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NTHA Awards showcase industry excellence in SA, NT and WA

COVER STORY P 3



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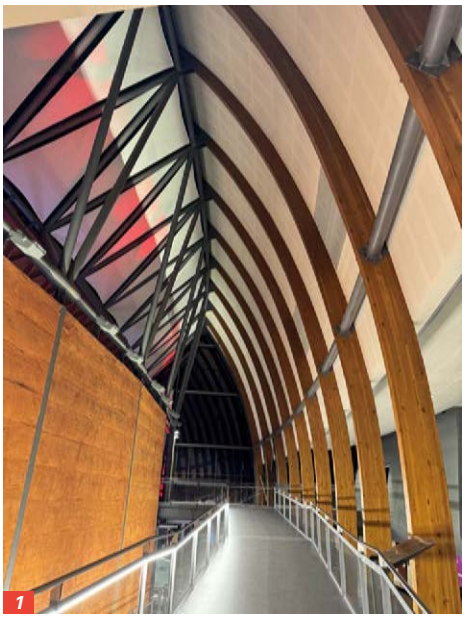


Industry stars shine bright

2026 SA, NT & WA National Timber & Hardware Association (NTHA) Awards.

By CAMPBELL McINNES

FROM standout retail stores and trusted suppliers to rising stars and safety champions, the people driving the timber and hardware industry took centre stage in Adelaide on Friday 30 October, with *Timber & Forestry eNews* among the 179 industry guests attending this special night. SA Skills Commissioner, Cameron Baker and AEN SA EO, Matt Lowe also attended the awards event.





1/ ***The walkway connecting the ground floor to the first level at Adelaide's National Wine Centre features curved laminated timber beams, evoking the sensation of moving through the interior of a wine barrel.***

2/ ***Guests arrive in the Hickinbotham Hall to enjoy pre-dinner drinks and the spectacular timber diagrid roof beams above.*** Images: Campbell McInnes

The industry came together to recognise the people and businesses shaping the future of timber and hardware, with 12 winners named across retail, trade, supply, training and safety categories.

The night was as much about celebration as recognition. Guests gathered for pre-dinner drinks before taking their seats for a program that included a graduation ceremony for NTHA's South Australian graduates, two rounds of awards and, of course, plenty of catching up with industry friends.

A FITTING SETTING

Few venues suit a timber industry celebration quite like Adelaide's National Wine Centre. Set beside the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, the centre was designed so its materials – rammed earth, stone, steel and, in particular, timber – are exposed in their natural state, rather than hidden behind decoration. The showpiece is the Hickinbotham Hall, where a timber diagrid roof built from domestic-scale timber elements is precisely engineered into a shell structure, pre-stressed with stainless steel cables. For an industry that lives and breathes timber, it was a beautiful backdrop for the evening.

The building was opened on 6 October 2001. The distinctive architectural design was created by Cox Grieve Architects in association with Sydney's Cox Richardson. The inspiration came directly from a wine barrel and the vat-like shapes of traditional winemaking vessels.

INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES 'THE HEART AND SOUL' OF THE INDUSTRY

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Beyond the trophies handed out in a stunning setting, NTHA Chairman Peter Hutchison delivered a clear message: independent businesses are the backbone of the industry, and they need the support of the whole supply chain to thrive.

Mr Hutchison acknowledged the pressures facing independent operators, from rising costs and squeezed margins to increasingly complex regulation and tough conditions across construction. Family-owned timber merchants, hardware stores, importers, wholesalers, frame and truss plants and manufacturers do far more than sell product, he said. They employ local people, train apprentices, support their communities and bring generations of knowledge and relationships to the industry.

"They are genuinely the heart and soul of what we do," Mr Hutchison said.

He called on suppliers and industry partners to get behind the independent channel, stressing that doing so strengthens the entire supply chain and keeps the industry competitive, diverse and connected to the communities it serves.

NTHA CEO David Little was unable to attend due to illness. It would have been Mr Little's last NTHA Awards dinner as CEO, and Mr Hutchison thanked him for his work over the past eight years. Mr Hutchison also thanked Paul Stewart of Barrow & Bench, who stepped in to present awards on Mr Little's behalf, and noted that Mr Stewart was formerly the chair of Hardware Australia and a key person in enabling the successful merger with TABMA to form NTHA in early 2023. Since NTHA's inception, he has served first as joint chair and then as vice chair.









1/ ***Peter Hutchison, NTHA Board Chair presented Outstanding Employee Award: Emma Isaac, Adbri Cement.***
2/ ***Retail Store of the Year – Over 2500sqm: Balhannah Mitre 10. Simon Henderson accepted the award with Peter Hutchison, NTHA Board Chair to his right.***
3/ ***Kim Syrus (left), MC winner of Supplier Sales Representative of the Year, Carly Mattner Carly Mattner.***
4/ ***Leon Rayner, ITI Australia (right), accepts Trade Supplier Award from NTHA Board Chair, Peter Hutchison.***
5/ ***Left to Right: Peter Hutchison NTHA, Nikki Slabskyi and Anthony McDonald both from Sunrise Hardware & Garden Products, who took out Hardware Retail Supplier Award.***
6/ ***Leon Rayner, ITI Australia (right) presents Best Frame & Truss Operation Award to Worldwide Truss & Frames (WA). Clinton Wells (left) accepted the award.***
7/ ***Paul Stewart of Barrow & Bench with Safety Champion: Melanie Pink, Pink's Mitre 10.*** All images: Peter Andrinopoulos, supplied by NTHA

CELEBRATING THE NEXT GENERATION

The evening opened with a graduation ceremony led by NTHA General Manager, GTO & RTO, Melissa Clark, who told guests, "We gather not only to honour our graduates' achievements, but also to celebrate the strength, the determination and the passion of the next generation of leaders in the timber and hardware industry. To our NTHA graduates, today

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marks a major milestone in your journey."

NTHA's South Australian graduates received their certificates during the ceremony. Nicole Bampton and Teodora Velea (Certificate III in Business-to-Business Sales), Ryder Grinsted (Certificate III in Bricklaying), Cooper Falco (Certificate III in Cabinetmaking), Jordan Dunn (Certificate III in Supply Chain Operations) and Thomas Banks (Certificate III in Timber Frame or Truss Manufacture) were all celebrated with a photo on stage, while several others who could not attend were also congratulated.



Left to Right: Peter Hutchison, NTHA Board Chair, with Isaac Phillis, Nathan Sprinks, Fiona Rosalia proudly holding the award, Huey Rosalia and Talia Wilson of Port Lincoln Mitre 10. Image: Peter Andrinopoulos, supplied by NTHA

THE WINNERS

Twelve award categories recognised the people and businesses delivering results across South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

RETAIL AND TRADE BUSINESSES

- **Retail Store of the Year – Over 2500sqm: Balhannah Mitre 10**. Simon Henderson received the award and thanked his family, his staff and the other finalists. He said he would present the award to the staff. Finalists: Wills & Co Mitre 10 (Renmark), B&B Hardware, Bianco Construction & Industrial Supplies, Barossa Mitre 10.
- **Retail Store of the Year – Under 2500sqm: Port Lincoln Mitre 10**. The award was accepted by Fiona Rosalia, who thanked NTHA and all the sponsors for the night. Several staff joined Fiona on stage, where she paid tribute to them, saying, "Without these people and our family, we would not be here, so my heart is right here. Thank you." Finalists: Barrow & Bench Mitre 10, Pink's Mitre 10, Bordertown Hardware.
- **Trade Store of the Year: Franz Building Supplies (WA)**. Franz Building Supplies was unable to attend the evening to accept this award, which will be passed on to the team. Finalists: Newtons Building & Landscape Supplies, Timco Timber.
- **Best Frame & Truss Operation: Worldwide Truss & Frames (WA)**, presented by Leon Rayner of ITI Australia. The award was accepted by Clinton Wells, who thanked NTHA for holding such a great event. "It's a special honour just to be nominated," he said. "We're a family business. My dad and brother are on holidays somewhere in Australia currently, so we brought out the rest of the team – a special thanks to them all." Finalists: Freeman Wauchope Timber, Framewayz, JAG Timber & Truss, Big River Group (Dry Creek).

SUPPLIERS LEADING THE WAY

- **Trade Supplier of the Year: ITI Australia**. Leon Rayner, who earlier presented the Frame & Truss award, accepted this one and said, "Firstly, I just want to thank the NTHA for their support, especially around our care program. I want to thank our staff, without your hard work and dedication every day, we wouldn't be in a position to accept awards like this. So, thank you very much." Finalists: Adbri Cement, James Hardie, Hume Doors & Timber, SmartFrame by Tilling, Mortim Australia.
- **Retail Hardware Supplier of the Year: Sunrise Hardware & Garden Products**. The award was accepted by both Anthony McDonald and Nikki Slabskyi. Anthony told the audience, "Sunrise is 43 years old. The staff are like-minded people where our customers are the priority. They're our number one, without them, we're nothing. Thank you to everyone who voted for us." Finalists: Dulux, Wattyl, Cabots Premium Woodcare Brands, Griffon ANZ, Trio Group Australia.
- **Supplier Sales Representative of the Year: Carly Mattner, Brunnings Garden Products**. Carly has been in the role for seven years and described Brunnings as a good company to work for. "I have some wonderful customers, and I really enjoy the job," she said. Finalists: Brad Barclay (Wattyl), Alexandra North (Adbri Cement), David Pisani (Griffon ANZ), Brad Fullerton (Selleys), Miesha Paynter (Trio Group Australia).

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION

- **Trainee/Apprentice of the Year: Jordan Dunn, SmartFrame by Tilling**. Presented by SYC's Rose Caon. Jordan thanked Tilling for the opportunity it had given him. Finalists: Ryder Grinsted (LJP Masonry), Brett Dowse (Big River Group), Cooper Falco (Kustom Joinery).
- **Host Employer of the Year: Tilling Timber**. Recognised for its commitment to mentoring and developing trainees, with special mention of Simon for his ongoing support and guidance.
- **Student of the Year: Lucas Sculfer-Baldwin, ITI Australia**. Lucas thanked ITI Australia, saying, "They are really great and helpful, and I am looking forward to the future." Finalists: Phoenix Smith (Ruedigar Pre-Fab), Nicole Bampton (Big River Group), Robert Butler-Johnson (Wesbeam), Ty Dearing (Regency Timber).

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING PEOPLE

- **Safety Champion: Melanie Pink, Pink's Mitre 10**. A passionate safety leader who champions both physical and psychosocial wellbeing, Melanie has introduced practical training for high-risk tasks, strengthened incident review processes and promoted WHS e-learning. Her involvement with the NTHA SA Committee, TTHG Village Meetings, Women in Hardware and industry mentoring extends her impact well beyond her own workplace.
- **Outstanding Employee Award: Emma Isaac, Adbri Cement**. As a Customer Service Officer, Emma was recognised for her professionalism and resilience,

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and for going above and beyond for customers through a challenging year of stock shortages and operational disruptions. Emma told the room, "Thank you for the award. I'm very honoured to receive this one. I really want to thank my team, I can't be anything without them. It's been a great night, and I hope everyone enjoys the rest of it."

From retail stores and trade suppliers to apprentices, employees and safety leaders, the winners showcased the talent, commitment and expertise that keep the industry moving.

SPONSORS BACKING THE INDUSTRY

The awards would not be possible without the support of industry partners who recognise the value of bringing people together and celebrating achievement. NTHA thanked its sponsors for helping make the event possible and for supporting the wider work of the Association:

- **Platinum Partner: ITI**
- **Silver Partners and Sponsors: Big River and Total Tools Hardware Group**
- **Category Partners: First Super, NCI, SAGE and Sympac**
- **Bronze Sponsors: Adbri Cement and HBT**
- **Trainee/Apprentice of the Year Sponsor: SYC**

Mr Hutchison also thanked the NTHA Board, the state and national committees and the NTHA team, singling out Events Manager Tahlia Belotti for putting the whole night together.



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*1/ **Left to Right: Cooper Falco (Kustom Joinery), Jordan Dunn (SmartFrame by Tilling), Brett Dowse (Big River Group), and Ryder Grinsted (LJP Masonry).***
*2/ **General Manager SA, Simon Swiney accepts the award from Paul Stewart of Barrow & Bench.***
*3/ **Student of the Year: Lucas Sculfer-Baldwin, ITI Australia, proudly holding his award. Finalists: Robert Butler-Johnson (Wesbeam) on his left with Phoenix Smith (Ruedigar Pre-Fab) to his right.*** All images: Peter Andrinopoulos, supplied by NTHA

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

Mr Hutchison congratulated every nominee and finalist, noting that being recognised by your peers is something special. With the winners called back to the stage for a group photo, the evening wrapped up in celebratory style over dessert and music.

Congratulations to all 12 winners, and to every finalist, for the role you play in making the timber and hardware industry stronger.

On the cover: All the winners take centre stage. Congratulations to all. Image: Peter Andrinopoulos, Supplied by NTHA

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Responsible Wood RW/1-10-1

Are NSW farmers being squeezed out of private forestry to protect carbon credits?

FOREST & Wood Communities Australia (FWCA) is demanding answers from the NSW Government over looming cuts to Private Native Forestry (PNF) support services, uncertainty surrounding Commonwealth environmental approvals and a potential conflict with the Government's forest carbon-credit interests.

FWCA has received concerning reports that most fixed-term positions supporting PNF within Local Land Services (LLS) may not be renewed beyond June 2027, with some staff reportedly already departing.

FWCA Chair Steve Dobbyns said farmers and private forest owners deserved certainty about their right to sustainably manage and harvest timber from their own land.

"You don't have to ban private native forestry if you progressively remove the staff, technical support and approval pathways that make it possible."

Two major threats are converging in July 2027.

First, the future staffing of LLS's PNF program is uncertain. Second, changes to Commonwealth environmental legislation take effect on 1 July 2027, removing the existing Regional Forest Agreement exemption. Although a NSW–Commonwealth strategic assessment is underway, the forestry-specific approval arrangements have not been finalised.

"Farmers could find themselves caught between a depleted LLS service and a new Commonwealth regulatory system that isn't ready," Mr Dobbyns said.

> PRIVATE NATIVE FORESTRY MUST NOT BECOME COLLATERAL DAMAGE



FWCA Chair, Steve Dobbyns. Photo: FWCA

THE CARBON-CREDIT CONNECTION

The NSW Government's Improved Native Forest Management (INFM) carbon methodology contains a particularly concerning provision.

Under section 40, increased harvesting in NSW private native forests above a historical baseline can reduce the carbon credits generated by eligible public forest projects.

FWCA understands that NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service already holds a PNF harvesting baseline, although its origins, calculation and reliability have not been publicly explained.

"This creates a potential conflict of interest. The Government stands to benefit financially from stopping timber harvesting in public forests, while increased private forestry production can reduce those carbon benefits.

"We are not suggesting deliberate interference has been established. But the financial incentive exists, and the Government must demonstrate that its carbon interests are not influencing its support for private forestry."

FARMERS DESERVE ANSWERS

FWCA is calling on the NSW Government to:

- Guarantee adequate LLS staffing and PNF services beyond June 2027.
- Publish the PNF harvesting baseline, its data sources and calculation methodology.
- Confirm a workable Commonwealth environmental approval pathway before 1 July 2027.
- Explain how conflicts between INFM carbon revenue and support for PNF will be managed.

"Farmers own and manage these forests. They carry the costs of maintaining their properties and should retain the opportunity to earn income through lawful, sustainable timber production.

"Private native forestry must not become collateral damage in the Government's pursuit of forest carbon credits."

FWCA urges farmers, private forest owners and rural industry organisations to raise these concerns with their local MPs and demand firm commitments before July 2027.

> HARVESTING IN NSW PRIVATE NATIVE FORESTS ABOVE A HISTORICAL BASELINE CAN REDUCE THE CARBON CREDITS

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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: Architecture & Design Sustainability Summit 2026 – The Fullerton Hotel, Sydney. The summit provides a valuable opportunity for built environment professionals to hear from industry leaders, explore emerging ideas and gain practical insights that can help shape better project outcomes For more information and to register, visit https://www.sustainablebuildingawards.com.au/sustainability-summit-2026/

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

12: WoodSolutions Webinar – ONLINE EVENT, 1.30pm - 2.30pm AEDT. Topic - Managing condensation risk in modern timber buildings. For more information and to register for the event, click here.

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

19: WoodSolutions Timber in Action Tour – Perth, 8.00am - 5.00pm AWST. Hosted by Timber Insight, the tour will take attendees behind the scenes of five projects across Perth. For more information and to book, click here.

25: WoodSolutions Webinar – ONLINE EVENT, 12.00pm - 1.00pm AEDT. Topic - Understanding Australian MGP Timber: Grading, compliance, and discolouration. For more information and to register for the event, click here.

26-27: Master Builders Australia National Conference and Awards – The Star, Brisbane. Sponsored by WoodSolutions. For more information and to book, click here.

2027

10-14 MAY: LIGNA. Builds – Exhibition Grounds, Hannover, Germany. Watch the LIGNA 2027 house take shape over the 5-day event. For more information, visit https://www.ligna.de/en/side-events/ligna-builds/

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NZ durable eucalypts: pathway to diversification

PART ONE. By MICHAEL SMITH

SINCE its establishment in 2008, New Zealand Dryland Forests Innovation (NZDFI) has made significant gains in genetically improving drought-tolerant eucalypts that produce naturally ground-durable hardwood.

As part of an ongoing series of articles, *Timber & Forestry Enews* invited Paul Millen, NZDFI's Research Manager, to update progress on the development of a sustainable hardwood industry in up to 12 regional catchments over the next 30 years.

Mr Millen says the organisation's forestry research outcomes now provide a market- and science-based pathway for those who want to diversify. "Sustainable durable eucalypt forestry is feasible for many North Island regions, and Marlborough, Nelson and North Canterbury."

UPCOMING FIELD DAY

With that in mind, NZDFI is planning a national field day to be held on Wednesday 17 February 2027 in Hawke's Bay, "one of the regions identified with excellent potential, and where 10 NZDFI trials were established from 2011 to 2021".

"This will be targeted to forest growers and farmers interested in the potential for durable hardwood forestry as a productive land use in areas where more intense summer droughts are likely to become more frequent."

The day will include hearing from some of NZDFI's science team who have been evaluating a number of prospects:

- the potential value of a new durable hardwood industry in New Zealand
- growth rates and biomass yields produced by durable eucalypt species
- using naturally durable hardwood for vineyard posts and poles, and other products
- alternative potential markets, including bioenergy, for biomass residues
- practical aspects of growing, harvesting, processing and utilising durable eucalypts
- growing durable eucalypts under the Emissions Trading Scheme.



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1/ ***PhD candidate Shiva Pariyar collecting tree locations using the Trimble Geo 7X GNSS.*** Image: Elijah Goodkind, courtesy of Shiva Pariyar

2/ ***Shiva clipping leaf samples as a ground reference.*** Image: Maggie Crawford, courtesy of Shiva Pariyar

3/ ***Leaves damaged by paropsine beetle larvae.*** Image: Shiva Pariyar

PHD STUDENTS

An important component of NZDFI's project history is the ongoing research and development undertaken by a number of PhD candidates at the University of Canterbury School of Forestry.

Among them is Shiva Pariyar who is completing the final year of his PhD, focusing on the remote sensing of foliar insect herbivory (defoliation) in *E. bosistoana* (coast grey box) forests.

> "SUSTAINABLE DURABLE EUCALYPT FORESTRY IS FEASIBLE FOR MANY NORTH ISLAND REGIONS

Mr Pariyar has previously worked on predicting the current and future potential distributions of nine invasive paropsine beetles in New Zealand. He determined that "Host-specific richness hotspots indicated elevated herbivory risk mainly in northern regions, while future projections suggested a broad persistence of suitable habitats, with potential southward and upslope range expansion under climate change."

In addition, he has developed a UAV LiDAR-based predictive model to quantify individual tree-level foliar herbivory (defoliation) caused by chewing insects in *E. bosistoana*. "Using high-density Zenmuse L1 LiDAR metrics and ground-measured leaf area loss from 408 trees across three NZDFI sites,

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the best-performing model explained approximately 74% of the variation in tree-level herbivory.

"This research demonstrates the potential of UAV LiDAR to provide an objective, repeatable and scalable method for assessing herbivory severity across *E. bosistoana* stands, with potential applications in breeding programmes, pest monitoring and management decision-making."

Collectively, he says the work should provide "direct practical value to the NZDFI programme by supporting the identification and selection of more insect-resilient *Eucalyptus* genotypes, improving pest and silvicultural decision-making, identifying priority areas for monitoring and intervention, and enabling herbivory to be assessed consistently from individual trees to management units".

More broadly, this research can contribute to strengthening the case for naturally durable eucalypts in New Zealand's drylands as a complementary alternative to monocultural *Pinus radiata* plantations.



Milad Lezgi evaluated the potential of E. bosistoana for mass timber construction through five interconnected studies. Image: Milad Lezgi

MASS TIMBER POTENTIAL

Also making a valuable contribution to the diversity of research is Milad Lezgi with his recently completed PhD thesis, *Utilisation of High-Density Eucalyptus Timber Species in Mass Timber*.

Milad evaluated the potential of *E. bosistoana* for mass timber construction through five interconnected studies that spanned "mechanical properties, dowel embedment behaviour, adhesive bonding in cross-laminated timber (CLT), and the torsional and in-plane performance of dowel cross-laminated timber (DCLT) panels.

"Although adhesive bonding presented challenges, the adhesive-free DCLT system showed promising structural performance."

His work has provided a comprehensive pathway from material characterisation to panel-scale behaviour, supporting the future structural use of high-density hardwood in sustainable mass timber construction.

More in next week's edition, including the possibility of selling locally grown eucalypt logs to wood processors in Victoria and New South Wales; and other research undertaken under the auspices of the University of Canterbury School of Forestry.

Thanks to Paul Millen, NZDFI's Research Manager, for his help in compiling this material.



Wood waste has new worth

Sustainable wood DIY contest entries triple, with 20 finalists showcased.

PARTICIPATION in the Sustainable Wood DIY Contest 2026 has more than tripled, with 149 entries received this year compared with 48 entries in its inaugural edition in 2024.

Of the total, 88 entries, or 59%, were submitted under the Student Category, while the remaining 61 entries were from the Public Category. The increase reflects growing interest, particularly among the younger generation, in exploring the potential of wood through design, reuse and the creation of innovative products.

Organised by the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), the three-day event at IOI City Mall, Putrajaya, featured 20 finalist products from the Public and Student Categories. The prize-giving ceremony, held on 4 October 2026, was officiated by YB Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad, Minister of Plantation and Commodities.



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1/ ***Public Category winners: first place - Jeffrey Yong Chin Hoe, second place - Mohd Haidil bin Sulaiman, and third place - Falah bin Abu.***

2/ ***Student Category winner: first place - Bryan Khoo Ting Xiang of SMK St Xavier, second place - Nur Hamra binti Nasir of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, and third place - Nurin Sofiya binti Izamri of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).*** All images: MTC

Commenting on the contest, Minister of Plantation and Commodities YB Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad said the initiative demonstrates how creativity and innovation can help optimise the use of wood, including leftover materials that still have value.

"Wood waste and offcuts can be given a new function and value through creativity, design and craftsmanship. Initiatives such as this not only provide a platform for emerging talent but also encourage the creation of wood products that are creative, functional and value-added. This approach is important in strengthening the competitiveness of Malaysia's timber industry," she said.

Held under the theme 'From Waste to Wonders', the contest encouraged participants to transform wood waste, recycled wood, reclaimed wood and wood offcuts into creative, functional and value-added products. Among the entries showcased were an eco-craft desk lamp, a wooden guitar, a dual-purpose frame that can also be used as a seat, a foldable chessboard, a creative workbench set and innovative lighting pieces.

The contest is part of MTC's efforts to build greater public understanding of wood as a renewable resource, while encouraging the creative, optimal and responsible use of wood resources.

> "MATERIALS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED NO LONGER USEFUL CAN STILL BE GIVEN A NEW PURPOSE

MTC Chairman Datu Haji Zainal Abidin Haji Abdullah said the increase in participation reflected broader public interest in the competition.

"The increase from 48 entries in 2024 to 149 entries this year is very encouraging. It shows that the contest is gaining wider interest among the public and attracting more participants to explore the potential of wood creatively. The contest also provides a platform to bring the public closer to the timber industry and demonstrate how wood can be transformed into useful and valuable products," he said.

Finalists were assessed based on creativity, sustainability, functionality and craftsmanship. Final scores comprised 60% from the judges' evaluation and 40% from public voting.

In each category, the first, second and third-place winners received RM1,500, RM1,000 and RM500 respectively. Participants who placed fourth to tenth each received RM100 and a certificate.

In the Public Category, Jeffrey Yong Chin Hoe took first place with Universe IV, a handcrafted guitar, followed by Mohd Haidil bin Sulaiman in second place with Sutra Bowl (Nyibodak), while Falah bin Abu secured third place with Tri-Element: Eco-Craft Desk Lamp, a functional lighting piece crafted from reclaimed wood.

In the Student Category, Bryan Khoo Ting Xiang of SMK St Xavier emerged

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MALAYSIAN WOOD EXPO





Discover Innovation and Excellence at MWE 2027

Mark your calendars and prepare for an exciting showcase of timber and wood-based products, innovative technologies and industry solutions!

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) proudly announces the return of the highly anticipated Malaysian Wood Expo (MWE) for its fourth edition on 8–9 November 2027 at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC), Kuala Lumpur.

Building on the success of its previous editions since 2019, MWE continues to bring together international wood-based manufacturers, exporters, suppliers and buyers under one roof, offering opportunities to discover a diverse range of products, explore new technologies and forge valuable business connections.

With exhibition, business matching and conference opportunities, MWE 2027 is set to be an exciting gathering for the global timber industry.

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From P 10

as the first-place winner with Anima Ligni, a chessboard created from a rescued log and solid hardwood; Nur Hamra binti Nasir of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, took second place with Foldable Chessboard; while Nurin Sofiya binti Izamri of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) placed third with Kumbu Craft, a statement side table. The winning entries stood out for their creativity, craftsmanship and thoughtful transformation of wood waste, offcuts and reclaimed materials into functional, distinctive and value-added products.

The contest also recognised the public's favourites through the People's Choice Award, determined by votes cast by mall visitors during the exhibition on 2 and 3 October 2026. In the Public Category, the award went to Wooden Heart – PC Casing by Noorashikin binti Othman of Kolej Komuniti Jelebu. In the Student Category, Lengkungan Cahaya Estetika, created by Muhammad Danny Ashraff bin Ishamuddin, Shiekh Ajnabil bin Shiekh Fazilur Rahman and Muhammad Haikal bin Azmi of Kolej Komuniti Kuala Langat, received the highest number of public votes and was named the winner of the People's Choice Award.

Meanwhile, MTC Chief Executive Officer, Puan Noraihan Abdul Rahman said the contest also highlighted the value of timber as a renewable resource, as well as the importance of using it optimally and responsibly.

"Timber has long-term value when used responsibly. Materials that may be considered no longer useful can still be given a new purpose.



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1/ ***The Sustainable Wood DIY Contest 2026 exhibition at IOI City Mall, Putrajaya, showcased 20 finalist products under the theme From Waste to Wonders.***

2/ ***A selection of Sustainable Wood DIY Contest finalists featuring lighting, furniture and musical instruments crafted from wood offcuts and recycled timber.*** All images: MTC

"This contest demonstrates that timber waste and offcuts are not merely waste materials but can be transformed into products of value through creativity, design and craftsmanship," she said.

Rekayu Penang, a Penang-based creative space and woodworking workshop, together with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), supported the contest as Strategic Partners. The collaboration brought together expertise in woodworking and academia to broaden engagement among students, creative practitioners and the wider public.

Malaysia's timber industry continues to play an important role in the national economy, with timber and timber products exports reaching RM21.51 billion in 2025. As global markets place increasing emphasis on sustainability, efforts to optimise material use and create value-added products remain important in strengthening the competitiveness of Malaysia's timber industry.

> "CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND CRAFTSMANSHIP TRANSFORM TIMBER WASTE INTO PRODUCTS OF VALUE

ABOUT THE MALAYSIAN TIMBER COUNCIL

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) was established in January 1992 to promote the development and growth of Malaysia's timber industry. Its key objectives include promoting trade and developing global markets for Malaysian timber products; empowering the industry through the expansion of manufacturing technology and increased value-added production; strengthening the supply of raw materials for the timber-processing sector; providing relevant information-sharing and advisory services to the industry; and enhancing the global credibility and reputation of Malaysia's timber industry. Further information on the Council's activities can be obtained from **www.mtc.com.my**

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Timber Union welcomes Victorian Coalition's forest plan

THE Timber, Furnishing and Textiles Union (TFTU) has welcomed the Victorian Liberals and Nationals' new forest management policy as a step in the right direction.

Announced on 28 October 2026, the policy proposes ecological thinning and fuel reduction across 5,000 hectares of public forest annually, with recovered timber made available to Victorian mills and manufacturers.



Leo Skourdoumbis, TFTU's newly elected National Secretary
Image: TFTU

"Healthy forests need good management, including reducing bushfire risks. And where that work produces usable timber, why burn it when it could support local timber supply, jobs and regional communities?" said Leo Skourdoumbis, who was recently elected TFTU National Secretary and will begin his four-year term on 2 January 2027.

The union said decisions about whether and where to thin forests should be informed by forest scientists, foresters, forestry workers, fire authorities and local communities.

"Sometimes good management means leaving forests undisturbed. Other times it means thinning, fuel reduction or restoration."

This approach, known as active, adaptive forest management, is consistent with the Commonwealth-backed Timber Fibre Strategy and the union's successful push for "proactive management" in Victorian Labor's policy platform.

Victoria already has a substantial, risk-based fuel management program, with almost 110,000 hectares treated in 2024–25, including 17,465 hectares of non-burn treatments such as mechanical slashing, mowing and mulching. Ecological thinning research and trials are also underway.

Victoria's existing State Forest By-Products Framework provides a sound basis for determining how recovered timber can be put to its best use for the community.

However, the union cautioned against overstating what the proposal could deliver for timber manufacturing.

The Coalition estimates recovering between 100,000 and 200,000 tonnes annually, roughly 7–13% of VicForests' annual harvest a decade ago, using indicative weight conversions.

The actual volume suitable for sawmilling remains uncertain, while timber recovered from ecological thinning is likely to be irregular in volume and variable in quality.

"Mills and manufacturers need reliable timber supplies, and workers need job security. Recovered timber is a useful supplement, not a silver bullet. The future of the industry still depends on sustainably managed production forests," Mr Skourdoumbis said.

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Off The Rails Byron Bay highly commended for sustainability

BYRON Bay reclaimed timber supplier Off The Rails has been highly commended in two categories at the 2026 Northern Rivers Business Awards, Excellence in Sustainability and Excellence in Micro Business, as the business marks more than ten years of trading.





1/ ***Reclaimed timber doors and sleepers feature in the landscaped courtyard at Casa Franc.***
2/ ***Timber pergola beams and pathway sleepers create a warm, textural outdoor setting at Casa Franc.*** All images: Louise Roche, Photographer @villastyling

Founded by Julian Simpson in 2015, Off The Rails recovers Australian hardwood from decommissioned railway and bridge infrastructure, selling reclaimed timber for reuse in construction, landscaping and design.

The business estimates it has recovered and on sold around 20,000 tonnes of reclaimed timber since launching in 2015, including an estimated 3,000 tonnes during the 2025/26 financial year.

"Sustainability is close to our heart. It's the core of what we do," Simpson said.

"Every piece of reclaimed timber we bring back into use is one less piece of new timber needed across the Byron region and beyond. Being in business for ten years is something I'm really proud of."

The Excellence in Micro Business recognition follows back-to-back wins in the category in 2023 and 2024.

GIVING AUSTRALIAN HARDWOOD A SECOND LIFE

Off The Rails has sourced timber from infrastructure projects around Australia, including purchasing 31,500 railway sleepers associated with the Inland Rail Network upgrade. The sleepers represent approximately 2,400 tonnes of timber, equivalent to about 100 semi-trailer loads, and have been progressively graded and sold for reuse.

Other sources include bridge timbers recovered from Lismore's Terania Street Bridge and Byron Bay's Old Bangalow Road rail bridge.

The reclaimed material includes dense Australian hardwoods such as ironbark, grey box, spotted gum and tallowwood, valued for their durability and use in structural and architectural applications.

Operating from a 4,000-square-metre yard at 268 Ewingsdale Road, Byron Bay, the business has a 1,600-square-metre shed and a custom hardwood mill designed to process large bridge timbers, railway sleepers and transoms.

Timber is milled to builders' and architects' specifications for applications including structural work, cladding, pergolas, seating and architectural features, with finishes ranging from rough-sawn to sanded, oiled and hand-hewn.

> "SUSTAINABILITY IS CLOSE TO OUR HEART. IT'S THE CORE OF WHAT WE DO

The business aims to direct each piece of timber to an appropriate use. Premium material is supplied for construction and design, offcuts go to furniture makers, and lower grades are used for landscaping. Clean sawdust is supplied for horse stables and mulch, while remaining material is used for firewood. Railway hardware, including fishplates and bolts, is removed and resold.

Off The Rails says its milling and power tools run on solar energy with battery storage, while freight is consolidated into bulk semi-trailer loads.

For structural applications, recycled hardwood has a national reference in FWPA Standard G01, released in 2025, which provides guidance for visually grading recycled hardwood for structural use.

RECLAIMED TIMBER IN AWARD-WINNING PROJECTS

Off The Rails supplies more than 500 projects annually through a network of over 200 builders, landscapers and designers. Its timber has also been specified by the councils of Byron, Ballina, Lismore, Tweed and Clarence Valley.

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Projects include reclaimed white cypress and red ironbark structural trusses at Fig 'n' Fox on the Gold Coast, built by Jaspin Construction, and 1,250 milled reclaimed sleepers used for pathways at Damia, the Byron hinterland estate formerly known as The Range.

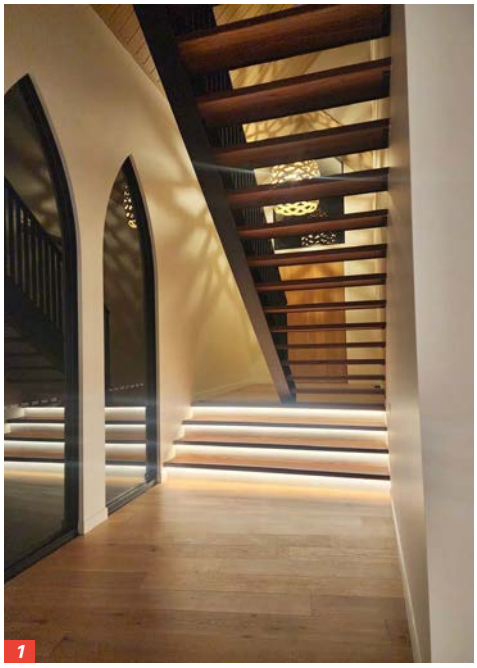
Bridge timbers have also been used at a Belongil waterfront property built by JBuilds, while reclaimed timber features in Byron Bay's Belongil hospitality precinct, home to Belongil Bistro.

At Obsidian, a home in Tallai in the Gold Coast hinterland, reclaimed railway sleepers supplied by Off The Rails were milled into hardwood stair treads. Designed by Ryan Moore of Hinterland Design Co. and built by Lucian Constructions, the home was named the Gold Coast 2026 Regional Winner in the Master Builders Queensland 2026 Awards Individual Home from $2.5 million up to $3 million category.

In South Lismore, Off The Rails supplied reclaimed timber for the post-flood rebuild of the Station Hotel, working with Joel Jensen Constructions.

At The Eighth Spring, a 37-acre estate and event property near Clunes in the Byron hinterland, reclaimed timber supplied by Off The Rails was used for barn doors, pergolas, pathway fencing and fire pit seating.

> OFF THE RAILS HAS RECOVERED AND ON SOLD AROUND 20,000 TONNES OF RECLAIMED TIMBER FOR REUSE





1/ ***The floating timber staircase at Obsidian, crafted from Off The Rails reclaimed sleepers.***
Image: @lucianconstructions

2/ ***Off The Rails founder Julian Simpson on the red carpet at the Northern Rivers Business Awards.***
Image: Off The Rails supplied

The project received two distinct accolades at the regional Master Builders Association of NSW regional awards, winning both the Landscape Project in the Northern Rivers Award and the Commercial Build in the Northern Rivers Award.

The development brought together Motif Group, which partnered on the commercial build and project management, and Hard Yakka Land & Waterscapes, whose work included the spring-fed ecosystem, stone layouts and native landscaping.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Beyond its commercial operations, Off The Rails has donated approximately $50,000 in timber and support to community projects, including Byron Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.

As it enters its second decade, the business continues to focus on recovering Australian hardwood from decommissioned infrastructure and finding new applications for timber in construction, landscaping and design.

To view projects and for further information, **click here.**

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Tairāwhiti gets new land-use transition focus

Government redirects $16.4 million and expands advisory group to tackle land-use risks.

THE New Zealand Government is redirecting the remaining $16.4 million from a $27 million Ministry for Primary Industries woody debris package toward debris removal, mitigation measures and pilot projects exploring land-use transition in Tairāwhiti. It has also provided one-off funding to Gisborne District Council to accelerate processing of forestry harvest consents over a 12-week period for roughly 600 hectares of harvesting currently awaiting decisions.



Woody debris piled after recent weather. Remaining Government funding is being redirected to removal, mitigation and land-use transition work in the region. Image: Shutterstock

At the same time, the former Tairāwhiti Forestry Action Group has been refocused as the Tairāwhiti Transition Advisory Group (TTAG), with a wider mandate to support regional resilience and long-term land-use transition. Forestry Minister Todd McClay said the changes aim to better coordinate work across the region while facilitation and an independent council review of consenting practices continue.

"No one organisation can fix the challenges facing Tairāwhiti on its own. The group's wider role will help join up the work across the region and keep it focused on the long term," McClay said.

The pilots will test sustainable logging on hillsides, options for land-use change and slash traps designed to reduce woody debris entering waterways. Initial efforts will prioritise high-risk areas and work with landowners on barriers such as harvesting risks, consent requirements and establishment costs. Results are intended to inform future policy and funding decisions.

Gisborne District Council chief executive Nedine Thatcher Swann described the package as an important step in addressing the region's vulnerable terrain and extreme weather impacts. "We need a future where forestry can continue on appropriate land, harvesting is undertaken well, and land carrying the greatest risk has a realistic pathway to transition," she said. Council has pointed to ongoing work in the Te Ārai demonstration catchment, where property and catchment transition plans are being developed with landowners. The council welcomed the consenting capacity support while stressing it will continue to maintain the environmental protections communities expect.

Eastland Wood Council chairman Julian Kohn and the New Zealand Forest Owners Association also welcomed the moves. Kohn noted the region has endured tough years and that some of the most erosion-prone land will need to transition. He highlighted the hundreds of millions of dollars forestry and wood processing contribute to the local economy each year and the pressure already felt by contractors, workers and families. The refocused group, he said, offers a chance to create a workable plan that protects communities while sustaining forestry opportunities.

> "WE CANNOT KEEP FOCUSING ONLY ON CLEANING UP AFTER EACH MAJOR EVENT

Ngāti Porou's interim chief executive Henare Walker called the broader focus on long-term land-use transition encouraging and something the iwi had long advocated. "We have been saying that Ngāti Porou cannot keep focusing only on cleaning up after each major event. We have to deal with the bigger question of what land use should look like across the rohe," he said, emphasising the need for Ngāti Porou involvement from the outset so decisions deliver lasting benefits for whenua, people and the economy.

Mana Taiao Tairāwhiti spokesperson Manu Caddie welcomed recognition that land-use transition can reduce ongoing damage but described the response as still incomplete. He called for clearer representation of affected communities, stronger links to existing work including the earlier Land Use Transition Business Case, transparent progress measures, an implementation timetable and details on funding distribution. Sustained investment in permanent indigenous cover, pest and weed management, and supported employment would be needed to give landowners confidence, he said.

CONTEXT OF A LONG-RUNNING CHALLENGE

Tairāwhiti has faced repeated severe weather events that mobilised large volumes of woody debris (slash) from steep, erosion-prone hills, damaging infrastructure, waterways and properties. Significant Crown and council spending has already gone into clean-up: by late 2025 nearly 600,000

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cubic metres of large woody debris had been removed from rivers and beaches in some phases of work, with total Crown spending on debris and sediment removal in the region previously reported above $110 million. A further $27 million MPI package was allocated for ongoing woody debris management.

A cross-sector Transition Advisory Group (and related work) earlier developed guidelines and a business case seeking substantial Crown co-investment, around $359 million over 10 years, alongside regional and private contributions, to transition tens of thousands of hectares (estimates have ranged up to around 100,000 hectares of highly erodible land) out of high-risk production uses into permanent cover. That larger package was not advanced by government, with the minister previously describing elements as unrealistic. The current $16.4 million redirection and pilots are therefore framed as practical first steps rather than a full transition programme.



Harvesting machinery on steep terrain in a clear-felled area. Steep, erosion-prone hillsides remain a central challenge for forestry in Tairāwhiti.
Image: Shutterstock

An independent review of Gisborne District Council's forestry consenting and compliance approach, released in early November 2026 and chaired by former Attorney-General Christopher Finlayson KC, found the council had acted diligently and that its regulatory environment was proportionate to the region's risks. It urged greater Crown responsibility for the long-term land-use challenges, noting the scale of the problem exceeds what local tools alone can resolve.

The new funding and expanded advisory group sit alongside ongoing facilitation and the review's findings. Stakeholders broadly agree that forestry will remain part of the regional economy on suitable land, while the highest-risk country requires realistic pathways out of rotational plantation forestry. The pilots and TTAG work will test approaches on the ground; whether they scale into the more substantial, sustained investment many parties say is required remains an open question for future policy decisions.



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