laying a solid foundation for the sector's next chapter.

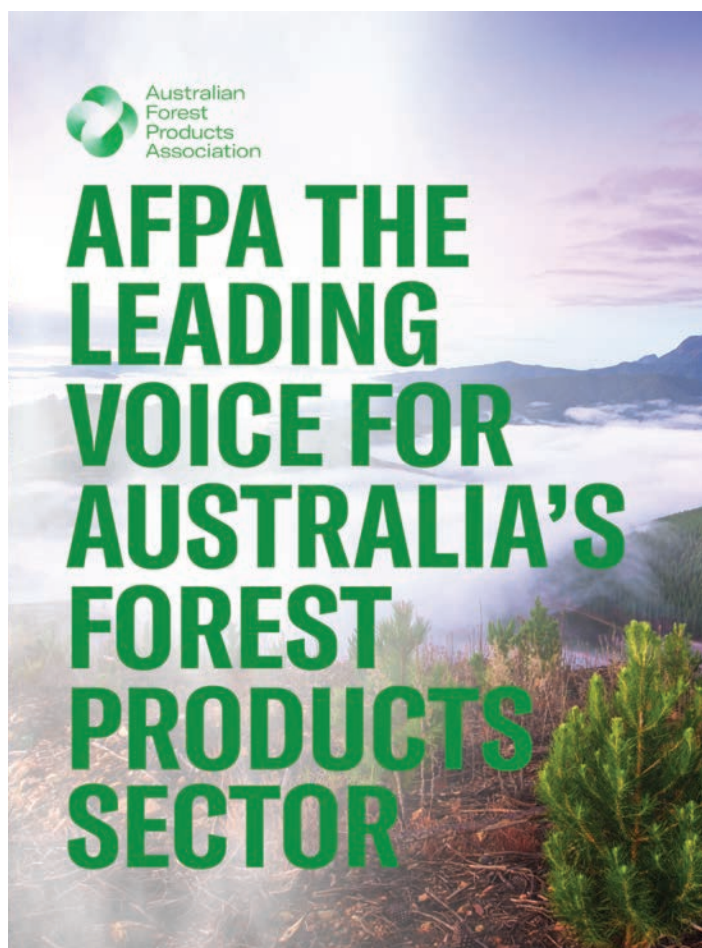
"None of that happens alone. To the members and the many people across government, industry and community who engaged with us in good faith even when the issues were hard, thank you. It's been a genuine honour to represent this industry and the people who make it up."

Steel, too, expressed satisfaction with Freeman's appointment, saying: "I'm confident TFPA is in excellent hands with Drew stepping in. He brings deep experience, a strong reputation across Tasmania's business community, and a genuine commitment to the state and I look forward to seeing the Association continue to thrive under his leadership.

“DREW HAS DEMONSTRATED AN EXCEPTIONAL ABILITY TO BUILD TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS”

"Drew is an experienced senior executive, industry advocate and regional leader with more than 25 years' experience leading complex, multi-stakeholder organisations across Tasmania," Courtney said. "He has an unwavering commitment to evidence-based advocacy and long-term industry sustainability, together with a collaborative and solutions-focused approach."

Courtney said Freeman's previous senior roles within the forestry sector provide



Cont P 5



1/ Sarah Courtney, independent chair of TFPA.



2/ Nick Steel, the outgoing CEO, has forged strong political, industrial and community relationships.



3/ TFPA represents the entire forestry value chain across Tasmania. All images: courtesy TFPA

From P 4

"Thank you again to everyone who has been part of this journey. Tasmania's forest industry has a bright future ahead, and I'll be cheering it on," he concluded.

Courtney thanked Mr Steel for his outstanding leadership and significant contribution to the Association. "Nick has played a pivotal role in strengthening TFPA's position as the trusted voice of Tasmania's forest industry," she said.

"Under his leadership, the Association has built strong relationships across government, industry and the broader community, creating a solid foundation for the future. We sincerely thank Nick for his dedication and wish him every success in his next chapter."

Terry Edwards, former CEO Forest Industries Association of

Tasmania, added his praise, saying, "Congratulations Nick on a job well done. With some strong headwinds to battle against your contribution has always been calm, well considered and accurate. It was a great privilege to work alongside you at some stages along the way."

Freeman said he was excited to return to the forestry sector and work alongside TFPA's members.

"I am looking forward to once again working across the forest industry alongside our members and the Tasmanian businesses and communities connected to it," he said.

"NICK HAS PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN STRENGTHENING TFPA'S POSITION"

"With the ever-increasing demand for sustainable, high-quality Tasmanian timber, I am committed to uniting the full forestry value chain as the industry continues to evolve and advance towards a bright and sustainable future."

Freeman added that he was committed to building on the strong legacy established by Mr Steel: "Nick has done a tremendous job developing deep and trusted relationships across industry, government and the community. I look forward to building on that work by continuing to strengthen member representation, enhancing collaboration with State and Federal Governments, and helping our members navigate the significant regulatory changes facing the sector."

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2026 Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award nominations now open.

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Recognise a leader and celebrate excellence in responsible forest management and sustainable timber utilisation practices.

Click here to apply online.

Entries close Friday August 14, 2026.

Responsible Wood

RW/1-10-1



New timber study excites

Hardwood manufacturing in Western Victoria has “huge potential”.

THE Hardwood Timber Manufacturing Hub (HTMH) Feasibility Study was announced as completed late last week.

The study looked at the prospects of a hardwood engineered timber plant (or, as the announcement put it, an integrated, multi-operator advanced manufacturing facility) to be called The Precinct and sited in the Portland region and found that it was both technically and commercially viable. The plan would take plantation bluegum that is currently chipped for wood pulp and paper and shipped offshore, and turn it into structural beams, both displacing imports and providing a secure, sovereign timber supply chain of new hardwood products to the region.

The study results were announced in Portland by the Member for Western Victoria, Jacinta Ermacora MP, who described the project as a “revolution” for the timber industry.

“This will help address growing demand for timber building supplies in Victoria,” she said.

“There are huge benefits here for the Portland community, the study has already unlocked new domestic markets and, potentially, international markets while supporting hundreds of jobs.”

The announcement was enthusiastically welcomed by the Victorian Forest Products Association (VFPA).

“The proposal is to create a facility in Western Victoria which is specifically designed to transform existing hardwood plantation timber into a suite of innovative new products, including engineered glue-laminated timber beams,” said VFPA CEO, Andrew White.

“The completion of the Hardwood Feasibility Study represents a significant milestone towards enabling innovative timber housing solutions in Victoria and reducing imports.

“The study confirms that a new facility could reduce the export of raw wood fibre (wood chips) by 300,000 green metric tonnes per annum, increasing local value-



Member for Western Victoria, Jacinta Ermacora MP (right) at the launch of the Hardwood Timber Manufacturing Hub Feasibility Study. Image: supplied

adding by instead transforming this fibre into valuable new housing and timber products, such as glue-laminated timber beams.”

Funded by the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub (GTFIH), the Victorian Government and VFPA, the study focuses on the feasibility of the new hardwood manufacturing hub and represents the first phase of three in the development of Portland’s Precinct project.

This first phase, the proposed hardwood glulam project, would generate 74 permanent jobs in the local area in addition to 150 construction jobs building a 35-hectare site that will run 300,000 tonnes of logs a year through a log yard, sawmill, drying kilns and a glulam line, with an on-site biomass plant supplying the facility’s heat. At capacity, it would produce around 52,000m³ of glue laminated timber annually, plus sawn hardwood, finger-jointed timber and 180,000 tonnes of woodchips.

Stage one is put at more than \$200

million in investment and it is important to note that despite the positive feasibility study it is not yet a funded project.

However, bluegum plantation hardwood EWP represents a viable alternative to higher-grade native timber hardwoods that have been removed from the Victorian market under the native forestry ban, so the ability to return value to the local timber sector and remove the risks surrounding a reliance on imported EWP makes this a doubly attractive proposition.

Stage two would add a laminated veneer lumber line. Stage three would manufacture components for prefabricated homes.

Feasibility studies for those stages are in production. Developed in full, The Precinct group projects 280 ongoing jobs, more than one million tonnes of plantation timber processed each year, and building components for 20,000 homes annually.

Bluegum glulam is already succeeding in the Australian marketplace, with WTIBeam producing GL17 and GL18 beams in partnership with forest managers Australian Bluegum Plantations and OneFortyOne.

As the Feasibility Study shows, The Precinct could deliver an industrial supply of the product and deliver much-needed product as well as jobs and returns into the forestry sector.

“What this shows is that if Victoria continues to invest in affordable, low-carbon housing solutions that support regional employment, it is possible to reduce timber imports and at the same time get more houses built using Victorian-made products,” White said.

VFPA thanked its members, the State Government and the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub (GTFIH) for supporting the Feasibility Study.

For more on The Precinct, click here.

“THERE ARE HUGE BENEFITS HERE FOR THE PORTLAND COMMUNITY

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

2: AFPA member dinner – Wrest Point Hotel, Hobart, 6.00pm - 9.30pm.

The event will involve key industry leaders, Members of Parliament, including from the Federal and Tasmanian parliaments. It will also feature a CEO breakfast, Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Members Forum as well as the Softwood Supply Chain and Hardwood Supply Chain meetings. For more information and booking, visit <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1613848>

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: 2026 WFTN Cocktails for Charity – Cloudland, Brisbane, 1.30pm - 6.00pm.

Join us for an afternoon of networking, drinks and canapés as we come together to raise much-needed funds for a remarkable Queensland charity making a real difference in the lives of children affected by domestic and family violence. In support of Zephyr Education Limited. Further information, and ticket sale visit <https://events.ntha.com.au/events/nationaltimberhardwareassociationntha/2273829>

RSVP: Monday 31 August 2026.

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: 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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Calls for INFM to be disallowed

FWCA says INFM risks are too great.

PART ONE of two-part feature. By STEVE DOBBYNS, FWCA

FOREST & Wood Communities Australia is calling on Federal Parliament to disallow the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative - Improved Forest Management in Multiple-use Public Native Forests) Methodology Determination 2026, warning that the method risks issuing carbon credits for shutting down sustainable timber production while shifting environmental, economic and emissions impacts elsewhere.

The Australian Government says the INFM method allows state governments to earn Australian Carbon Credit Units by voluntarily ceasing planned harvesting in defined areas of multiple-use public native forests that would otherwise be used for commercial forestry.

FWCA Chair Steve Dobbins said the method should be disallowed before any ACCUs are issued under it.

"Carbon credits should represent genuine climate benefit," Mr Dobbins said.

"They should not be used to financially reward governments for closing sustainable public native forestry while timber demand simply moves to imports, interstate supply chains or private landholders.

"That is not emissions reduction. That is displacement."

The Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee's (ERAC) own advice confirms that leakage, additionality and transparency were central concerns raised through consultation. The method was amended, but the amendments do not remove the central flaw: it still creates credits by removing timber production from public forests and assumes that displacement can be adequately accounted for.

ERAC's advice also confirms the original flat 5% indirect leakage



Tropical forest destruction near Sibiti, in the Lékoumou department of the Republic of the Congo, 300km west of Brazzaville. Image: CC, Verhody

deduction was replaced with project-level assessment by an independent qualified expert, but only within a possible deduction range of 0 to 40%.

FIGURES DON'T ADD UP

FWCA says that 40% leakage ceiling is difficult to reconcile with work by Venn et al. (2026) (click here to download), which analysed Australian solid wood production and trade data over the period 1996–97 to 2022–23.

Venn et al. found that reduced domestic native forest harvesting has been a structural driver of Australia's growing import dependency, with a long-run timber harvest leakage rate of 81.3%. The report also found that 86.8% of displaced demand was met by nations with elevated illegality-risk profiles, including hardwoods from Southeast Asia and the Congo Basin.

The authors were careful to note that their study did not directly estimate carbon leakage. However, given the

countries from which substitute products are being sourced, they concluded that the 81.3% timber harvest leakage rate is likely to represent a conservative proxy carbon credit discount until comparative embodied-carbon estimates are available.

"Venn et al. do not claim every displaced cubic metre carries the same carbon profile," Dobbins said.

"But they do show the real-world market response. When Australia cuts domestic native forest supply without reducing

demand, a very large proportion of that demand is replaced through imports. That means jobs, emissions risk and biodiversity pressure are not eliminated. They are exported.

"That international leakage estimate of 81.3% alone is more than double the INFM method's 40% cap, before interstate leakage or private native forestry displacement are properly accounted for."

FWCA says the contradiction is even more serious given advice provided directly to Venn et al. during discussions with ERAC.

"We understand Professor Karen Hussey, Chair of ERAC, clarified in a meeting with Tyron Venn that ERAC did not have to consider leakage to imports when assessing the method," Dobbins said.

"If that is correct, it exposes the hypocrisy at the heart of the INFM approval. ERAC says leakage was a key integrity concern and the method now includes a leakage assessment, yet the largest leakage pathway identified by Venn et al. — import substitution — was apparently outside the scope ERAC had to consider.

“THAT IS NOT ROBUST CARBON ACCOUNTING. IT IS A POLICY BLIND SPOT DRESSED UP AS INTEGRITY



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From P 8

"You cannot claim a carbon method is conservative while excluding the market response most likely to undermine the claimed abatement. That is not robust carbon accounting. It is a policy blind spot dressed up as integrity."

STATE LEAKAGE OVERLOOKED

FWCA says Venn et al.'s analysis may also understate the leakage risk for a state-based carbon project because it focuses on international market leakage and does not account for interstate displacement. The authors describe their paper's focus as international market leakage.

"That is critical for the INFM method," Dobbins said.

"If NSW locks up public native forest supply, the timber market can respond through imports, increased harvesting in other states, or increased pressure on private native forests."

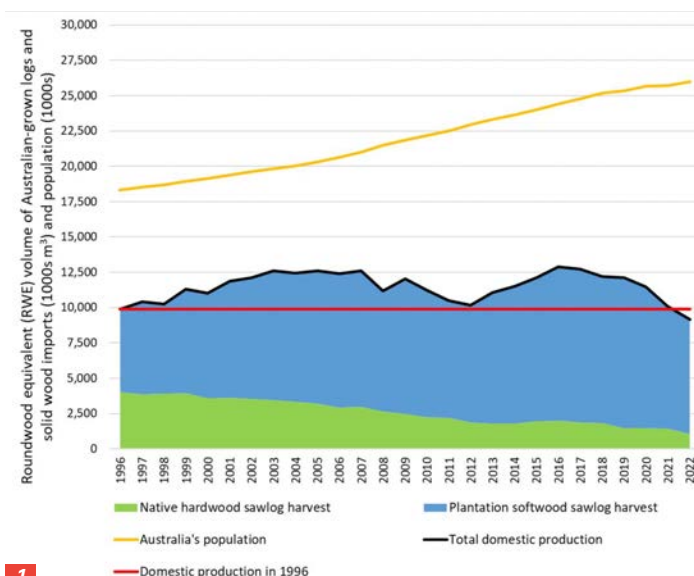
"We have already seen this in practice. ABC's *Four Corners* program, *Timber Turmoil*, criticised how Victoria's native forest closure shifted supply pressure across Bass Strait into Tasmania. That kind of interstate leakage is not captured by Venn et al.'s import analysis, and it is not properly resolved by the INFM method."

FWCA is also warning that the private native forestry safeguard is weakened by the lack of a reliable baseline.

ERAC says the method requires private native forestry harvesting data to be collected and published so private native forest leakage can be calculated reliably and transparently. It also says harvesting volumes from private native forests in the same jurisdiction will be monitored against historical baselines, with ACCU deductions where harvesting increases outside the project area.

"But what baseline?" Dobbins asked.

"For private native forestry, there is no comprehensive, transparent production



1/ Venn et al. shows that plantation softwood sawlog harvest has held fairly steady since 1996, while native forest timber had already declined by 75% in 2022, before the WA and Victorian bans. Image: supplied

2/ Some of the NSW hardwood timber millers whose business has been damaged or put at risk by the GKNP, thanks to the INFM. Image: NSW Nationals

baseline equivalent to public forest sustainable yield and wood supply records.

"Venn et al. note that while private native forest accounts for 89.6 million hectares nationally, there are no records about how much private native forest is managed by landholders for timber production. You cannot credibly deduct leakage against a baseline that does not properly exist."

Dobbins said the problem is even more acute in the Great Koala National Park footprint because the NSW Government's moratorium has already distorted the market.

"The Father's Day 2025 moratorium has already forced supply pressure onto private property," he said.

"Pentarch's State forest log supply was cut off by the NSW Government, and the company has been forced to shift its entire supply focus onto private property."

"That matters directly to the carbon

accounting. Any private native forestry baseline collected from that point forward is already contaminated by the policy shock."

"That means leakage could be normalised into the baseline before the carbon project is even assessed. The proponent cannot create the leakage problem, wait for the market to adjust, and then treat the adjusted private-property harvest level as business as usual."

FWCA says the INFM approval process has also failed to transparently consider the economic and social impacts of the method.

Under the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011, the Minister must have regard to whether any adverse environmental, economic or social impacts are likely to arise from the kind of project covered by a methodology determination.

ERAC's published advice records that it considered the Offsets Integrity Standards, 371 submissions and advice from the Clean Energy

Regulator. It also records that ERAC was not directed to have regard to any additional issues.

"What ERAC's published advice does not show is a transparent, quantified socio-economic assessment of the INFM method's impact on timber workers, contractors, mills, downstream businesses or regional communities," Dobbins said.

"That is extraordinary."

"The INFM is not an abstract carbon accounting exercise. It is a method designed to reward the permanent removal of timber supply from multiple-use public native forests. That has direct consequences for jobs, regional manufacturing, contractors, timber customers, private landholders, imports and community resilience."

Part two next week will look more closely at the GKNP's INFM pathway and the lingering impacts of the INFM. See story on page 13 of this issue for more on leakage problems in NSW.

New NSW SLATS data

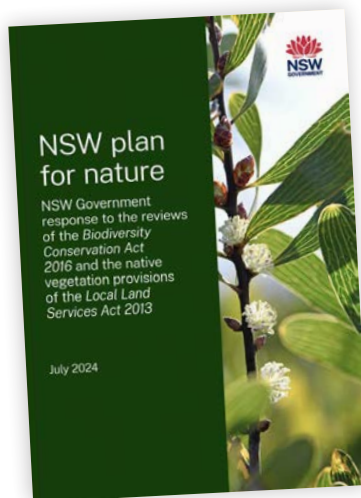
The report for 2024 was released last week and immediately misinterpreted.

THE latest NSW Statewide Landcover and Tree Study (SLATS) report was published last week, showing data on clearing of native vegetation for agriculture, infrastructure and forestry in 2024.

In 2024, a total of 24,103 hectares of native woody vegetation was cleared, which is 19% less than the 2018–2024 average of 29,800 hectares.

At least 57,190 hectares of native non-woody vegetation was cleared, 13% more than the 2018–2024 average of 50,700 hectares. This figure includes native and non-native vegetation. After showing a declining trend from 2020 to 2022, non-woody clearing has increased between 2022 and 2024.

Predictably, the report has been misinterpreted in some parts, with alarmist headlines of “rampant” clearing. However, the report records only vegetation loss and not gains. This results in an incomplete picture of the status of native vegetation, and of the conservation efforts of



Changes to the SLATS report to show net gain and loss were committed to in the NSW Plan for Nature. Image: supplied

landholders and others.

As the government’s guide to the report says, “Sustainable native forest harvesting is not land clearing.

“SLATS reports sustainable native

forest harvesting as clearing. Sustainable forestry operations require forest managers to regenerate the forest and the areas are not permanently cleared.”

This distinction was lost on *The Guardian*, which included native forestry alongside agriculture and infrastructure as a source of tree loss, taking much of their report from materials supplied by ‘conservation’ groups.

The NSW Government has committed (in the NSW Plan for Nature) to establishing monitoring and annual reporting of net change in woody vegetation, as a more complete picture of the status of native vegetation, capturing both loss and regrowth. Three pilot trials are underway, recording clearing, regrowth, and information on the type of regrowth and how it affects habitat and carbon accounting.

For the full NSW SLATS report, click [here](#). For the data interpretation guide, click [here](#).

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Elevating women's voices to support a more diverse forestry and timber sector

ACROSS Australia's forest and wood products sector, women are contributing deep expertise, leadership and lived experience through research, sustainability, Indigenous stewardship and industry practice. Three recent FWPA podcast conversations with Professor Tripti Singh, Tolita Davis-Angeles and Dr Penelope 'Pene' Mitchell highlight the breadth of that contribution and the importance of making women's stories more visible.

That visibility matters. FWPA's Diversity and Inclusion Survey shows that women represented 23% of the forest grower and timber processing workforce over the past three years, up from 21% in the previous three-year period. The same survey found women now represent an average of 29% of executive roles, up from 21%, pointing to gradual but important progress in leadership representation.

While the data shows momentum, it also reinforces that there is more work to do. Sharing the experiences of women already leading and contributing across the industry can help broaden perceptions of who belongs in forestry and timber.

THREE VOICES, THREE PATHWAYS

Professor Tripti Singh's story demonstrates the value of sustained research leadership. A globally recognised expert in timber durability and wood protection, Professor Singh has spent more than 20 years leading collaborative, multi-million-dollar research programs that have advanced understanding of timber performance, service life and resilience.

In sharing her career pathway, Tripti reflects on collaboration between researchers and industry, and what it means to build a career in a technical field where women have historically been under-represented. Her story



The podcast episodes share three different but equally successful pathways in the timber sector. Image: supplied

offers encouragement to early-career professionals while reinforcing the role women play in building the evidence base that supports the sector's future.

Tolita Davis-Angeles brings a different but equally important perspective. A Cobble-Cobble woman from the western Bunya Mountains in Queensland who grew up on Butchulla Country, Tolita's work is grounded in Indigenous leadership, caring for Country and stronger relationships between Traditional Owners and the forest and wood products sector.

As Chair of the Forest Stewardship Council Indigenous Working Group, Tolita highlights the role cultural knowledge can play in sustainable forest management. Her story expands the conversation about diversity beyond gender alone, reminding the sector that inclusion also means recognising different knowledge systems, lived experiences and forms of

“LEADERSHIP IN FORESTRY AND TIMBER IS NOT CONFINED TO ONE ROLE, DISCIPLINE OR BACKGROUND”

stewardship.

Dr Pene Mitchell's career has taken her through forestry, wood science and sustainability, with a focus on connecting research to practical industry outcomes. Her reflections point to the many pathways into the sector and the skills needed to bridge science, environmental

performance, circularity and communication.

Taken together, the three stories demonstrate that leadership in forestry and timber is not confined to one role, discipline or background. It can be found in laboratories, on Country, in research partnerships and in the everyday work of connecting knowledge with practice.

Elevating these voices is not simply about recognition. It shows students, early-career professionals and people from under-represented backgrounds that there are meaningful careers and leadership opportunities across forestry and timber.

The conversations with Professor Singh, Tolita Davis-Angeles and Dr Mitchell provide timely examples of the women already helping shape the future of the industry. Their experiences are a reminder that increasing diversity is central to building a stronger, more resilient and more representative forestry and timber sector.

To listen to their stories, click here for the Forest & Wood Products Australia Podcast.

Private timber concerns

Modelling finds only 17% of NSW private native forest fit for timber production.

NEW spatial modelling published in *Australian Forestry*, the peer-reviewed journal of Forestry Australia, finds that only a small share of the private native forest estate along the New South Wales coast and tablelands can support commercial timber production. Of the 3.6 million hectares assessed across 11,722 properties, just 0.6 million hectares, or 17%, is both available and commercially suitable.

The finding raises the question of leakage as debate continues over the future of the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) in north-east New South Wales. If private native forest cannot deliver at the same scale, where does the timber come from?

The research is led by spatial modeller Masoomah Alaibakhsh of the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, with co-author Nick Cameron of the North East New South Wales Forestry Hub. The team weighed more than 40 spatial datasets to rank every property on how well it could support timber production.

The model measured how much of each property could be harvested, how far timber would travel to a mill, how steep and rough the ground is, and the value of the species growing there. Forest that is protected, too rugged to work or too far from a mill was set aside.

What remained split heavily to the north. The northern private native forestry region held 0.5 million hectares, equal to 20% of its private forest, while the southern region held 0.1 million hectares, or 9%.

"Much of the existing assessed private native forest is not commercially available and suitable," Cameron said,

Figure 1. Assessment area, NSW Northern and Southern PNF code areas captured by LIDAR.

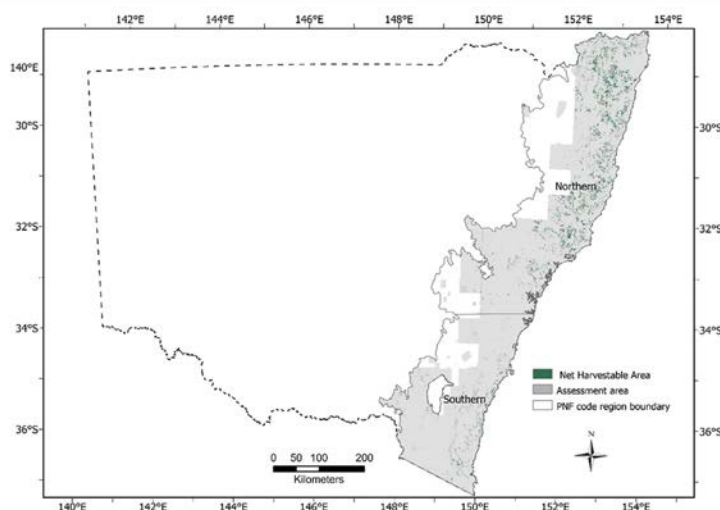


Figure 1 from the paper showing the assessment area. Image: courtesy Australian Forestry

pointing to small harvestable areas, low-value species, poor site quality and distance from mills.

Timber production in the north is more likely to be viable than in the south, with more large properties within reach of more mills. Properties in the south's lowest suitability class sit an average of 98 km from the nearest mill.

Even inside the workable 17%, timber values clustered in the middle, with nearly 62% of properties rated medium, 16.2% of properties classed as high and 21.7% of properties with a low suitability value. Only 0.2% met the very high suitability value. Two or more decades typically pass between light selective harvests, so much of the resource is regrowth not yet ready to cut.

The modelling lands as the New South Wales Government makes permanent the closure of 176,000 hectares of state forest in the Great

Koala National Park. The reserve ends timber harvesting across its extent.

"Not all wood products can be produced by the plantation industry," the research states, with Australian native timber production down nearly 70% over the past two decades. The authors note that hardwood plantations

remain far from a universal substitute for a country that already faces a wood shortage.

Blackbutt and spotted gum, valued for their durability and strength, supply the flooring and decking trade and the poles that carry the state's electricity network. Private native forests were routinely harvested for sawlogs, poles and girders, sleepers and fencing timber, the paper notes.

On the other side of the ledger, 83% of the assessed estate, five hectares in every six, is likely to be managed chiefly for environmental and social values rather than timber. Landholders, agencies and processors now have property-scale rankings to guide where limited harvesting effort is best directed.

The authors describe that output as the first comparison of ranked results across two discrete forest regions. The study concludes that the private estate cannot meet the expectations placed on it, with just 0.6 million hectares rated commercially workable and much of that still decades from harvest.

To read the full report in *Australian Forestry*, [click here](#).

Source: Forestry Australia

"MUCH OF THE EXISTING ASSESSED PRIVATE NATIVE FOREST IS NOT COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE"

Calls for modern homes

A leading think tank has released a plan for timber to play a starring role in MMC-delivered housing.

NO-ONE can be blamed for being a little tired of politics. Indeed, we're ignoring the shenanigans of the Victorian government entirely this week. But it's worth taking a moment for one report that was released by the Labor-aligned John Curtin Research Centre (JCRC) just in time for last week's ALP National

Conference, where it was launched by Federal Housing Minister Clare O'Neil.

Written by Lachlan Kerwood-McCall and Nick Dyrenfurth, *Manufactured Homes: A National Strategy for Solving Australia's Housing Crisis* calls for what it says on the label: manufactured homes using modern methods of construction (MMC).

As the executive summary makes clear, timber is an essential part of this plan, both for its environmental credentials and as a practical, adaptable and affordable material: "By way of example, manufactured housing expansion can be underpinned by the nation's substantial timber plantations, wood processing and emerging engineered wood product manufacturing sectors. Scaling up the timber-based building system engine-room that delivers the vast majority of Australian free-standing houses and townhouses to be the supply-side catalyst for MMC is a pathway to improved Australian housing outcomes."

The report is clear on the fact that housing concerns are supply side failures in this country, saying "Traditional site-based construction is fragmented, labour-intensive, exposed to weather and sequencing delays, and



1/ Dr Nick Dyrenfurth, co-author of the report, is executive director of the John Curtin Research Centre and one of Australia's leading political commentators, historians and public intellectuals.



2/ Co-author Lachlan Kerwood-McCall is an economist at JCRC and a Scholar Associate at the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis at the Australian National University. Images: courtesy JCRC

beset by weak productivity growth, insolvency risk, cost escalation, waste of resources, reliance on high carbon processes, and labour and skills shortages. The result is a housing system that cannot reliably deliver the homes families and governments fund, communities need or workers can afford."

But, as the report also notes, "Australia is the least manufacturing self-sufficient country in the OECD." After decades of decline, it will not be an easy task to ramp up the skills, infrastructure and supply chains required. Currently, manufactured housing is a niche sector in Australia, often tied to specialised design concepts such as Passivhaus. Less than 5% of homes in 2023 were built offsite for assembly, and there's no reason to believe that number has climbed substantially in the past three years.

Compare this to the post-War years when the population grew faster and immigration was at higher rates, but

prefab housing was an important part of the housing sector that kept homes affordable and abundant.

Kerwood-McCall and Dyrenfurth don't sugar-coat the difficulties. We've seen multiple offsite specialists come and go in Australia over the past decade: without guaranteed regular and ongoing contracts,

the capital costs, which are higher in Australia than in Europe or Japan where MMC has much broader uptake, become too high a barrier. Finance has also been a stumbling point here, with lenders unfamiliar with the higher upfront costs of MMC balking at the new model.

In some ways, the post-war success of manufactured housing has also proved to be a stumbling block. The idea of prefab equals lines of identical suburban fibro builds for many, and concerns about quality remain, despite the architectural excellence and design for manufacture and assembly (DfMA) philosophies underpinning the modern versions. The authors make it clear that Australian engineered wood products represent vital, attractive parts of the supply chain (which will free us from the uncertainty of imports), and call for government education programs showing the beauty – and efficiency – of contemporary manufactured homes.

Then there's the 'what we know' problem, which affects everything from builders unwilling to retrain, to certifiers nervous about new building methods and a lack of appropriate regulatory framework from councils, mortgage providers and insurers.

“AUSTRALIA IS THE LEAST MANUFACTURING SELF-SUFFICIENT COUNTRY IN THE OECD

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The authors outline a path forward. At its heart is government support, creating demand certainty through targeted procurement mandates and social and affordable housing pipelines, including Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) Round 3, Defence Housing Australia and MMC-applicable government-funded building construction.

Tax incentives, financing reform and the potential of Australia's superannuation funds to reap the rewards of a long-term investment in MMC are also covered, along with the potential of new Government Bonds and changes to regulatory and certification schemes to cope with the lack of on-site progress inspections (the building only being delivered to site at the end of construction and slotted together).

A large section of the report looks at the advantages of homes created through MMC, from superior energy efficiency and improved embodied carbon costs, through to higher comfort for residents and vastly reduced inconvenience for neighbours, who have to suffer through much shorter building



The Manufacturing Homes report shows a path forward to sustainable, affordable and faster prefabricated housing. Image: supplied

programs in their residential areas.

Alongside this are the advantages for builders and construction workers. Work is moved indoors for the majority of the building program. Instead of labourers only being able to leverage the skills of their hands, digital machine operating roles also open up for those who want them, extending their career in the face of ageing backs and knees. Mistakes are lessened and made easier to repair,

with less impact on the finished building, leading to fewer rectifications, as well as lower costs for worker injuries with the removal of the vast majority of work at height risk and much of the heavy lifting currently involved in construction.

The authors call for a staged roadmap towards a manufactured homes future. Phase 1 is this financial year and calls for legislative and regulatory changes to be made to set the groundwork for the MMC transition, as well as the Federal Government pulling the triggers available to it (mostly HAFF, Defence housing and non-residential builds) to procure MMC builds.

Phase 2, FY2027–28 to FY2028–29, calls for industry scale-up across the board, including forestry and timber product delivery, then Phase 3, from FY2029–30 onward, focuses on mainstreaming MMC.

It's a big plan, but it's also one that delivers homes, jobs, certainty and sustainability. [Click here to download a copy.](#)

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Accounting for Tasmania's native forestry

The economic, environmental and community benefits to the state are clear.

By DEAN KEARNEY, STT

ECONOMIST John Lawrence raises an important question about how Tasmania measures the full value of its public production forests. That discussion should consider not only accounting treatments and hypothetical land costs, but also the broader economic, environmental and community benefits delivered through the responsible management of our forests.

The claim that Sustainable Timber Tasmania's published financial profit is merely a "paper profit" overlooks the figures designed to show how the underlying business is actually performing.

In 2024-2025, STT recorded a \$7.5m increase in the value of its biological assets. It also separately reported an underlying net profit of \$0.8m, defined as operating revenue less operating expenditure and positive operating cash flow of \$1.8m. It paid an ordinary dividend to the state and has now recorded eight consecutive profitable results.

Since 2017, STT has paid \$30m to the state in dividends and made contributions to on-island processing funds to help the local sawmilling sector modernise its equipment.

Importantly, STT's accounts are prepared under Australian Accounting Standards, including the standard applying to biological assets. The forest valuation is undertaken by an independent specialist and examined by Audit Tasmania, which concluded that the 2024-2025 accounts presented a true and fair view of STT's financial performance, position and cash flows.

STT is happy to acknowledge that such accounting standards do not capture every social and environmental value provided by Tasmania's forests and it is reasonable to debate the limitations of the accounting process. However, STT is not using a valuation method of its own invention. We are applying the accounting rules required



A tiny fraction of Tasmania's native forest is available for harvesting, but the benefits to the state are huge. Image: Shutterstock/FiledIMAGE

for biological assets, which measure the value of the standing timber and are not designed to measure every economic, environmental and community benefit.

That distinction is important because valuing the standing timber separately does not mean the broader costs of managing the forest are ignored. STT's financial statements include contractor and freight costs, property management, local government rates, road depreciation, forest re-establishment, and fire prevention and suppression.

For example, whilst reporting a financial profit last financial year, STT also carried out maintenance on 3040km of existing roads, constructed 24km of new roads, conducted works on 5566ha of forest, sowed 100 million locally sourced seeds and achieved a 99.5% regeneration success rate across the areas assessed. STT also planted about half a million seedlings in restocking timber plantations that had been previously harvested.

The characterisation of STT as having "rent-free" access is similarly incomplete. STT is not a private company handed free land to exploit. It is a government business enterprise established under legislation to manage Permanent Timber Production Zone land for multiple users, while supporting economic growth and employment and supplying agreed volumes of timber.

It manages a forest-road network of more than 10,000km, providing access for communities, tourism, beekeepers, hunters, fishers, emergency services and other land managers. It also manages hundreds of leases, licences and easements, supports apiary sites, undertakes conservation, research programs, biodiversity outcomes, carbon storage and provides a trained statewide firefighting capability with about 16% of PTPZ, around 129,000ha, being managed purely for conservation.

The \$12m STT receives from government is transparently identified as payment for community service obligations: keeping public production land managed and accessible, undertaking fuel-reduction work, supporting fire prevention and detection, and helping suppress fires on non-production forests and adjoining land. That is not a concealed subsidy to log sales. It is payment for public services the state would still need to allocate should timber harvesting end.

The wider economic contribution of STT's forestry activities also matters. During 2024-2025, STT paid \$109m to 544 Tasmanian businesses, with 87% of its purchases made locally. About \$45m went to harvesting and haulage contractors. More than 1.2 million tonnes of forest products were harvested and transported for Tasmanian processing, including high-quality eucalypt sawlogs and special-species timbers.

Those figures represent regional Tasmanian businesses – including contractors, truck drivers, sawmill workers, engineers, mechanics, furniture makers, builders and small businesses.

Most importantly, value creation does not stop when a log leaves the forest, that is only the beginning. Once delivered, the value of the log and the number of people

Aviation fuel from forest waste

A NEW project backed by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) could turn forestry byproducts like sawdust and bark into sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), helping cut aircraft emissions while also supporting a new clean fuels industry in Australia.

The \$32 million in conditional funding will support HAMR Energy to conduct a Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) and other development activities for a proposed biomass-to-fuel supply chain across Victoria and South Australia. The project aims to convert forestry byproducts into renewable methanol, which can then be used as SAF, renewable diesel and other low-carbon fuel products.

SAF produced by the proposed facility could result in the displacement of 140 million litres of fossil jet fuel and abate approximately 330,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum and support the commercialisation of SAF production.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said this project could help accelerate Australia's emerging SAF industry: "Aviation is one of the most challenging sectors to decarbonise, particularly for long-haul flights where alternatives to liquid fuels remain limited. SAF offers a practical near-term pathway to reduce emissions from



Artist's impression of the completed SAF biomass-to-fuel facility. Image: courtesy HAMR Energy

aviation using existing aircraft and infrastructure."

HAMR Energy's Co-founder, David Stribley, said: "This funding is a significant milestone in Australia building globally competitive domestic SAF industry."

"Our projects bring together plantation forestry residues from the Green Triangle, Australian renewable energy and hydrogen, and proven methanol and refining technologies to produce lower-emissions aviation fuel at commercial scale."

ARENA's funding will be released over two stages with \$12.5 million available for the initial phase and the remaining \$19.5 million conditional on HAMR Energy securing the necessary co-funding to commence detailed FEED. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$92 million across three facilities, located in Victoria and South Australia. HAMR Energy expects more than 200 ongoing jobs will be

created, with hundreds more during construction.

The forestry byproducts used by the project will be sourced from plantation owners in the Green Triangle region that meet Australia's stringent certification schemes for forestry management. Creating a new market for these materials could provide plantation owners with an additional revenue stream.

Stribley noted that the funding is a significant milestone in Australia building globally competitive domestic SAF industry: "The project has the potential to strengthen Australia's fuel security, reduce aviation emissions and create skilled jobs across construction, engineering, manufacturing and regional supply chains."

Announcing the funding, Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen said: "Australia has an abundant supply of forest waste, and turning it into fuel for hard-to-abate sectors like aviation would be a win for emissions, Australian industry and regional jobs."

"Projects like this can help strengthen Australia's long-term fuel resilience by supporting more domestic fuel production and a more diverse fuel supply, making us more resilient to global energy shocks."



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employed continues to grow as it moves through local processing, manufacturing, construction, retail spending, wages and household incomes.

None of this means native forestry should be beyond scrutiny. STT must keep improving efficiency, transparency, forest practices

and environmental outcomes. It must account for carbon, biodiversity, cultural values, water, recreation and future generations, while meeting supply commitments and maintaining financial discipline.

The evidence suggests Tasmania is not carrying a cost burden from public production forestry. Through employment, processing, public land management,

fire protection, regional investment, community access and dividend returns to the state, Tasmania is receiving substantial value from its forest industry.

Dean Kearney is the chief executive of Sustainable Timber Tasmania. This opinion piece first appeared in the Mercury newspaper and is reprinted with the author's permission.

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