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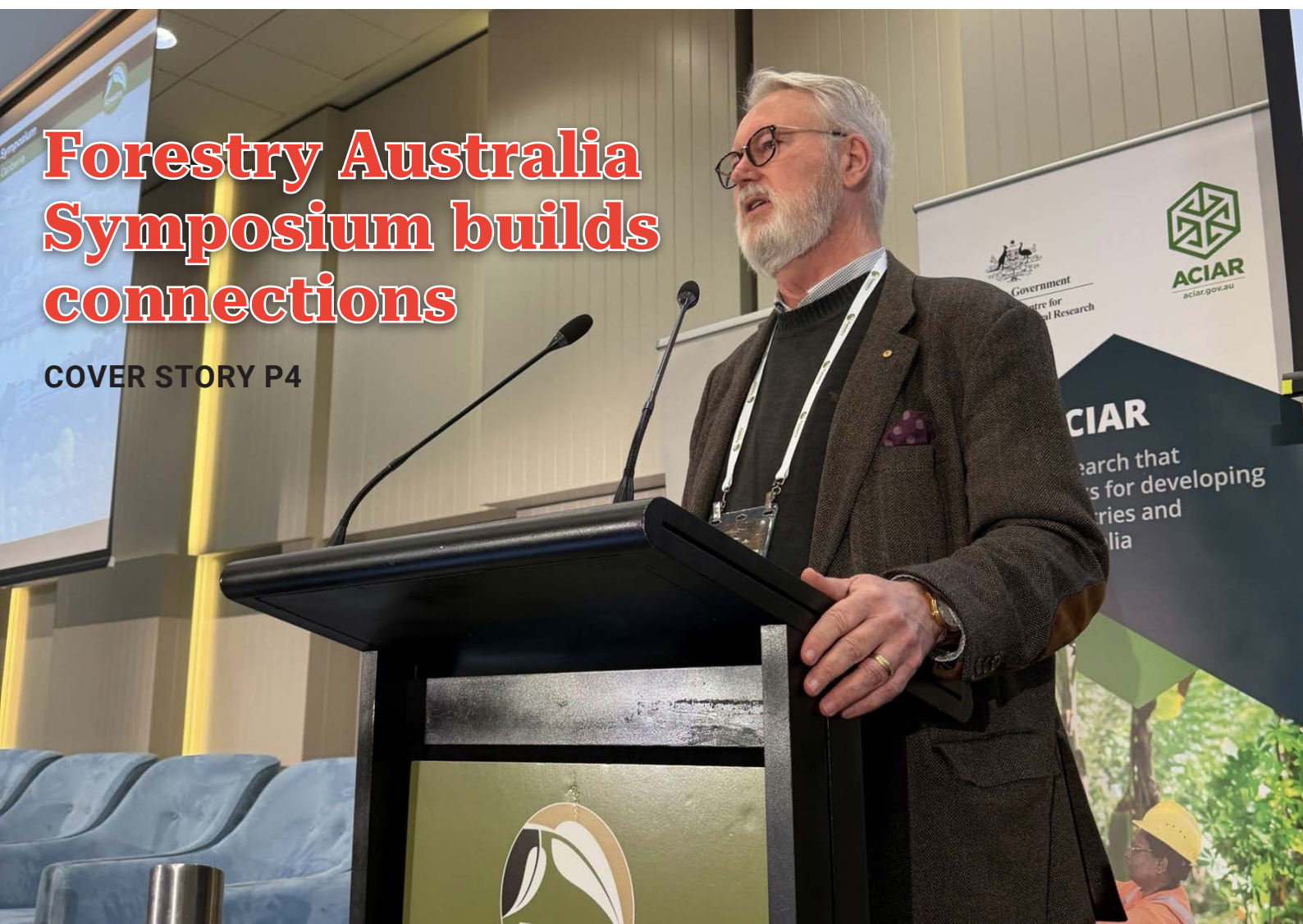


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Forestry Australia Symposium builds connections

COVER STORY P4



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VFPA leads strategy call

Members are asking all political parties to commit to forestry's future.

WITH the Victorian elections drawing ever nigh, VFPA has cut through the dramatics of the campaign with a simple request. Its members are asking for all political parties to commit to developing a refreshed, future-focused vision for the timber and forestry industry if they form government.

Victoria remains Australia's premier plantation state, with over 380,000 hectares of plantation forestry contributing \$9 billion annually in sales and service, but, in recent years, forestry has largely featured in the political sphere only as a source of debate.

VFPA's campaign video seeks to change that. It features members from across the sector including growers, harvesters, haulage teams and manufacturers from HVP Plantations, Midway Limited and Australian Bluegum Plantations.

They make the case that all of them work together to deliver over 5000 products made from sustainably grown timbers, which build and furnish our homes as well as supplying the paper,



Some of the VFPA members included in the video.
Image: supplied

packaging and more we use every day. The message of sustainability is made clear: timber products store carbon throughout their life cycle and are essential to meeting Victoria's carbon and housing targets. Add to that the fact that over 17,000 Victorians are directly employed by the sector and, they ask, why is there so little focus on the future of this important regional industry?

Accordingly, the campaign asks all political parties competing in the upcoming election to:

- Commit to a new Timber Strategy and 10-year Action Plan to unlock regional projects and support sovereign timber manufacturing; and
- Appoint a designated 'Minister for Plantation Industries and Wood Fibre' with clear responsibility for industry across government.

Simple asks, but ones that would deliver big changes, as the impact of similar policies in states such as Queensland has shown.

VFPA is to be applauded for putting everyday faces to the story of the forest and timber sector. It serves as a tangible reminder that behind every forestry policy are jobs, families and regional towns, all of whom are impacted by forestry policy decisions. Too often in the past these have been made poorly and without factual bases, by people who are disconnected from the sector.

A well-defined Timber Strategy and a designated Minister who had a chance to understand the sector would be the first steps in rebuilding trust between Victorian timber towns and government. We wait to see who steps up to the promise.

You can watch the video on LinkedIn by **clicking this link**.

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New AFPA CEO

Shona Gawel is set to take over the reins at AFPA after her successful tenure at GrainGrowers.

THE Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has announced the appointment of Shona Gawel as its new chief executive officer, effective from January 2027.

Gawel comes fresh from a highly successful tenure as chief executive officer of GrainGrowers, where she led major strategic transformations, significantly elevated the organisation's national advocacy profile, and delivered substantial value for members across Australia's agricultural sector.

During her time at GrainGrowers, where she began as chief operating officer before being promoted to CEO, Gawel successfully steered the organisation through complex policy environments ranging from supply chain resilience and sustainability frameworks to workforce participation initiatives while building trusted relationships across governments, regulators, and industry stakeholders. During the unpredictable difficulties of 2026, with skyrocketing input costs and global transport disruptions thanks to the Iran War, Gawel plotted a steady course, as Australian growers delivered another record year of grain production.

STAUNCH LEADERSHIP

GrainGrowers chair Rhys Turton thanked Gawel for her extraordinary contribution and leadership to the grains sector.

"Shona's passion for GrainGrowers and our industry has ensured Australia's grain farmers have benefited from outstanding advocacy, which has guaranteed action and results on the challenges facing growers in uncertain times," Turton said.

"Furthermore, Shona has strengthened the reach and diversity



Shona Gawel has cemented a reputation as a clear communicator who is able to work well with members and stakeholders as well as deliver strong advocacy and guidance. Image: supplied

within our capacity building programs and has resourced our thought-leadership efforts to ensure tangible outcomes to mitigate industry risk. The introduction of a membership class for State Farming Organisations within GrainGrowers, confirmed at [last week's] AGM, is an example of how Shona has led positive evolution within our business for members' benefit.

"Shona has built a great team within GrainGrowers and nurtured a positive culture. She leaves the organisation in a strong, well respected and impactful position. She has been a great leader of our organisation and ambassador for the grains sector. While Shona will be sorely missed, we wish her all the best in her new role."

Holding tertiary qualifications in business and communications, Gawel has developed a reputation

for leading high-performing teams through periods of growth and change. With extensive leadership experience spanning member-based organisations, national advocacy, and the public sector, she brings a proven track record of influencing public policy, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and driving sustainable organisational growth.

Importantly, Gawel has a strong history of connecting with local communities and embracing the things that make them special: vital skills at a time when forest industries are being pressured by city-based lobby groups seeking to deny our social licence.

Gawel said, "It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as CEO of GrainGrowers. I am deeply grateful for the support of our board and our wonderful members across the country.

"I would also like to recognise the many incredible staff I have worked with during my time, whose dedication, expertise and hard work have helped us achieve so many great things as GrainGrowers."

Looking ahead, Gawel is very prepared for the extent of her new challenge. "The forest products industry is central to Australia's housing, climate, and regional economic agenda," she said. "I am thrilled to be joining AFPA at such a critical time and look forward to working alongside members, industry partners, and governments to ensure a strong, sustainable, and unified voice for the sector."

AFPA chair John McKillop echoed the enthusiasm, saying: "We are delighted to welcome Shona as national CEO of AFPA. She is a trusted leader with an exceptional track record working with members, government and key stakeholders to improve industry outcomes at a national level. Her guidance will be invaluable as AFPA continues to advance the sustainable growth and interests of Australia's forest products sector."

“SHONA'S OUTSTANDING ADVOCACY HAS GUARANTEED ACTION AND RESULTS

Forestry Australia Symposium

COURAGEOUS conversations, fresh perspectives and a willingness to listen were among the defining features of Forestry Australia's 2026 Symposium, which brought together nearly 280 delegates in Canberra last week.

Held at the Rex Hotel from 7–9 October, the Symposium generated considerable enthusiasm as delegates explored how the forestry profession can strengthen community trust, learn from past experiences and engage more effectively with the broader community.

Under the theme 'The forestry story: Strategies for improved awareness, social licence and effective engagement', the program deliberately brought together voices from within and beyond forestry, providing opportunities to learn from others, reflect on how trust is built and consider new approaches to communication and engagement.

Forestry Australia CEO Jacquie Martin said one of the most encouraging aspects of the Symposium had been the energy and enthusiasm delegates brought to the discussions.

"There has been a real buzz around the Symposium this week. People have been genuinely enthusiastic about the conversations taking place and the opportunity to be part of them," Martin said.

"We deliberately created a program that would encourage us to reflect on how we build and maintain trust, learn from the experiences of others and consider what we might do differently. What has been particularly encouraging is the willingness of delegates to listen, share experiences and reflect on what they've heard.

"These are important conversations for our profession, and some require courage. We won't always agree on



1/ Professor Stan Grant delivered his keynote speech to a packed room.
2/ A diverse range of voices spoke at the MONA discussion. From left, Dr Michelle Freeman, Palawa custodian Wuratji Truwalata (Cody Gangell-Smith), Tasmanian forester Michael Schofield and Alice Hardinge from the Wilderness Society. All images: courtesy Forestry Australia

everything, but being willing to engage openly and respectfully is an important part of building understanding and trust."

Martin said the Symposium had highlighted the value of learning from how others communicate and connect with their communities.

"As forestry professionals, we bring considerable knowledge, experience and a genuine commitment to manage, study and care for forests," she said. "But community trust isn't something we can simply expect because of our expertise. It takes time, and it's something we need to continue to earn through our actions, our relationships and the way we engage

“PEOPLE HAVE BEEN GENUINELY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE CONVERSATIONS TAKING PLACE

with others.

"We've heard some great examples of how others communicate, tell their stories and build genuine connections. It's given us plenty to reflect on about how we tell the forestry story and continue to build trust and understanding."

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Symposium convenor and Forestry Australia director Matt de Jongh said bringing speakers from outside forestry was a deliberate and valuable part of the program.

"We wanted people to hear from others who have faced similar challenges, explore different approaches and reflect on what we can learn from their experiences," de Jongh said.

"The engagement throughout the Symposium has been fantastic. It's clear these are conversations people want to have, and there is a real appetite to take them further."

The opening keynote address from Walkley Award-winning journalist, author and Wiradjuri man Professor Stan Grant was titled 'When words fail us, bridging the divide'.

In her thoughtful response to the speech ([click here to read](#)), panelist Tolita Davis-Angeles, chair of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Indigenous Working Group, said: "One thought stayed with me: when words fail, we should reflect not only on what we want to say, but on what we want another person to hear. That shift – from performance to relationship – requires modesty. It asks us to begin with the ground we share, rather than taking up positions at opposite ends and shouting across the space between."

These themes continued throughout the symposium. Dr Simon Longstaff AO

From P 4

of The Ethics Centre challenged delegates to consider what would need to be true for forestry to have trust, while Dr Amanda Cahill of The Next Economy explored the changing expectations surrounding social licence.

Research presented by Giselle Stollznaw of Stollznaw Research provided insights into public perceptions of forestry, while speakers from farming, mining and energy shared their experiences of communicating and engaging with communities.

The program also explored lessons from past forest management decisions, politics and advocacy, effective communication, and the role of First Nations knowledge, leadership and enterprise.

A discussion involving participants of the ongoing Forest Congress, convened by Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), demonstrated how people with very different backgrounds and views on forest harvesting can come together for open and constructive conversations



1/ AFWI chair Bob Gordon and Dr Michelle Freeman on the closing panel.

2/ The closing panel discussed what comes next. From left, climate change specialist Dr Rob Waterworth, farm forester Leon Holt, Jenna Hammond from Private Forests Tasmania and AFWI chair Bob Gordon.



about the future of Tasmania's forests.

The value of these conversations was reinforced during the Symposium's closing panel, with former Forestry Australia President and Australian Forest and Wood Innovations (AFWI) chair Bob Gordon reflecting on how much the profession had evolved.

"I don't think we could have had a session like this 10 years ago," Gordon said.

"There wouldn't have been enough willingness in the room to listen to different viewpoints, to engage in a discussion outside our comfort zone."

MOVING FORESTRY FORWARD

The closing panel, chaired by retiring Forestry Australia president Dr Michelle Freeman, also considered what delegates could take from the discussions and how the profession might build on them.

Forestry Australia director Leon Holt emphasised the importance of community trust as a foundation for forest management. "We've got to place our trust in the

community and put gaining their trust at the forefront of what we do," Holt said. "It's actually a precursor, a prerequisite for us to be able to do anything in the forest."

Drawing on the words of forest economist Jack Westoby in 1967, he reminded delegates that "forestry is not about trees, it is about people. And it is about trees only insofar as trees can serve the needs of people."

Jenna Hammond of Private Forests Tasmania encouraged delegates to

Cont P 6

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Forestry Australia board changes

Two highly respected leaders have concluded their terms.

AMID last week's Symposium, the Forestry Australia AGM took place, with changes to the board. Forestry Australia formally recognised the significant contributions of retiring president Dr Michelle Freeman, as well as retiring vice-president Dr Bill Jackson, who have both concluded their terms. It also welcomed two newly elected directors: Louise Bourke and Dr Phil Lacy.

Forestry Australia CEO Jacquie Martin said both Dr Freeman and Dr Jackson had played important roles during a period of significant growth, renewal and increased professional standing for the organisation. "Michelle and Bill have each made an extraordinary contribution to Forestry Australia, and it is difficult to adequately capture the impact of their leadership over many years," she said.

"Michelle has led Forestry Australia with enormous energy, commitment as well as a deep belief in the value of forest scientists, forestry professionals and the role that our association can play in strengthening the profession's voice and standing.

"Michelle will leave a legacy on Forestry Australia, not only through her leadership but through the energy, generosity and passion she has brought to the role. She has helped create an organisation that is confident in its purpose and ambition for our future."

Martin added: "Bill has brought an



From left, retiring Forestry Australia president Dr Michelle Freeman, Forestry Australia CEO Jacquie Martin and retiring vice-president Dr Bill Jackson. Image supplied

exceptional depth of experience to the Board. His national and international perspective, strategic insight, considered approach and strong governance leadership have been enormously valuable as Forestry Australia has continued to mature as an organisation.

"I have personally valued Michelle and Bill's counsel, support and friendship enormously. On behalf of our members, staff and Board, I sincerely thank them both for their years of service to Forestry Australia and to the profession."

Dr Michelle Freeman said, "It has been a genuine privilege to serve as President and to work on behalf of our many thoughtful, passionate and experienced members and dedicated volunteers. I'm proud of what we have achieved together, and particularly of the way Forestry Australia has continued to strengthen its voice as a constructive and trusted contributor to important conversations about forests and their future.

"I step down with enormous

gratitude for the people who make this organisation what it is, and with great confidence in those who will carry its work forward."

On his retirement, Dr Bill Jackson reflected the increasingly important role Forestry Australia plays in supporting forest growers, scientists and professionals to restore, conserve and sustainably manage Australia's forests and woodlands.

"The willingness of its members to use credible evidence to promote active and adaptive forest management underpins their commitment to ensuring Australia's natural and planted forests continue to provide the full range of ecosystem services for the benefit of every Australian," he said.

Forestry Australia's board now comprises Dr Lyndall Bull, Leon Holt, Professor Rod Keenan, Matt de Jongh, Louise Bourke and Phil Lacy with Emily Post and Dr Sam Van Holsbeeck continuing as board observers.

From P 5

recognise the value of small steps in building community connections, while Dr Robert Waterworth of FLINTpro and AFWI reflected on the breadth of conversations the Symposium had opened up.

Dr Freeman reminded delegates that forestry is "the art and science of caring for forests for all their values, extending well beyond timber production."

“FORESTRY IS NOT ABOUT TREES, IT IS ABOUT PEOPLE

Jacquie Martin said the Symposium had reinforced the strength and diversity of the forestry profession, and the value of bringing people together to learn from one another.

"Our members work across research, conservation, fire management, biodiversity, carbon, environmental services, timber production and many other areas. That breadth of experience is one of the real strengths of Forestry Australia," said Martin.

"What has stood out this week is how much delegates have valued the opportunity to be part of these conversations. The discussions have continued well beyond the sessions,

and there's been a genuine sense of enthusiasm about what we can take away from the experience.

"The opportunity now is to build on that momentum. I hope delegates leave Canberra with new connections, ideas they can put into practice and a renewed commitment to engaging with the communities who care about our forests. These aren't conversations that end when the Symposium finishes. In many ways, they're just getting started."

On the cover: Dr Simon Longstaff AO challenged delegates to consider what would need to be true for forestry to have public trust.
Image: Forestry Australia

OCTOBER

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>

21: SAVE THE DATE: Timber Design Awards – Museum of Contemporary Art, The Rocks, Sydney.

Event is almost full. For more information and to obtain tickets, visit: <https://timberdesignawards.com.au/>

28: NTHA's MOVE SMART: Safe Manual Handling Workshop – ONLINE EVENT, 1.00pm- 3.00pm AEDT.

Cost: \$250 (members can use training vouchers). For an industry where lifting, carrying and moving timber and other products. The workshop covers how to identify risks and hazards, prevent workplace injuries, follow safe work procedures and risk assessments, and

use safer techniques when lifting and handling awkward or heavy pieces. To register email: info@ntha.edu.au or call 1800 822 621

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

12: Forestry Australia Webinar – ONLINE EVENT, 12.30pm - 1.30pm AEDT.

Topic: Forest Recreation & Tourism. Registrations close 11 Nov at 10am. Registration cost: (inc. GST) Forestry Australia Member: \$15 | Non-Member: \$70 | Student Members: Free. The webinar link and joining instructions 24 hours will be sent 24 hours prior. A recording will be available should you be unable to attend live. To book, visit <https://forestry.memnet.com.au/MemberSelfService/EventBooking.aspx>

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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OneFortyOne photo comp returns

Students are encouraged to get snapping in their local forests.

PRIMARY and secondary students living in the area of OneFortyOne's forestry operations – SA's Limestone Coast and Western Victoria – are invited to grab their cameras and head to the forest for the annual OneFortyOne photo competition. But hurry, entries close soon on 26 October.

This year's annual competition features a simplified entry process, exciting local prizes, and a new opportunity for schools to get involved. Entries opened on 7 September and students can submit up to five competition entries each, with a school participation prize also open to schools that have five or more students enter.

OneFortyOne Corporate Affairs Manager Charlene Riley said the competition has been refreshed to support easier entry and encourage participation.

"The competition has always been designed to encourage young people to discover and enjoy our region's beautiful forests," she said.

"This year, based on feedback from local schools, we've moved the competition dates to align with the school holiday period, giving everyone more time to get out into the forest and capture their favourite moments.

"We've also made the entry process much easier. All people need to do is upload their photos, provide some contact information and tell us what they love about the forest."

Students can enter up to five photographs by simply uploading their entry through the competition's online entry platform ([click here](#)).

This year's major prizes will be



1/ Abbey Hood's forest fungi photo from the 2022 competition sees the beauty in small forest things.

2/ Max Turner's 2025 entry used Lego minifigs in a graphic updating of a Marvel adventure.

3/ Cohen Minter perfectly captured the beauty of plantation forest in this past entry. All images: courtesy OneFortyOne

awarded in both primary and secondary school categories, with winners receiving four \$250 vouchers from their choice of participating local businesses, including:

- Area 51
- BeArtiful
- Birdie Blue
- Blue Lake Golf Club
- Collins Booksellers
- Intersport Mount Gambier
- Kaboom Family Entertainment
- Millicent SportsPower
- Millicent Toy Kingdom
- Oatmill Cinema
- Spot On Fishing and Tackle

Riley said the prize structure supports local businesses and encourages shared experiences: "We wanted to keep the prizes local and varied. The range of businesses involved means winning students can choose experiences and products that they can enjoy with people they care about, while also supporting our community."

A new school participation prize has also been introduced this year. Schools with at least five student entries will be eligible to win a \$500 grant towards a school project.

"I'd encourage students to enter landscape-oriented photos this year, as we're hoping to create a calendar



featuring some of the images from the competition," Riley said.

"We're also planning to display a selection of photographs at Mount Gambier Airport gallery over summer, so more people can enjoy the photos and stories on show and visitors can experience the beauty of our local forests as soon as they arrive in the region."

The competition attracted 120 entries last year, and OneFortyOne is hoping to surpass that number in 2026.

Entries close on 26 October.

For more information, [click here](#), and to enter, [click here](#).

"I'D ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO ENTER LANDSCAPE-ORIENTED PHOTOS THIS YEAR"

Fire ants in Sydney

Residents are asked to keep watch after an infestation was confirmed.

A RED imported fire ant nest found at the Enfield Intermodal Logistics Centre in Sydney late last month has been confirmed through genetic testing to be both the feared invader pest and unrelated to established colonies in Queensland.

Thought to have arrived directly from overseas via a container in the facility, authorities suspect the highly invasive insects will have already spread and are asking members of the public in the area to keep a close eye out for any sightings.

Fire ant detection dogs have been deployed and while they did not find other nests at the Logistics Centre beyond the one that has been destroyed, searches continue in wider sweeps. These are being done first in a 500m radius, in which experts say there is a 93% chance of fire ant nest spread, then a 2km radius.



Red imported fire ants have been found in Sydney's Inner West.
Image: CC/Stephen Ausmus

Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty said confirmation from the federal government that the insects were red imported fire ants "took longer than it should have", and the container carrying them had probably travelled through Port Botany before reaching the site.

"Biosecurity is everybody's responsibility, so we want the community to help us to have a look for these red imported fire ants. Hopefully

they haven't spread through this region but we want people to keep an eye out," she said.

A community information drop-in centre will be opened at Chullora Marketplace in Greenacre to help spread awareness and businesses in the area will be subject to a control order that limits the movement of fire ant carrier materials.

It's not the first incursion of the pest into Sydney: a similar infestation was eradicated at Port Botany in 2014. Their stings are famously painful and have killed people overseas.

If you think you've spotted fire ants, you can **submit an online notification** at <https://forms.bfs.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forms/9247> or call 1800 680 244.

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From Belgrade to FWPA

Marina Milić, FWPA's new forest research project manager on resource understanding, mill realities and connecting the value chain.

By JESS HOCKRIDGE

MARINA Milić's path into the forest and wood products sector began with her grandfather, a joiner whose skill and care in transforming timber into finished products left a lasting impression. When it came time to choose a university path, she weighed architecture against forestry. Forestry won.

She studied Wood Processing Engineering at the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Forestry, an institution that has taught the discipline since 1920, and developed a dual view of wood as both a natural resource and an engineering material. That foundation still shapes her approach.

"I try to understand the resource first, then consider how decisions at each stage of processing affect the quality and performance of the final product," she says.

FWPA's head of forest research, Jodie Mason, highlighted the contribution Marina's practical industry experience will make to the organisation's RD&E program, saying: "I'm delighted to welcome Marina to FWPA. Research plays a vital role in strengthening Australia's forest and wood products sector, and Marina's practical understanding of timber resources and mill operations will help our RD&E program deliver member-focused outcomes with tangible benefits across the value chain."

After moving to Australia in 2016, Marina spent eight years in national technical roles at AKD Softwoods. The work spanned research, process improvement, quality, compliance and technology adaptation inside a live mill environment. The most valuable lesson, she reflects, was that a good technical idea must work in production.

"A trial might look straightforward on paper, but it depends on many people and processes coming together: the forklift driver moving the testing timber, the operators running it through the mill, and the teams checking and recording the results. Everyone needs to understand



Marina Milić, FWPA's new forest research project manager. Image: supplied

what the trial is trying to achieve. A small mistake can make results unreliable."

The experience also sharpened her appreciation for compliance and product traceability. Demonstrating that a product was made, tested and supplied as intended matters for customers downstream.

It taught her to design research and process improvements around the realities of mill operations, where production priorities constantly compete for time and resources. Explaining the 'why' to operators is essential, not simply imposing extra work, but showing how the change can ultimately make the job better.

MEETING CHALLENGES

From the processing end, Marina sees clear opportunities and persistent challenges for Australia's plantation softwood sector. The biggest opportunity, she argues, is extracting more value from the resource already growing. Better information on log characteristics and closer collaboration between growers and processors can help mills select

practical technologies that improve recovery and product consistency, including finding productive uses for lower grade material.

The challenges are equally real: rising costs, variable resources, limited ability to expand supply quickly, and the ongoing need to meet demanding quality, compliance and traceability requirements. "You have to work with what you have," she notes. "Understanding the resource better is the way to go."

One practical example from her time at AKD illustrates the point. Timber from the same harvest area or batch did not always behave the same way through processing

and treatment. It was easy to focus only on mill settings or final test results. Differences in incoming log size and characteristics could affect product consistency and treatment uptake. Understanding the resource upstream helped the team ask whether results reflected the timber, the processes, or both, leading to more meaningful trials and more reliable interpretation of data.

"Product quality does not begin at the start of the mill production line," Marina says. "It starts with understanding where the timber comes from."

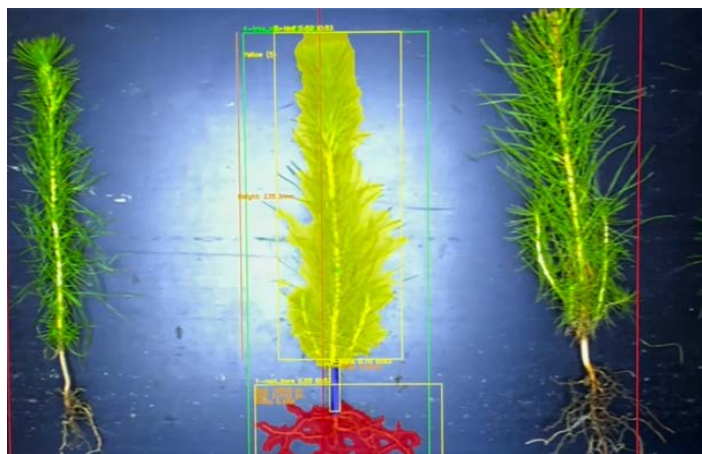
That value chain perspective is central to her new role as forest research project manager at Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA). She plans to begin with the problems industry is actually seeing, then work backwards to ensure projects are appropriately focussed and designed, the right people are engaged, and outputs are able to be adopted. If a project aims to improve the resource, the questions must extend beyond the forest: Can the

From P 10

resulting logs be processed effectively? Do they become products customers want?

"That means involving growers, mill teams where appropriate, and end users early and designing trials around the timber and the production constraints they actually face. Throughout the project I would keep checking whether the results are useful to the people who need to put them into practice. Research has the most value when it connects a real problem on the ground with outcomes that work commercially."

What excites her most about the move from hands-on technical work to research project management is the chance to connect perspectives that are often treated separately: forest health, log characteristics, processing realities and the performance customers require from the final product. Her industry experience has shown that promising technical results create value only when they can



FWPA's research work interacts with other leading programs. For example, Forest Growers Research (FGR NZ), through its Precision Silviculture Programme, has developed an AI supported seedling grading prototype to automate a traditionally labour intensive and subjective nursery process.

Photo: courtesy Contempo Lab / Tui Technology

be translated into practice. At FWPA she hopes to help frame and deliver research so that growers, processors and others ask the right questions together and generate evidence the industry can use to improve industry productivity, risk and cost outcomes.

For young professionals considering a career in forest and wood products, especially those with an engineering or technical background, Marina's advice is

grounded and practical. Spend time in forests, in mills, and in the places where timber is put to use. Technical training provides foundations, but being on the ground teaches how decisions are made and how each step affects the next.

"Seek out a mentor. Ask questions and listen closely to people who know what they're doing: forest managers, engineers, operators, researchers. I was lucky and learned a great deal from people who were generous with their knowledge.

Expertise is built not only through formal study, but through curiosity, practical experience, and the relationships you make along the way."

Her own journey from Belgrade to FWPA illustrates the point. It is a path shaped by early inspiration, rigorous technical grounding, years of mill floor reality, and a consistent focus on connecting the whole value chain.

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Plantations and cockatoos

AFFPA sets out workable plans for growers to help endangered birds.

AFFPA has made two submissions on draft national recovery plans for the gang-gang cockatoo and south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo.

Central to both submissions are misunderstandings by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water where the role of plantation forestry within conservation practices is poorly interpreted in the proposed recovery plans.

In its response to the gang-gang cockatoo draft national recovery plans, AFFPA suggests “that the draft National Recovery Plan repeatedly conflates forestry with land clearing, agriculture and urban expansion.”

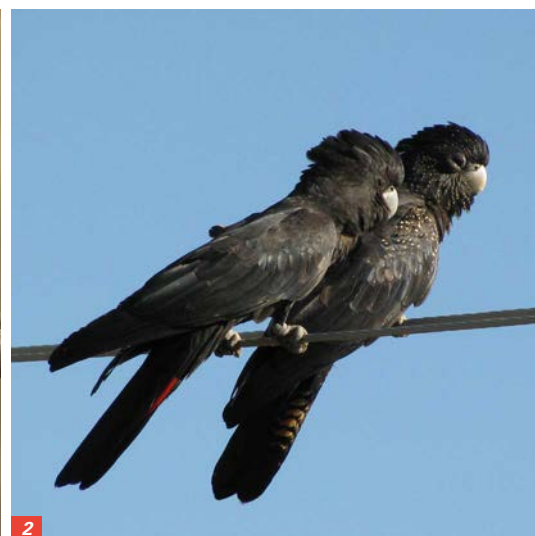
The response notes that while gang-gangs use plantation forests as temporary sources of shelter and food, those forests do not “without evidence of a material ecological function, demonstrate that the commercial crop constitutes breeding habitat, significant foraging habitat, a functional movement corridor or habitat critical to survival”.

The focus on retaining native vegetation within plantation sites is done consciously for habitat reasons and “Their presence must not result in the surrounding commercial plantation crops [also] being classified as habitat.”

As the submission says: “While there are a range a forestry practices, the essence of a forestry operation is sustainability where harvested trees are at a minimum fully regrown. In this context, we note that the earlier TSSC Conservation Advice on the status of the gang-gang makes a clear distinction between land clearing and native forest timber harvesting. This distinction should be included throughout the National Recovery Plan – thus avoiding any unintended ambiguity.”



1/ Endangered gang-gang cockatoos; the male has a red head. Image: CC Wikimedia/JJ Harrison
2/ A pair of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos: male on left and female on right. Image: CC Wikimedia



AFFPA's submission on the draft National Recovery Plan for the south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo notes that the industry has taken considerable voluntary measures to enhance the long-term viability of this species. Companies have worked in partnership with Birdlife Australia and Zoos SA on projects including:

- Establishing and monitoring artificial hollows for nesting, with fledglings reported.
- Establishing new areas of brown stringybark and buloke in areas adjacent to our plantations.
- Undertaking annual surveys of birdlife throughout the region.
- Volunteering to participate in the annual red-tailed black cockatoo count.

While noting that the affected plantation companies supported conservation measures such as protecting nesting habitat from illegal firewood collection and removing woody weeds and wilding pines within priority

habitat areas, AFFPA acknowledges they have practical limitations on these activities, ranging from out-of-hours attacks to difficulty gaining legal access to neighbouring properties.

The submission calls for government support and an inter-agency approach that will help to easily resolve the issues without putting a significant burden onto growers.

A statement from AFFPA said: “We support the conservation and recovery of the Gang-gang Cockatoo and appropriate protection of confirmed breeding habitat, significant foraging areas, refuge areas and important native vegetation.

“For the south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo, AFFPA broadly supports the proposed actions while emphasising that harvesting and silvicultural activities should not be unnecessarily restricted in areas adjacent to identified habitat.”

To download AFFPA's submission on the gang-gang cockatoo, [click here](#). To download the submission on south-eastern red-tailed black-cockatoo, [click here](#).

“WE SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY OF THE GANG-GANG COCKATOO



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Timber Design Awards shortlist

The final instalment of the 2026 finalist reveals contains true gems.

THE last tickets to the gala dinner are sold. The trophies have been ordered and the dinner wear is being dry cleaned. With less than a week to go before the announcement of the 2026 Timber Design Awards on Wednesday 21 October, the excitement is very real.

Before the big event, we have the last set of finalists to catch up on, with offsite manufacture and mass timber the common themes of these diverse builds.

We're a nation that has long embraced offsite when it comes to building our frames and trusses, but a shift towards cassettes and panels has truly shown its worth against years of terrible weather and tradie shortages. Able to be produced to high-quality, easily repeatable standards in protected factory conditions, these building products then show their worth again on-site, slotting together quickly and easily to minimise time, expense, waste and risk on building sites.

It's not only workers who feel the benefits: neighbours who would once have been subjected to a year or two's disruption to their roads, footpaths and sleep schedules now experience vastly shorter builder interruptions to their areas, and see much less public space lost to the infrastructure associated with those builds.

Thanks to Australian timber's investment in mass timber manufacture, builds featuring glulam and CLT have moved from expensive proofs of concept that relied on European orders with months-long shipping to everyday educational builds that are being supplied locally – very locally indeed for many South Australians. All this within 15 years of the groundbreaking Forté Apartment's completion.

These are the types of innovation and desire to improve the built environment the Timber Design Awards celebrate. *Enews* will be attending the awards dinner and we're looking forward to meeting some of the talented designers behind this year's finalists. Look for the winners in an upcoming issue.

SUSTAINABILITY

Putty Passiv

Set on Wonnarua and Darkinjung Country off Putty Valley Road, Putty Passiv by Anderson Architecture is a remote, off-grid home designed to the Passivhaus standard, using timber as both a high-performance structural element and the defining architectural feature. A Life Cycle Assessment using eTool and Rapid LCA confirmed a carbon-positive outcome, with a global warming potential of just 12kg CO₂e per square metre over 50 years, a 238% improvement over a standard six-star Australian home.

Large-scale prefabricated timber cassettes were manufactured off-site by Evan Graham Master Builder and craned into place, integrating insulation and

weatherproofing directly into the panels. That precision secured the airtightness the Passivhaus standard demands, while significantly reducing construction time for builders Built By Eli, as well as site waste and disruption to the sensitive valley environment. Steel was introduced only where structurally essential for large roof spans according to engineering consultants Partridge.

Throughout the interior, FSC-certified Blackbutt flooring and Spotted Gum plywood are left exposed to celebrate the material's natural grain, finished in a low-VOC, breathable oil that lets the timber move and age without cracking or peeling. Rather than imposing on the landscape, the home's scale and material palette echo the tones of its valley setting, resulting in a highly efficient, resilient house deeply connected to its site.

See images 1 and 2.

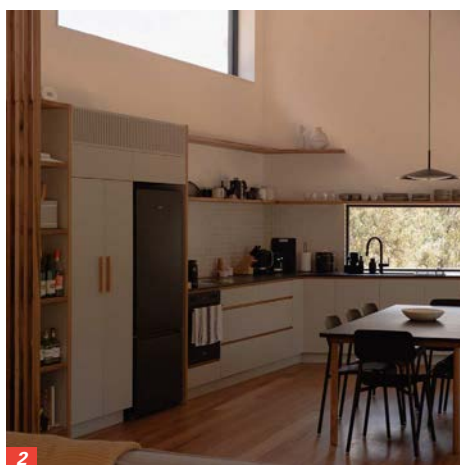
AUSTRALIAN CERTIFIED TIMBER

CIT Woden

Australia's largest mass timber building by volume, CIT Woden, is a 22,500-square-metre, 6-Star Green Star vocational training campus in Canberra. Built using approximately 1200m³ of mass engineered timber, the project used Australian Oak MASSLAM to help achieve an impressive 50% reduction in structural embodied carbon over a traditional steel and concrete building of comparable size.

By opting for timber throughout CIT Woden, architecture firm Gray Puksand was also able to deliver an impressive seven week saving in the duration of construction and 75% less labour was required for the build and install of timber components by builder Lendlease with engineer Robert Bird Group. Far from marginal gains, these results help the building industry reconsider what 'standard' construction should look like.

ASH's Australian Oak MASSLAM glulam beams and columns carry the load across four curved sections of the



1/ Putty Passiv's exterior is designed to meld into its natural surrounds.

2/ Exposed timbers celebrate the low-emission philosophies that underpin the home. Photos by Lachlan Kain

From P 14

precinct, with CLT floor slabs on top of the GLT frame adding to the volume of timber performing substantial structural work and exposed timber trusses through the roof. For structural elements, 100% of the timber used is Australian Certified, supplied by Australian Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH) under PEFC chain of custody.

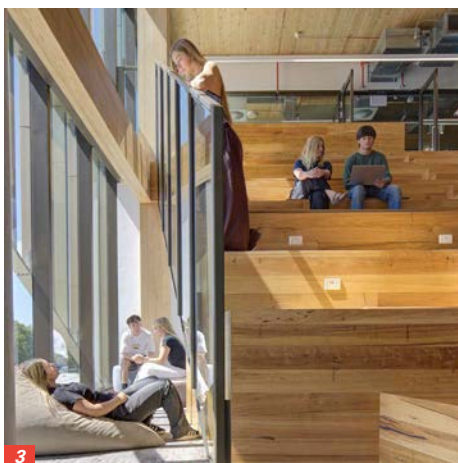
See images 3 and 4.

PUBLIC BUILDING

Tonsley Technical College

Already discussed in *Enews* #914 as a finalist in the Sustainability category, this centrepiece of Flinders University's Factory of the Future is a \$55 million dollar learning village in the Tonsley Innovation District, uniting vocational education for 250 students, university research and industry collaboration under a single, mass-engineered timber roof.

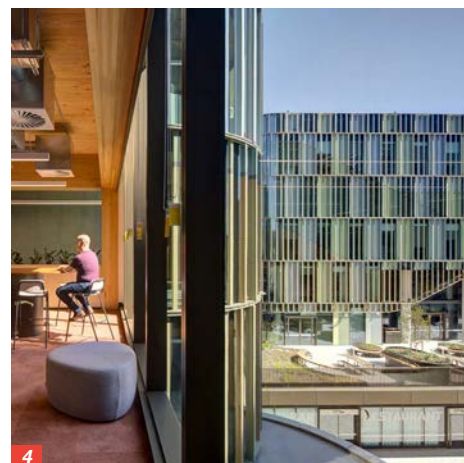
Designed by Das Studios, the college is South Australia's first full mass timber building and had to function as an exemplar of its type as well as a productive educational and research space. Built by Sarah Constructions,



3

3 / Exposed timber provides a relaxing environment for students while also helping them stay motivated for study.

4 / The MASSLAM and CLT build cut embodied carbon, build time and site labour costs. Photos by Matthew Sherren and Brett Boardman



4

the facility is 85% timber by structure, with approximately 376m³ of ASH's MASSLAM glulam beams and columns forming its frame, including a 22m free-spanning timber truss over the factory floor.

The roof and floor structures are comprised of 5303m² of NeXTimber CLT panels from nearby Tarpeena. All structural timbers were sourced from southern Australian forests, minimising

the carbon freight cost as well as additional carbon costs in the build, while maximising the inherent carbon storage: over 700,000kg of CO₂.

That same timber structure, left fully exposed throughout the building, relies on sacrificial char layers to meet fire ratings rather than concealing the material behind linings, so the timber

Cont P 16

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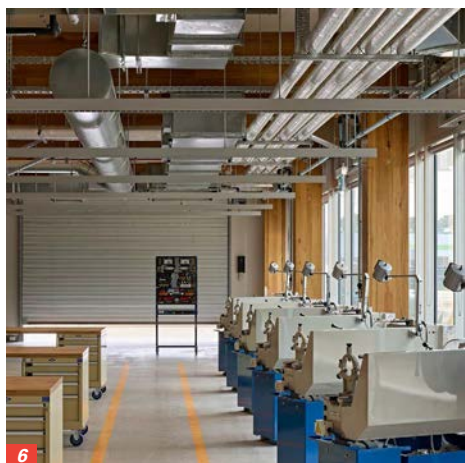
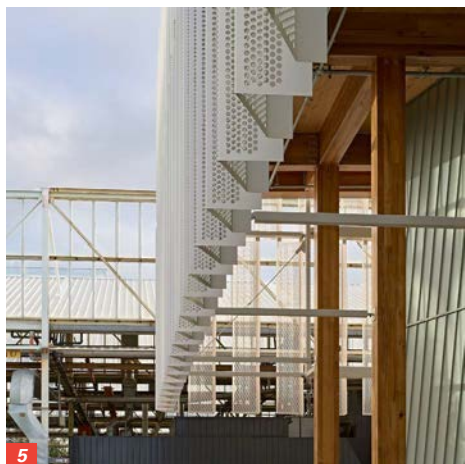
Image: AKD

From P 15

structure remains visible and provides biophilic advantages to students and staff. This sense of connection to nature has been shown to lower stress and improve concentration, both vital aids to learning.

The mass timber-centric approach also supported the project's budget and certification outcomes, which were delivered \$1.13 million under budget and achieved both 5-Star Green Star Rating and WELL Core certification.

See images 5 and 6.



5/ The MASSLAM frame has an external veneer of pierced steel, shielding the interiors from blazing South Australian summers and nodding to the area's industrial heritage.

6/ Interior timbers are left exposed with a sacrificial char layer for safety. The result is both inviting and endlessly adaptable. Photos by Anthony Basheer

SPORTS AND RECREATION

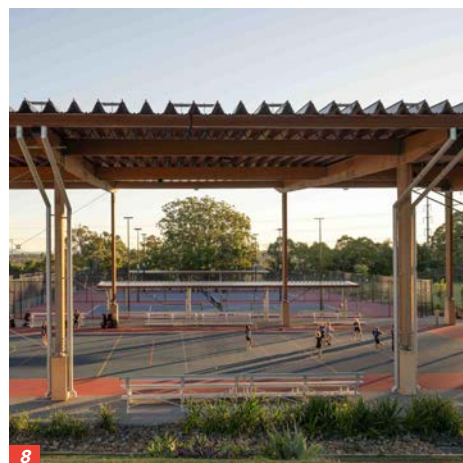
John Paul College

Jukambi Sports Precinct at John Paul College was designed by Deicke Richards, with structural and civil design by Bligh Tanner. The aim of the design was to encourage students to engage



7/ An amenities block and canteen combine with the sports courts and seating to deliver a fully functional sports precinct.

8/ Rain cancellations are now mostly a thing of the past thanks to the soaring roofs above the court, which also protect from harsh midday sun. Photos by Alanna Jayne McTiernan



more actively in the school's sporting and training programs. Accordingly, the precinct includes eight new sports courts, a canteen, an amenity building and two multi-purpose covered courts. Rather than steel, the roof of the covered courts is carried on mass timber, cutting embodied carbon while creating warm, inviting spaces for students and spectators alike.

The civil design team delivered a lighter structural system that enhances site safety and construction quality while reducing foundation costs. Deicke Richards' soaring roofs over much of the precinct protect students and spectators from sun and rain, ensuring comfortable year-round use.

Built by Emancen Projects, a colonnade of slender, tapered glue-laminated timber columns supports

long, gently tapering GLT roof beams over the courts and spectator seating, all in exposed Hyne Beam GLT made from Australian plantation pine. Timber was chosen over steel specifically to lighten the structure, warm the spaces below and lower embodied carbon, with the frame's high strength-to-weight ratio allowing slender, efficient columns and reduced material use throughout.

The timber palette also honours Country, drawing on the heritage of the Turrbal, Jagera and Yugambah peoples through references to the eagle, native plants and the surrounding landscape. The finished facility touches the ground lightly, sheltering students beneath a canopy of natural timber that follows the oval's contours to limit cut, fill and site disturbance.

See images 7 and 8.

SOMETHING TO SAY?

Send media releases, news stories, events, any timber and forestry news related information anytime to Donyale, Jess or Nicky - editors@timberandforestrynews.com

Designing the future

QUEENSLAND'S forest and timber industry could generate greater value from existing resources through technology adoption, advanced manufacturing and next-generation engineered wood products, according to new technical reports released by the South & Central Queensland Regional Forestry Hub.

The reports identify practical opportunities to improve productivity, strengthen domestic manufacturing capability and increase value recovery across the forestry and wood products supply chain. The findings draw on research examining new harvesting technologies, advanced manufacturing systems and engineered wood product development, highlighting pathways to improve competitiveness and support future industry growth.

"Queensland's forestry and wood products industry has significant opportunities to improve productivity and create greater value from the resources we already have available," said Kerry Fullarton, South & Central Queensland Regional Forestry Hub manager.

"The studies are helping identify practical ways technology and innovation can strengthen industry competitiveness and support future growth."

Research examining forest operations found businesses continue to face challenges associated with resource characterisation, difficult terrain, transport and scheduling inefficiencies, and workforce constraints. These issues can affect operational productivity and reduce value recovery from available forestry resources.

The studies identified

a range of emerging technologies that could help address these challenges, including remote sensing tools, improved inventory systems and digital technologies that support more effective planning and operational decision-making.

"The opportunities identified aren't simply about adopting new technology for technology's sake," said Fullarton. "They are about helping businesses improve efficiency, make better use of resources and strengthen operational performance across the supply chain."

A separate investigation into timber processing technologies found future competitiveness will increasingly depend on industry's ability to improve productivity and maximise value from available resources. The study identified opportunities associated with technology adoption, advanced manufacturing and value-adding across the forestry and wood processing sector.

Advanced manufacturing was highlighted as an important pathway for creating higher-value products, strengthening domestic capability and improving industry competitiveness.

Technical reports into adhesive technologies used in engineered wood products also found innovation will also play an important role in future product development.

The study highlighted the critical role adhesives play in product strength, durability, performance and service life, while also identifying opportunities to support manufacturing innovation and improved utilisation of Queensland forestry and wood resources.

"Engineered wood products demonstrate how innovation

can unlock entirely new opportunities for timber," Fullarton said

"As technology evolves, there are increasing opportunities to strengthen manufacturing capability, create new products and expand timber's role in future construction and building systems."

Collectively, the Hub's technical reports demonstrate how innovation can support productivity growth, improve resource utilisation, strengthen domestic manufacturing and help position Queensland's forestry and wood products industry for future success.

"The common theme across all of this work is that innovation is becoming increasingly important to future competitiveness," Fullarton said.

"Whether it's harvesting systems, manufacturing processes or advanced timber and wood products, innovation is helping unlock the next generation of opportunities for Queensland's forestry and wood products industry."

You can read fact sheets on these projects by clicking the following links:

- **Adhesive Research for Softwood and Hardwood Engineered Wood Products**

- **Evaluate the feasibility of using new harvesting technologies and processes in Queensland's forest operations Products**

For videos, click on these links:

- **Adhesive Research for Softwood and Hardwood Engineered Wood Products**

- **Evaluate the feasibility of using new harvesting technologies and processes in Queensland's forest operations products**



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