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ISSUE 910 // 6 August 2026

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INFM Special: experts highlight the ACCU's flaws

COVER STORY P 5



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ABC clears the ABC

The ABC's investigation into *Four Corners'* Timber Turmoil has found no breach.

By **DONYALE HARRISON**

THE kids have a great term for it: weaksauce. It's an underwhelming, poor-quality result, like the ABC's Ombudsman Investigation Report into *Four Corners'* 'Timber Turmoil' episode that was released on Tuesday.

The report found no breach of ABC standards, and it's almost as frustrating as the original program.

In response to the complaint the program was made within an anti-native forestry framing, the *Four Corners* team justified it by saying that native timber forestry wasn't popular, as evidenced by politicians banning it, and therefore the framing wasn't biased. Classic circular argument.

In response to complaints the only scientist quoted was the anti-native forestry Professor David Lindenmayer, the report said: "Tasmanian Resources Minister Felix Ellis referred to native forestry being conducted on 'sustainable timber-managed land', while industry representative James Neville-Smith spoke to 'the sustainability and the practices that we adopt here in Australia'. The program therefore alerted viewers to the existence of a contrary position



Four Corners' Timber Turmoil episode received complaints but has been cleared of breaching standards. Image: supplied

and did not suggest that Professor Lindenmayer's views were universally accepted."

Yes, because a politician and a salesman obviously represent the same level of scientific authority as a professor; frankly, I'm embarrassed I had to have this pointed out to me.

In response to complaints that contractual payments to ASH were misrepresented as 'compensation', the report says: "We observe that Mr Hurley expressly disputed the characterisation of much of the financial assistance as 'compensation', describing it instead as contractual failure-to-supply payments arising from the Victorian Government's inability to deliver agreed timber volumes. Importantly, this distinction

was conveyed to viewers. The presenter stated that most of the \$49 million paid over three years comprised payments the government was legally obliged to make, and Mr Hurley was shown explaining that the payments were, in his view, penalties rather than compensation."

The distinction was conveyed to viewers by ASH's Vince Hurley, not by the ABC. And it was not 'his view', it was fact.

The report describes five Forestry interviewees balanced with six environmentalists, but neglects to mention that two of the former were shown for seconds, being hauled over the coals in a committee hearing, while the latter group enjoyed over two thirds of the run time of the program.

Four Corners also told the Ombudsman that: "A background pre-interview was arranged but cancelled by AFPA", however AFPA's acting CEO Richard Hyett reported that *Four Corners* revoked AFPA's opportunity for an industry response (see Enews #904).

You can read the report for yourself: [click here](#), but do check your blood pressure first.

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New EGM for GTFIH

Johan Revalk will take the reins at the Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub.

THE Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub (GTFIH) has appointed Johan Revalk as its new executive general manager, succeeding Tony Wright, who will retire from full-time work on 14 August 2026 after three years leading the Hub.

Revalk commenced in the role on 3 August 2026 and will work alongside Wright during a short transition period.

A South Australian lawyer and former journalist with The Advertiser, Revalk has held a number of senior leadership roles, including as chief executive of an industry association.

The Chair of GTFIH, Dr Ruth Schubert, said the appointment marked an important and well-planned leadership transition for the organisation.

"On behalf of the Board, I am very pleased to welcome Johan to the Hub," Dr Schubert said.

"Johan joins the Hub at an important time. He will work with the Board, members and partners to build on the strong momentum across industry development, workforce, research and policy.

"His experience across law, journalism and senior organisational leadership, including as chief executive of an industry association, brings a valuable combination of governance, communication and stakeholder engagement skills to the role.

"The transition period will provide continuity for the Hub's members, funding partners and stakeholders, while allowing Johan to gain the benefit of Tony's knowledge and established relationships."

Revalk said he was honoured to be appointed and looked forward to working with the Hub's members and partners.

"I am keen to get out across the Green Triangle, meet the people and businesses that drive the industry, and develop a strong understanding of the region's opportunities and challenges," he said.

"I am excited by the opportunities in forestry and timber manufacturing.



1



2

1/ After three years of successfully leading the Hub, Tony Wright is retiring from full-time employment. Image: courtesy GTFIH

2/ Johan Revalk with daughter Nava. Image: Johan Revalk/LinkedIn

The industry is nationally vital, and the Hub has an important role in bringing industry, government, researchers and communities together around practical opportunities.

"I look forward to building on the strong foundation established by the Board, Tony and the Hub team, and to supporting the industry's sustainable growth, competitiveness and contribution to the region."

Dr Schubert thanked Tony Wright, saying he had made an important contribution to the Hub and the broader Green Triangle region. "Tony has brought strategic thinking, governance experience, regional commitment and a strong ability to work across industry, government and community," she said. "During Tony's tenure, the Hub strengthened its role as a trusted regional industry body, delivering practical research, supporting policy development and helping sustain the Green Triangle's position as one of Australia's most important forestry and wood fibre regions.

"A major recent milestone was the completion of the Hardwood Manufacturing Hub Feasibility Study [see Enews #909]...

"That work formed part of a staged pathway to capture more value from the region's plantation resources. A critical earlier step was the ATMAC-funded Fast Start Commercialisation Trial, which supported the development, market testing and creation of a new Australian-made plantation hardwood engineered

wood product, Blue Gum GLT.

"The commercialisation work directly informed the feasibility study and the Australian Forest and Wood Innovations Precinct Project, helping move the opportunity from analysis and technical development towards future investment and manufacturing."

Wright said he was proud of the Hub's work, pleased to welcome Revalk and optimistic about the region's future. "The Green Triangle has always been home for me. I am originally from Kingston, and I understand how important regional industries are to the prosperity and identity of our communities," he said.

"I am proud that the Hub has helped connect industry strategy, government policy and practical delivery in ways that are creating real opportunities for the region.

"The hardwood manufacturing work, the Precinct Project, the Forestry Centre of Excellence, new education and training pathways, our workforce development strategy and major private-sector investments are coming together. The Hub is in a strong position, and I am excited to see what happens next."

Dr Schubert acknowledged Wright's contribution to the Forestry Centre of Excellence as well as other local groups.

"On behalf of the Board, I thank Tony for his leadership and contribution, wish him every success in retirement from full-time work and warmly welcome Johan as the Hub's new executive general manager," she said.

Forestry Australia scholarships

Early-career professionals and Indigenous Australians are invited to apply.

FORESTRY Australia's 2026 Symposium is already shaping up to be an unmissable event, with a long list of expert and insider speakers and workshops around the theme 'The forestry story: Strategies for improved awareness, social licence and effective engagement'.

Now, it's also more accessible for early-career professionals and Indigenous Australians, with five scholarship opportunities available to attend the event this October in Canberra, thanks to Forestry Australia's Forestry Scholarship Fund and the Australian Forest and Wood Innovations Centre for Climate-Smart Forestry (AFWI CCSF).

The scholarships are open to both Forestry Australia members and non-members, and Forestry Australia's CEO Jacquie Martin asked that the message be spread as widely as possible.

There are three **Early-Career Scholarships** available. These are designed to support emerging forestry practitioners,

researchers and students to develop their knowledge, professional networks and connection with the wider forestry sector.

Applications are open to:

- Early-career professionals working in forestry, forest management, natural resource management or a related field; or
- Early-career researchers working in forestry or natural resource management; or
- Higher degree research students undertaking relevant forestry or natural resource management research.

Applicants are required to be:

- Australian citizens or permanent residents;
- Interested in developing their forestry knowledge and professional networks
- Able to demonstrate an interest in supporting sustainable and healthy forests, communities and rural landscapes.

Each scholarship includes:

- Registration for Forestry Australia's 2026 Symposium, valued at \$875
- Up to \$1,500 towards travel, accommodation and other reasonable expenses associated with attending the Symposium.

Click here for more information and to download the Early-Career Scholarship application form.

There are also two **Indigenous Australian Scholarships**. These are intended to support Indigenous Australians to

participate in the Symposium, share knowledge and strengthen connections across forestry, community and natural resource management.

Applications are open to Indigenous Australians who:

- Are studying or working in forestry or a related field;
- Are associated with a community or organisation connected to the forestry sector;
- Would benefit from developing their forestry knowledge and networks; and
- Have an interest in supporting sustainable and healthy forests, communities and rural landscapes.

Each scholarship includes:

- Registration for Forestry Australia's 2026 Symposium, valued at \$875
- Approximately \$2,500 towards travel, accommodation and other reasonable attendance expenses.

Please note that additional funding may be considered where carer support is required or where travel arrangements are particularly complex. Applicants are encouraged to include all anticipated costs needed to make their attendance possible.

Click here for more information and to download the Indigenous Australian Scholarship application form.

Applications close: COB Monday 31 August 2026.

Completed application forms and all supporting documents should be submitted as one document to admin@forestry.org.au.

The Symposium will be held 7–9 October at the Rex Hotel in Canberra, visit www.forestryconference.com.au for more information.

Successful scholarship recipients will also be required to attend the Future Foresters Initiative function on Tuesday 6 October 2026.



Tolita Davis-Angeles of Gandan Yarnings Consultancy will be leading one of the symposium's Thursday breakout sessions. Image: courtesy Gandan Yarnings



Carbon risk

Forestry Australia warns the new forest carbon method risks millions of low-integrity credits.

FORESTRY Australia is raising serious concerns about the new Improved Native Forest Management in Multiple-use Public Native Forests Method (INFM Method), after technical analysis by its forest carbon experts identified material flaws that could systematically, and significantly, overstate carbon abatement.

Analysis by Forestry Australia's forest carbon experts indicates the INFM Method could potentially over-credit projects by 40 to 100 per cent, even before the full effects of leakage and carbon stored in harvested wood products are taken into account. Forestry Australia President Dr Michelle Freeman said the findings raise serious concerns about whether credits issued under the INFM Method would represent genuine climate benefit.

"There are fundamental problems with this Method. Its prescribed accounting and modelling framework is structurally biased towards issuing more carbon credits than the genuine climate benefit achieved," Dr Freeman said.

"Forestry Australia supports credible investment in forest carbon and does



In 2025, NSW Premier Chris Minns toured many of the hardwood mills he has since cut supply to as part of planning for the Great Koala National Park, which is funded by the INFM. Image: courtesy Forestry Australia

not dispute that avoiding native forest harvesting can generate genuine abatement in some circumstances. But every ACCU issued must represent a real, additional and accurately measured tonne of emissions reduction."

"That is why the maths must add up." Dr Freeman said.

“THESE ARE NOT MARGINAL DIFFERENCES; THEY ARE MATERIAL AND CUMULATIVE PROBLEMS

CORE PROBLEMS

Forestry Australia's assessment identifies three central problems:

The 15-year accounting period is too short: This is significantly shorter than the periods commonly used in forest carbon accounting; for example, the Plantation Forestry Method uses a 100-year accounting period. While harvesting causes an initial loss of forest carbon, regrowth captures carbon over many decades. Ending the accounting after 15 years excludes much of this regrowth, making the baseline appear to store less carbon

and inflating the estimated carbon benefit of the Method.

The accounting structure over-credits projects upfront and relies on future deductions: The INFM Method over-credits projects up front. Later reporting periods then deduct some of the earlier credits as regrowth occurs to claw back some of what was over-credited. The appearance of continuing carbon benefit therefore depends on repeatedly adding new areas; if that flow slows or stops, the underlying shortfall becomes visible.

Cont P 6

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Responsible Wood
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From P 5

FullCAM is applied incorrectly: The Method prescribes clearfall harvesting assumptions to be implemented in FullCAM, the Australian Government's tool for estimating greenhouse gas emissions and carbon stored in forests and land. Given the vast majority of native forest harvesting in Australia is implemented as selective or partial harvest, the INFM Method adopts an approach that does not reflect on-ground outcomes and is inconsistent with the settings used in Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. This misapplication of the model in FullCAM exaggerates the difference between the project and baseline forests and inflates the estimated carbon benefit.

Forestry Australia's testing indicates that correcting the short accounting-window issue alone could reduce estimated abatement by more than 40%. Correcting the FullCAM modelling could reduce estimated abatement by more than 50%.

"These are not marginal differences arising from professional judgement. They are material and cumulative problems embedded in the Method's prescribed calculations," Dr Freeman said.

Millions of ACCUs could be issued without a genuine carbon benefit.

The consequences could be significant because ACCUs generated under the Method may be used to offset real greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the economy.

"If the Method overstates the carbon benefits achieved, emissions offset through the purchase of ACCUs will not be balanced by an equivalent climate benefit. That weakens confidence in the ACCU Scheme, makes it harder for Australia to genuinely meet its emissions-reduction targets and means the Safeguard Mechanism will not work as intended."

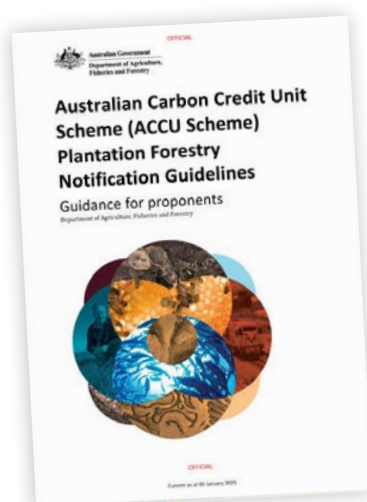
IMAGINARY ACCUS

New South Wales has promoted that it could generate approximately 22 million ACCUs over 15 years by ending



Dr Michelle Freeman has outlined Forestry Australia's case against the INFM and is calling on the Federal Government to act on the issues.

Image: courtesy Forestry Australia



The Plantation Forestry Method for ACCUs mandates a 100-year accounting period, as opposed to the INFM's 15-year period. Image: supplied

timber harvesting in relevant public native forests. If the Method overstates abatement by around half, approximately 11 million ACCUs could be issued beyond the genuine carbon benefit achieved.

Forestry Australia raised its concerns more than 12 months ago and repeatedly requested representative FullCAM files, modelling assumptions and sufficient technical detail to independently reproduce and test the claimed abatement outcomes. These materials have not been publicly released by the proponent, and material changes introduced by the proponent after consultation were not exposed to further independent testing.

"A method with the potential to materially affect Australia's carbon market should be transparent, reproducible and scientifically defensible. This is what is expected of a high-integrity ACCU Scheme method, yet the

INFM Method has not met this bar," Dr Freeman said.

Forestry Australia has also identified broader integrity risks relating to leakage, additionality and double counting. The Method caps indirect leakage at 40% even where an independent assessment might find a higher rate. Furthermore, it does not provide sufficient safeguards to objectively demonstrate that harvesting reductions would not have occurred anyway. In addition, it creates a risk that state governments could generate and sell ACCUs while also counting the same emissions reductions towards their own reporting and targets.

"In raising these concerns, Forestry Australia is seeking to safeguard the ACCU Scheme, not undermine it. The fastest way to damage confidence in a carbon market is to issue more abatement than is really there and try to resolve the problem later. It is far better to address it openly now," Dr Freeman said.

Based on the evidence currently available, Forestry Australia considers that the INFM Method should not be relied upon for ACCU issuance until its accounting and modelling problems have been resolved. The organisation says that it remains ready to provide technical expertise to government and supports the development of credible carbon methods that reward genuine improvements in forest management, health and resilience across all forest types and land tenures.

In addition to its responses to the NSW government and ERAC on the INFM, Forestry Australia has now produced a Briefing Note outlining its issues with the INFM in an accessible format. See below for links to these documents.

CONCERNS SHARED

AFPA has echoed the concerns raised by Forestry Australia over the INFM, warning it undermines the integrity and credibility of Australia's carbon market.

AFPA Acting CEO Richard Hyett said the alarming independent research reinforced concerns the sustainable forest products industry had been raising for more than 18 months.

"As we have highlighted on several occasions, this method does not meet the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) scheme's own requirements for integrity,

On the cover: Nick Cameron, manager of the North East NSW Forestry Hub, with industry members in the region that will be affected by the Great Koala National Park, a project dependent on the INFM (See pages 8 and 10 in this issue). Image: courtesy Forestry Australia

Cont P 8

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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The friendless ACCU

Even environmental campaigners aren't happy with the INFM.

YOU might be forgiven for thinking that at least the people who have argued against native timber harvesting would be happy with the INFM. Not so.

Dr Richard Denniss, co-CEO of the Australia Institute, which has long argued for the end of native timber forestry in Australia, has called the Minns Government “deeply fraudulent” and said that it was orchestrating “one of the bigger environmental frauds in Australian history” by using a new carbon credits method to fund the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) on the Institute’s What’s The Point? podcast.

“They’ve been promising to do this for over a decade,” said Dr Denniss, referring to the GKNP.

“But then in the last year or so, the New South Wales government started to say, ‘Ah, what I meant to say was I might set up a national park but only if I get some sweet, juicy carbon credit cash from the federal government.’”

Denniss points out multiple issues with the INFM, particularly with respect to the GKNP. The first is the fact the park had been a political promise for



Richard Denniss spoke against the INFM being used to ‘fund’ the GKNP on the Australia Institute’s podcast. Image: supplied

NSW Labor since 2015, but no action was taken until there was a possibility of using the park as a source of revenue.

“What a carbon offset is, is the idea that ‘it’s okay for me to pollute. It’s okay for me to do harm to the environment because you did something good. So, your good thing offsets my bad thing,’” he explained.

“So, the New South Wales government is going to get cash from Woodside, Santos, other big fossil fuel producers,

in exchange for protecting some trees that they committed to protecting over a decade ago.”

Denniss added: “In principle, carbon credits can be okay; I don’t think offsets are ever okay.

“But this Great Koala National Park is both bad credits because nothing extra is happening, and those bad credits are going to be used to justify a bad activity – the expansion of carbon pollution.”

You can listen to the full podcast by clicking here.

In a statement last Wednesday, NSW Minister for the Environment, Penny Sharpe announced: “ACCUs from the Great Koala National Park will not be able to be sold to coal and gas projects.

“Any revenue from the GKNP ACCUs will help to fund ongoing land management of the Great Koala National Park.”

Adam Bandt, chief executive of the Australian Conservation Foundation, suggested that this needed to be made a broader policy, saying that coal and gas projects should not be able to access carbon offsets that might enable their continued expansion and instead must be phased out.

“The answer is not more offsets, it’s no new coal and gas,” Bandt said.

From P 6

transparency or additionality,” Hyett said.

“The decision to register the method clearly prioritised politics over science and will damage public confidence in the integrity and transparency of the scheme.”

Hyett said the method would generate carbon credits without delivering

genuine additional emissions reductions and relied on science that had been challenged by independent experts and government scientists.

“We are very concerned the new method could flood the market with low-integrity ACCUs, undermining confidence in legitimate carbon projects and weakening investment in genuine climate action,” he said.

“Australia’s carbon credit scheme is designed to encourage real carbon abatement and high-integrity environmental outcomes, and it’s important the scheme remains focused on delivering genuine emissions reductions rather than being used to retrospectively fund policy decisions.

“Our carbon credit scheme is a critical part of Australia’s framework to meet net zero ambitions and it’s vital that its integrity is maintained to deliver genuine carbon abatement.”

To download Forestry Australia’s Briefing Note on the INFM, click here. To download its Response to the NSW Government on the proposed Improved Native Forest Management in Multiple-use Public Native Forests Method (INFM Method), July 2025, click here, and to download its Response to the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee (ERAC) on the proposed Improved Native Forest Management in Multiple-use Public Native Forests Method (INFM Method), January 2026, click here.

“FORESTRY AUSTRALIA IS SEEKING TO SAFEGUARD THE ACCU SCHEME, NOT UNDERMINE IT



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GKNP figures flawed

In the second part of this feature, FWCA outlines the economic failures of the INFM replacing native timber harvesting in the GKNP area.

By **STEVE DOBBYNS, FWCA**

LAST Wednesday, NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe submitted the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) project to the Clean Energy Regulator for approval, saying: "The project must be approved before the NSW Government can move to legislate the Park."

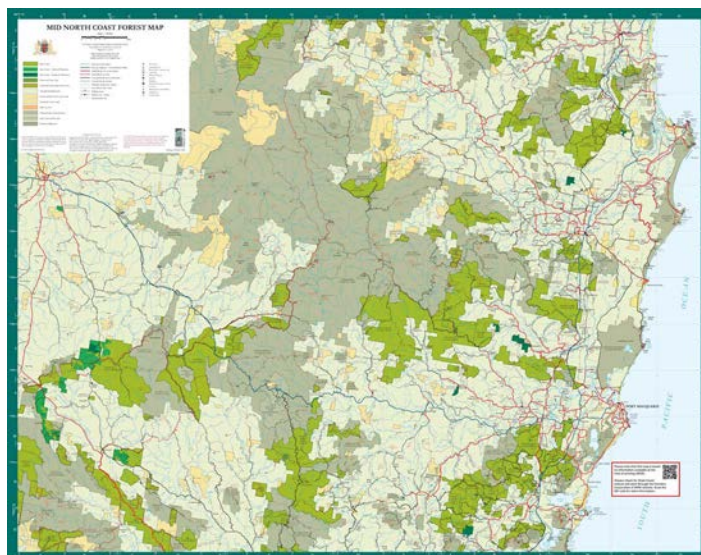
The GKNP depends on the Regulator approving Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) under the INFM. Minister Sharpe says "the NSW Government will prioritise these ACCUs for targeted manufacturing industries in NSW. This will help to support crucial NSW industries to transition into the future and maintain vital jobs."

However, FWCA disputes the NSW Government's claims underlying this ACCU, particularly that the GKNP moratorium and INFM pathway only affect six timber mills and approximately 300 jobs.

The NSW Government has stated that the proposed Great Koala National Park will reserve 176,000 hectares of State forest, that a temporary moratorium on timber harvesting commenced on 8 September 2025, and that the moratorium will affect "Six out of more than 25 timber mills in the region and approximately 300 jobs".

FWCA chairman Steve Dobbyns said, "The six mills and 300 jobs figure is not a serious socio-economic assessment.

"It is a narrow political framing of the immediate damage. It does not properly account for harvesting contractors, haulage operators, roading contractors, mechanics, private native forestry operators, downstream manufacturers, wholesalers, builders, fencing suppliers, firewood operators, farm and infrastructure users, or the regional communities built around those



The Mid North Coast Forest Map covers the areas around Kempsey, Wauchope, Port Macquarie and Walcha, showing all regularly maintained roads and trails, walking tracks, recreation areas and lookouts. FWCA asks how these will be maintained under the GKNP. Image: courtesy of Forestry Corporation of NSW

supply chains."

The EY Economic Contribution Study of the NSW hardwood timber industry (click here to download) found that the NSW hardwood timber industry contributed \$2.9 billion in gross revenue, \$1.1 billion in gross value added and supported 8900 full-time equivalent jobs across NSW in its reference financial year 2021–22. In North East NSW alone, the industry contributed \$1.84 billion in gross revenue, \$700 million in gross value added and supported 5700 full-time equivalent jobs.

EY also found the industry's impact flows beyond direct harvesting, supplying and servicing downstream sectors including construction, transport and manufacturing. The report notes that current reporting generally focuses on direct harvesting activities, rather than the broader flow-on impacts of the hardwood timber industry.

"The North Coast hardwood industry is not just six mills," Dobbyns said. "It is an integrated regional supply chain.

"Over the INFM's 15-year crediting period, the North East NSW hardwood

industry represents a \$10.5 billion regional economic base. Over the 100-year permanence period, it represents a \$70 billion economic base.

"That does not mean every dollar disappears, but it absolutely proves the NSW Government's 'six mills and 300 jobs' line is grossly inadequate as a measure of the economic and social impacts at stake.

"You cannot satisfy the requirement to consider adverse economic and social impacts by relying on a slogan, a transition grant program, or a narrow count of directly affected mills."

FWCA says the economics of the INFM are even harder to justify when the 15-year crediting period is compared with the 100-year permanence obligation.

ERAC's advice (click here and select Project timeframes) confirms INFM projects have a 15-year crediting period, while permanence obligations run for 100 years.

"That means the NSW Government can receive carbon-credit income for 15 years, but the public is left with the management obligation for the remaining 85 years," Dobbyns said.

"Who pays for fire management, roads, weeds, pests, compliance, visitor infrastructure, cultural heritage management and ongoing administration after the carbon-credit income stops?

"The answer is obvious: taxpayers.

"That is not a sustainable economic model. It is the creation of an intergenerational public liability. The State would be trading a renewable, productive, regionally embedded timber economy

From P 10

for 15 years of carbon-credit income, then leaving future taxpayers to fund the remaining 85 years of management.”

“How is that rational economic or social responsibility?”

“You cannot claim to have considered adverse economic and social impacts if you ignore both sides of the ledger: the public cost of managing locked-up forests for a century, and the economic activity the timber industry would have generated over that same period.”

FWCA says the additionality question also remains unresolved (see Enews #909).

ERAC acknowledged concern about the NSW Government’s pre-election commitment to establish the GKNP in a letter written to The Hon Josh Wilson MP on 5 June this year (click here to download), but accepted that it was reasonable for a state government to pursue an ACCU Scheme project to provide the means to deliver an election commitment.

“If the policy commitment already existed, and the moratorium has already

been imposed, the public deserves a clear explanation of what is genuinely additional and what is simply being monetised after the fact,” Dobbyns said.

FWCA is calling on Federal Parliament to disallow the INFM Determination and prevent ACCUs being issued under the method until there has been an independent review of leakage accounting, including import substitution, inter-State displacement, private native forestry baseline integrity, the effect of pre-existing moratoria, the full socio-economic cost to industry and regional communities, and the 85-year taxpayer liability created after carbon-credit income stops.

“Australia needs honest carbon accounting, sustainable domestic timber production and active, science-based forest management,” Mr Dobbyns said.



1/ **FWCA's Steve Dobbyns at work in his job as a forestry consultant.** Image: courtesy Steve Dobbyns



2/ **NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe.** Image: CC/JoshCrawfo

“What it does not need is a carbon-credit mechanism that locks up public timber resources for 100 years while pushing the impacts onto private landholders, other states, countries with weaker forest governance and future taxpayers.

“If the carbon benefit cannot survive proper leakage analysis, and the method cannot survive a proper socio-economic assessment, it should not be credited.

“That is why this instrument should be disallowed.”

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Resilient connections

New research coming out of the University of Auckland provides a promising solution for modular CLT builds in earthquake-prone regions.

If you keep abreast of engineering news, you might have seen reports about a successful test of a new modular timber building system at the University of Auckland.

The team, led by Dr Ashkan Hashemi and Professor Pierre Quenneville, together with PhD student Rajnil Lal, tested a two-storey structure made from cross-laminated timber (CLT) modules, with the weight of a third storey simulated on top. These were joined with novel connectors that allow the structure to move in a controlled way during an earthquake, reducing the forces that typically cause damage before returning the building to its original position.

During the public test, the building was subjected to a full simulated earthquake in front of 60 industry professionals – many of whom would have lived through such events in real life in their seismically active country.

Before this, over several weeks, the team ran the structure through simulations based on real earthquake records, including both horizontal shaking and twisting motions to capture the complex forces buildings experience during major seismic events, with over 100 strong shakes in total.

The building remained stable throughout the testing sequence, with no damage found in the main timber elements, something the guests were able to see for themselves on the demonstration day.

We spoke with Dr Hashemi about the work and its implications.



1/ The testing structure at the University of Auckland.



2/ The University of Auckland engineering team behind the connectors. All images: courtesy University of Auckland

MEETING NEEDS

"The decision to focus on the connector system came out of both research experience and industry need," says Dr Hashemi.

"From the research side, our team has been working for several years on low-damage seismic systems for timber structures, including resilient walls, braces and energy-dissipating connections. From the industry side, there is growing interest in modular and prefabricated mass timber construction because it can reduce construction time, improve quality control and support lower-carbon building solutions."

He notes that in high-seismic regions such as New Zealand, the connections between modules and storeys are a critical challenge.

"The question is not simply whether CLT panels are strong enough, but how the building accommodates earthquake movement without concentrating damage in the main structure," Dr Hashemi says.

"That led us to focus on a resilient inter-storey connection system. The idea was to allow controlled movement between

adjacent levels of the building during an earthquake, rather than rigidly tying everything together. This helps reduce force transfer into the primary timber structure, dissipate earthquake energy and bring the building back close to its original position after shaking stops."

In 2025, Dr Hashemi demonstrated another

resilient CLT structure to industry, which investigated different structural concepts.

"The earlier full-scale CLT testing focused on resilient mass timber structural systems, including rocking walls and tension-based bracing as lateral load-resisting systems," he says. "That work demonstrated the potential for mass timber buildings to go beyond life safety and target low-damage performance after major earthquakes."

"The more recent modular CLT shake-table test built on that broader research direction but focused on a different and very important challenge: how to make modular timber buildings work in high-seismic regions. In modular buildings, the connections between floors, walls and modules become especially important. This project therefore focused on a resilient inter-storey connection system that can safely isolate adjacent storeys, allow controlled movement, dissipate energy and re-centre the building after earthquake shaking."

In the aftermath of the Christchurch

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From P 12

Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011, thousands of homes were demolished due to damage, along with most of the commercial core of the city. These earthquakes had a major influence on the direction of seismic engineering research in New Zealand.

"They showed very clearly that life safety alone is not enough," Dr Hashemi says. "Many buildings protected occupants but were still badly damaged, difficult to repair, or ultimately demolished. That experience shifted attention toward low-damage design, reparability, downtime and post-earthquake functionality.

"Our research sits directly within that broader shift. The goal is to develop buildings that not only protect lives during earthquakes, but are also easier to inspect, repair and return to service afterwards."

While the system being trialled is a long way from being complete, the prospective gains are significant. Immediately after the Christchurch earthquakes, timber was proposed as a solution across much of the city, including a potential rebuild for the Anglican cathedral. However, steel framing was the dominant material actually used for most larger structures, with timber lateral-force-resisting systems appearing in only a small minority.

Dr Hashemi says, "If a mature version of this technology had been available a decade ago, its potential advantages would have been clear: greater confidence in modular timber buildings in seismic regions, reduced damage to primary structural components, faster post-earthquake recovery and a stronger case for low-carbon construction in multi-storey buildings."

WHY CONNECTORS?

The earlier research reinforced an important lesson: in low-damage timber buildings, the overall performance is often governed not only by the timber panels themselves, but by the way forces are transferred through the connections and energy-dissipating components.

"That naturally led to a stronger focus on connectors," Dr Hashemi said.



Christchurch's Colombo Street after the 2011 earthquake. The city's masonry buildings were particularly hard hit. Image: CC/Schwede66

"In modular construction, this is even more important because the building is assembled from prefabricated units. If the connection system can be made robust, repeatable and compatible with off-site fabrication, it has the potential to improve both seismic performance and buildability."

Typically, modular timber construction is attractive to developers because its repeatability leads to high-quality results with significant economies of scale. While Dr Hashemi emphasises that questions of economy or ease of build will need significantly more work before market adoption, he says, "What we can say is that targeting the inter-storey connection is a highly effective engineering strategy because it allows movement and energy dissipation to be concentrated in specially designed components, rather than forcing damage into the primary timber structure.

"Compared with post-tensioned timber systems, the key difference is the design philosophy and application. Post-tensioned timber technologies have been very important in the development of low-damage timber construction, particularly for rocking wall systems. Our system is specifically tailored to modular or platform-type CLT construction, where the aim is to introduce controlled isolation between storeys or modules while maintaining self-centring behaviour.

"It is not necessarily a replacement for post-tensioning in all applications, but it provides another (and better for modular construction) pathway for achieving low-damage performance in modular timber buildings."

The earthquake testing successfully demonstrated the proof of concept for the system, which behaved as intended under demanding earthquake loading, protecting

the primary timber structure while allowing controlled movement and re-centring after shaking.

"The next step is to move from proof of concept toward market readiness," says Hashemi. "That means further research into complete building integration, non-structural components, long-term durability, design procedures, constructability, cost-effectiveness and code acceptance. The specimen did not include all the non-

structural elements found in real buildings, such as linings, services, façades and finishes, so those interactions need to be better understood."

Working closely with structural engineers, timber manufacturers, connection suppliers, builders and industry organisations, the University of Auckland team's work focuses on more than the performance of the connectors. They need to be practical to design, fabricate, transport, assemble and maintain if they are to translate from the laboratory to market.

The rewards for getting it right are obvious: modular mass timber construction is a rapidly growing building methodology and being able to deliver certainty with regards to seismic performance increases the range of builds in which it can be adopted far beyond Aotearoa New Zealand's shores.

"There is strong potential for this technology in places with both seismic risk and growing interest in mass timber construction. Japan, California and parts of Europe are obvious examples," Dr Hashemi says. "These markets are looking for building systems that are lower carbon, faster to construct and more resilient after earthquakes. Modular mass timber can contribute to those goals, but seismic performance must be demonstrated convincingly.

"Our test provides an important step in that direction. The wider opportunity is to help make modular timber buildings not only sustainable and efficient to build, but also resilient enough for demanding seismic regions."

[Click here to see video of the earthquake testing.](#)

Forgotten treasure

We revisited a forest experiment that lay forgotten for 30 years. What we found was astounding.

WHAT'S the best way to manage a forest? Australians have argued about this for decades. The debate is often framed as binary: do we protect forests entirely, or harvest trees to support local economies and communities?

The reality is more interesting, as our new research on a long-forgotten experiment in Victoria's mountain ash forests reveals.

Since the 1970s, scientists and the public have questioned the use of clearfell logging – where all trees in a block of forest are cut down.



Aerial views of the Tanjil Bren Silvicultural Systems Project show (left) small cleared patches varying in size (50-140 metres wide) and shape (square vs. rectangular) and (right) heavy thinning. Image: courtesy Centre for Forest Tree Technology

Conservationists argued it destroys habitat for rare species and reduces the forests' ecological value. Foresters said mountain ash is adapted to catastrophic bushfires, and clearfelling is the forestry equivalent.

The argument was heated and the

polarisation unhelpful. But the underlying questions about the impacts of clearfelling, and how they compared to less intensive forestry options, remained unresolved.

A LANDMARK EXPERIMENT

In the mid-1980s, the Victorian government launched a major restructure of the timber industry, and invested today's equivalent of A\$26 million to explore alternatives to clearfelling. This would use silviculture, the branch of forestry that deals with establishing, growing and tending forests.

The Silvicultural Systems Project was established at two sites between

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From P 15

1987 and 1989: Tanjil Bren in Victoria's Central Highlands, and Cabbage Tree Creek in East Gippsland.

It was a landmark experiment, comparing forest regeneration across the full range of silvicultural approaches. These included traditional clearfells (250–350m wide), small patch clearfells (50–140m wide), and heavy thinnings, where 50–70% of trees were cut. Extensive areas of unharvested forest were kept as benchmarks for comparison.

The forest at Tanjil Bren was dense mountain ash regrowth from the 1939 fires. Hundreds of survey plots were established and thousands of seedlings were monitored. By the early 2000s, the results were clear: mountain ash regenerated best on clearfell sites. Where tall canopy trees were retained or the cleared patches were small, common understorey species such as acacia dominated.

The findings were published. The access road grew over. The project sign collapsed. The experiment was forgotten. The debates continued.

But the trees kept growing.

ASTOUNDING RESULTS

In 2014 we visited the Tanjil Bren site as part of a University of Melbourne subject on silviculture in native forests. A colleague, Simon Murphy, had been involved in its establishment and suggested our students see the long-term outcomes of different silvicultural systems side-by-side. What we found was astounding.

The original results still held: 30 years later, the mountain ash in the large cleared patches and clearfelled areas was vigorous and abundant. But it was the heavily thinned parts of the forest that really caught our attention.

The trees left behind after thinning were enormous. While they were only 80 years old, the largest averaged well over a metre in diameter at chest height, and some were more than 1.5m. Thinning had given these trees more space and resources to grow, and they had

responded dramatically. The largest trees in the thinned stands were 20% bigger in diameter than those in the unharvested control areas.

More remarkable still: the thinned stands of trees had stored as much or more carbon in their wood than the unharvested control areas. In just 30 years, the heavily thinned forest had not only recovered all the carbon removed during harvesting, but had also gained enough additional carbon to equal the increase seen in the unharvested controls.

These findings have profound implications. Bigger trees are more resistant to fires, so when the next fire occurs, they are more likely to survive. Bigger trees are also more likely to form hollows – a critical and declining habitat for rare species such as the greater glider and Leadbeater's possum.

The acacia trees that grew in most of the silvicultural treatments are also vital for Leadbeater's possums, which use it to forage and move around the forest. Camera traps across the sites confirmed this: Leadbeater's possums were found in every silvicultural treatment plot we surveyed – but none of the unharvested areas.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Tanjil Bren SSP offers three important lessons.

First, long-term silvicultural experiments are irreplaceable. Australia's forests contain many forgotten experiments that could transform our understanding of how forests respond to human intervention. But all too often, they end up neglected, unfunded and

forgotten. We should find them before it is too late.

Second, forest thinning is not a trade-off. Our findings show this for mountain ash, and other studies in North America have shown this for conifer forests. It can deliver wood for local industry, absorb carbon and improve habitat for wildlife. It is a win-win-win outcome that challenges the false dichotomy of conservation versus production that has dominated public debate for decades.

While thinning cannot (and should not) be done everywhere, it may be a useful tool to create more variety in tree ages and sizes, particularly in forests impacted by clearfelling or high-severity fire.

Third, and perhaps most importantly: there is no silvicultural silver bullet for managing forests. The long-forgotten experiment at Tanjil Bren has taught us that there are options available for managing our forests beyond clearfelling that can contribute to the societal demand for wood, maintain carbon stocks, and conserve biodiversity.

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1/ A Leadbeater's possum in one of the heavily thinned sites 33 years after the silvicultural treatment. Image: courtesy Jeremy Johnson

2/ The Silvicultural Systems Project (SSP) sign at Tanjil Bren in the late 1980s. Image: courtesy Centre for Forest Tree Technology



Deadline close for Victorian Innovation Fund

THE Victorian Government recently announced a \$12 million Timber and Fibre Innovation Fund and applications close at the end of this month. Grants are available from \$50,000 to \$1 million (excluding GST) and a minimum 1:1 cash co-contribution is required for all projects supported by the Fund.

Michaela Settle MP, Minister for Agriculture, said, "The Fund builds on the Government's forestry transition programs by shifting the focus from transition to transformation – supporting businesses to invest in innovation, advanced manufacturing, alternative fibres and new market opportunities that strengthen the long-term outlook of the sector.

"Through this Fund, the Victorian Government is supporting projects that improve productivity, enhance processing capability and unlock new and emerging markets across forestry, plantation, agroforestry and plant fibre industries. By encouraging the adoption of new technologies, advanced processing methods and innovative business models, the Fund aims to deliver lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for Victoria."

Applicants must be a business or organisation in the forestry, plantation, agroforestry or plant fibre industry (including manufacturers in those industries) that operates in Victoria, or a business that is a significant user of timber or plant fibre. Applications from partnerships or



The Fund is the next step in the Victorian Government's forestry transition program after the closure of native timber harvesting.

Image: supplied

consortiums are welcome.

The Fund guidelines call for projects or activities that:

- Make operations smarter and more innovative by supporting new ways to make forestry, plantations, plant fibre, and businesses who utilise timber and fibre more innovative and/or efficient.
- Create or improve products and processes, eg design, develop, or put in place new products, processes, or technologies that bring innovation or efficiency to the industry.
- Purchase or improve equipment or machinery to support innovative processes, boost efficiency, or access or create new markets.
- Develop new products from alternative fibres, investing in new products or fibre sources using products such as, but not limited to, hemp or

bamboo to grow, innovate or diversify the industry.

- Test and commercialise new ideas, exploring and validating innovative solutions such as tree breeding, bioenergy, and genetics to ensure practical and market-ready outcomes.

Any applications for grants under \$50,000 or over \$1 million may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applications above \$1 million must demonstrate significant innovation, compelling outcomes, increased employment, and matching of funding.

Innovation and strategic impact will represent 40% of the weighted criteria for the Fund.

The application form calls for comprehensive details and budgets, along with three years of audited financial reports, letters of support and multiple other requirements, so if you have a project that might meet the requirements, now is the time to start preparing an application.

Applicants for grants valued at \$500,000 or more must also have a Pre-Assessment Certificate from the Fair Jobs Code Unit before applying for the grant.

An information session on the Fund will be held online next Monday, 10 August, 1–2pm AEST. Click here to register.

For more information on the Fund, including timelines, assessment criteria and other requirements, click here.

To apply, and for details on the online information session and further enquiries, click here.



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