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Government reply leaves key INFM questions hanging

COVER STORY P3



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New program to strengthen forest certification and auditing capability

A NEW training program aims to strengthen auditing capability across the forestry sector in Australia and New Zealand, helping forestry businesses build the expertise to navigate certification requirements, while expanding the pool of specialist auditors equipped to assess forest management practices against certification standards.



PEFC International's Richard Laity (top right) meeting with JASANZ' Simon Bannock (top left), Caroline Bell-Singh (bottom left), Tatiana Bridova (bottom right) and technical consultant Kevin Reardon (on screen) in Wellington for a program planning session. Image: Responsible Wood

The JASANZ Futures x Responsible Wood program will help forestry businesses build internal auditing expertise. The program also provides experienced auditors from other sectors a pathway into forestry, or for auditors already in the sector, the opportunity to upskill.

To encourage industry participation, Responsible Wood is sponsoring 15 places in the program.

"Forest certification gives businesses a credible way to demonstrate responsible forest management and meet market expectations," said Responsible Wood Acting CEO, Matt de Jongh.

"By investing in auditing capability, our goal is to continue reinforcing the integrity of sustainable forest management practices, to equip businesses with additional skills to maintain their certification and to ensure forests are responsibly managed for generations to come."

The program combines Responsible Wood's expertise in sustainable forest management certification with JASANZ's expertise in accreditation and conformity assessment, delivered via online learning, mentoring and field trip opportunities, and is recognised by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) as initial training for forest management auditors.

> "FOREST CERTIFICATION GIVES BUSINESSES A CREDIBLE WAY TO DEMONSTRATE RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

JASANZ CEO Sarah Valentine said the partnership was an investment in market confidence. "Accredited certification is part of the infrastructure of trade. It gives businesses a way to show their products and practices meet the standards their markets expect.

"Our partnership with Responsible Wood is a long-term commitment to forestry and the trade it supports," Ms Valentine said.

A reflection of growing adoption of PEFC certification in New Zealand, the program offers an exciting opportunity to build capability for the trans-Tasman forestry sector.

"The program builds on existing capability in the region, complementing sustainable forestry practices with on the ground support from JASANZ technical assessors alongside PEFC New Zealand," said PEFC International's South Pacific Programme Manager, Richard Laity.

"While the program was designed for Australian and New Zealand audiences, it remains open to forestry and conformity assessment professionals from other regions."

The program runs from April to July 2027. Sessions will be delivered by specialists from Responsible Wood, JASANZ and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) – potential applicants are encouraged to explore the program for more detailed information, **click here**.



Premier asked to explain unanswered $1.5 billion forest carbon claim

Mr Dobbyns and Dr Raison exchange with the Premier and DCCEEW. Part 1.

FOREST & Wood Communities Australia (FWCA) says key questions about the NSW Government's claimed $1.5 billion carbon benefit from ending public native forest harvesting remain unanswered.

This is an ongoing issue. Readers can revisit previous published reports and concerns in *Enews* 911 and *Enews* 914.

On 26 September 2026, former CSIRO Chief Research Scientist Dr John Raison and forest scientist and FWCA Chair Steve Dobbyns wrote to Premier Chris Minns questioning the assumptions behind the claim.

The Premier referred the matter to NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). A month later, the Department responded - but did not answer the principal numerical questions raised.

"The issue was never whether the Improved Native Forest Management method had been approved," Mr Dobbyns said.

> "WHEN A FIGURE AS LARGE AS $1.5 BILLION IS USED, THE ASSUMPTIONS SHOULD BE OPEN TO SCRUTINY



The forests at the centre of the dispute: key questions about the $1.5 billion ACCU claim are still unanswered.
Image: Shutterstock

"The issue is whether the numbers behind the $1.5 billion claim withstand scrutiny.

"We asked how 1.5 million ACCUs [Australian Carbon Credit Units] a year was derived, why $67 per ACCU was assumed, whether $15.90 per hectare per year is a realistic management cost, and how 15 years of carbon credits can meet costs associated with a 100-year permanence obligation.

"A month later, those questions were still unanswered."

Dr Raison and Mr Dobbyns have now written back to the Premier seeking a substantive response and release of the underlying modelling.

The registered North East RFA INFM project covers about 531,677 hectares, including 117,275 hectares of carbon protection areas.

"If the Government is forecasting 1.5 million ACCUs a year, it needs to say clearly what area and modelling scenario that figure relates to," Mr Dobbyns said.

There is also a separate transparency issue.

In its 5 June 2026 advice, the Commonwealth's Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee recorded that NSW DCCEEW had provided a fully modelled FullCAM scenario and had "agreed to publish this scenario in the event the method is made."

The method was made on 25 June 2026.

"NSW had already agreed to publish the modelling once the method was made," Mr Dobbyns said.

"That condition has now been met.

"When a figure as large as $1.5 billion is being used to support a major change in public forest policy, the assumptions behind it should be open to scrutiny.

"Release the modelling and let the numbers speak for themselves."

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The disappointing reply

Mr Dobbyns and Dr Raison exchange with the Premier and DCCEEW. Part 2.

DEAR Mr Dobbyns and Dr Raison

I refer to your correspondence to the NSW Premier, the Hon Chris Minns MP, regarding carbon revenues and the long-term cost of managing Improved Native Forest Management (INFM) method projects. Your correspondence was referred to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and I have been asked to reply.

DCCEEW partnered with the Australian National University Enterprise to develop the INFM method. The draft method was subject to extensive technical development, stakeholder engagement and public consultation, including briefings and workshops with experts. The INFM method was publicly exhibited with an invitation to submit comments by both the Australian and NSW governments.

Following consultation, the draft method was submitted for independent assessment by the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee against the statutory Offsets Integrity Standards.

On 25 June 2026, the INFM method was approved by the Australian Government's Assistant Minister for Energy and Climate Change. The method was found to meet the Offsets Integrity Standards under the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011 (Cth).



The response to the letter sent focused on how the INFM method was approved by government and that the Great Koala National Park would become a centrepiece of Koala conservation without answering the actual concerns. Image: Shutterstock

While individuals and organisations may hold differing views regarding the method, it has completed the Australian Government's method development, public consultation, and independent assessment processes, and has been approved for use under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme.

On 22 October 2026, the Clean Energy Regulator registered the North East Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) project under the INFM method in the ACCU Scheme. The North East RFA project covers approximately 531,677 hectares of public native forests in the North East RFA region of NSW, including 117,275 hectares designated as carbon protection areas.

In accordance with standard registration processes, the Clean Energy Regulator has undertaken a rigorous assessment of the application to ensure the project meets all the legislative requirements under the ACCU Scheme.

ACCUs from establishment of the Great Koala National Park will not be able to be sold to fossil fuel projects. The NSW Government will prioritise ACCUs for targeted manufacturing industries in NSW to help support their transition into the future and maintain vital jobs. These ACCUs provide a significant opportunity for NSW to fund ongoing management of fire, feral animals and weeds.

The Government recognises that reduced native forest harvesting affects individuals, businesses and communities in the region. The Government is providing support for affected workers and industry while it continues work to establish Great Koala National Park.

The NSW Government expects to formally create the park in late 2026. When established, the park is set to become a centrepiece of koala conservation in NSW as well as a must-see destination in the area, attracting visitors and contributing to the local economy.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me at gknp@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Trish Harrup
Executive Director Conservation and Aboriginal Partnerships
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

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Responsible Wood RW/1-10-1

The follow up request

Mr Dobbyns and Dr Raison exchange with the Premier and DCCEEW. Part 3.

DEAR Premier

Thank you for referring our correspondence concerning the claimed $1.5 billion carbon benefit from ending public native forest harvesting in NSW to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

We have now received the Department's response, reference MD26/5904.

Unfortunately, it does not address the substantive questions raised in our letter.

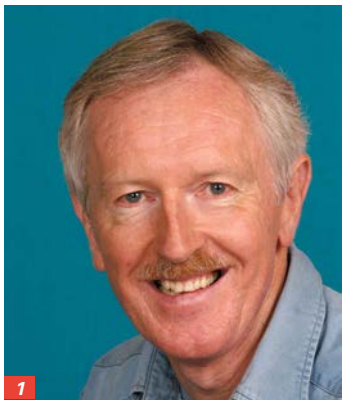
Our concern was not whether the Improved Native Forest Management method had completed the Commonwealth approval process. We are well aware that the method has been approved.

Our questions concerned the assumptions underpinning the NSW Government's much-publicised claim that ending public native forest harvesting could generate approximately $1.5 billion in carbon value.

The response describes the development and approval of the INFM method, registration of the North East RFA project and the Government's intended use of ACCUs. None of that answers the quantitative issues we raised.

In particular, the response provides no explanation or supporting analysis for:

1. **1.5 million ACCUs per year** - including how this level of additional carbon sequestration is derived and reconciled with the carbon contained in NSW's annual native forest timber harvest;
2. **the assumed ACCU price of $67** - including the basis for that price and the sensitivity of the $1.5 billion estimate to lower carbon prices;
3. **the assumed management cost of $15.90 per hectare per year** - including how this compares with the demonstrated costs of managing NSW public forests for fire, roads, weeds, feral animals, recreation and other obligations;





1/ ***Dr John Raison is a former CSIRO Chief Research Scientist.*** Image: John Raison

2/ ***Steve Dobbyns is a forest scientist, consultant and chair of Forest and Wood Communities Australia.*** Image: FWCA

4. **15 years of carbon credits versus 100 years of permanence** - including how management expenditure for the remaining 85 years is accounted for after the crediting period ends; and
5. **the net financial return to NSW** after the full long-term costs and liabilities associated with the project are included.

Indeed, the Department's response states that the ACCUs will provide an opportunity to fund the ongoing management of "fire, feral animals and weeds". That makes the unanswered question about the 100-year management liability even more important.

The response also provides a significant new figure: the registered North East RFA project covers approximately **531,677 hectares**, of which **117,275 hectares are designated carbon protection areas**.

We therefore also ask that the Government clarify whether the forecast **1.5 million ACCUs per year** is derived from the 117,275 hectares of carbon protection areas, the full 531,677-hectare registered project area, the Great Koala National Park area, or some other area or modelling scenario.

These are not questions about whether the INFM method has been approved. They are questions about whether the **financial case being presented to the NSW public is credible**.

The $1.5 billion figure has been used publicly as an important claimed benefit of the Government's forest policy. It should therefore be possible to provide the calculations and assumptions from which it was derived.

We would appreciate a substantive response to these questions and access to the modelling and calculations relied upon.

We also note that, in its advice to the Assistant Minister dated 5 June 2026, the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee recorded that NSW DCCEEW had provided it with a fully modelled Full Carbon Accounting Model scenario and had **"agreed to publish this scenario in the event the method is made."**

The INFM method was subsequently made on 25 June 2026.

Accordingly, could the Government please also provide the fully modelled FullCAM scenario referred to by ERAC, together with sufficient information on its assumptions, parameters, model settings and outputs to allow the modelling to be independently understood and tested.

Given that NSW DCCEEW had already undertaken to publish this material once the method was made, its release should not require a further policy decision.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Raison
Former CSIRO Chief Research Scientist

Steve Dobbyns
BSc (Forestry)
Forest Scientist
and Consultant

On the cover: The forests require continuous care. The modelling used to justify a major change in public forest policy does not. More than a month after writing to the Premier, Dr Raison and Mr Dobbyns are still waiting for the numbers behind the $1.5 billion claim. Image: Shutterstock

NTHA welcomes Paul Whitaker as new CEO

THE National Timber and Hardware Association (NTHA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Paul Whitaker as its new Chief Executive Officer, bringing more than 25 years of experience across the hardware, timber and building supplies industry.

Mr Whitaker's appointment comes as outgoing CEO David Little prepares to step down after almost eight years leading NTHA.

Mr Whitaker began his career managing independent and co-operative supermarkets in the Riverina before joining the Donaldson family in 1999 as a Mitre 10 Store Manager.

He went on to spend 14 years managing single and multi-site independent timber, steel and building supply businesses across NSW before joining Home Timber and Hardware Group as Trade Business Manager for NSW/ACT, supporting independent merchants to establish, grow and develop their trade businesses.

> HIS CAREER HAS TAKEN HIM ACROSS INDEPENDENT RETAIL, TRADE DEVELOPMENT AND MULTI-SITE OPERATIONS



NTHA warmly welcomes newly appointed CEO, Paul Whitaker. Image: NTHA

For almost a decade, he served as Operations Manager and General Manager of the Hudson Mitre 10 Group's 14 NSW/ACT sites, further strengthening his leadership, commercial and sector expertise across Retail Hardware, Trade pick up centres, Trade Distribution centres, Frame and Truss Plants, and Timber Milling and Joinery businesses.

His career has taken him across independent retail, trade development and multi-site operations, giving him extensive experience across the sector he will now lead.

As Mr Little prepares to leave NTHA and embark on a new chapter in Hong Kong, he described leading the Association as one of the great privileges of his career. He thanked members and industry colleagues for their support and commitment, and expressed confidence in NTHA's future, highlighting its experienced Board, capable management team and clear direction.

The transition will be supported by Mr Little, NTHA President Peter Hutchison, the Board and the management team over the coming months, with the Association's advocacy, member support, training and industry programs continuing as usual.

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NOVEMBER

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 EVENTS

APRIL - JULY: JASANZ Futures x Responsible Wood training program. Specialist training combining forestry expertise with accreditation and conformity assessment. Learn how forest management certification works from both sides, connecting what happens in the forest with the standards, audits and certification decisions behind it. Training is April - July 2027 but enrolments close 14 February 2027. For more information, visit https://www.jasanz.org/futures-responsible-wood

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: research and marketing

PART TWO. By MICHAEL SMITH

IN this follow-up to last week's article on developing genetically improved and commercially viable durable eucalypts, *Timber & Forestry Enews* looks further at the ongoing research and possible market opportunities.

In collaboration with a number of industry partners and public organisations, New Zealand Dryland Forests Innovation (NZDFI) is breeding high-quality planting stock suitable for the country's dryland regions.

Paul Millen, NZDFI's Research Manager, says that "farmers and forest owners in these regions need sustainable, economically viable land-use alternatives to complement traditional farming enterprises and radiata pine forestry".

"The first generation of improved XyloGene plants became available in 2021 and demand for our stock is increasing.

"Our select eucalypt species are renowned for their adaptability to drought, are very fast-growing, and produce strong, naturally durable hardwood timber which remains sound in outdoor conditions for many years without chemical treatment."

R&D

Important contributions to NZDFI's R&D programme have come from several PhD candidates at the University of Canterbury School of Forestry. Among them is Alfie Misena Torres whose work focuses on characterising naturally durable eucalypts as a potential bioenergy resource.

"The aim is to add value to biomass and processing residues from emerging high-density eucalyptus plantations."

Mr Torres says eucalyptus species can produce high-quality biomass, but "moisture and ash content vary and may directly influence fuel performance. By examining this variability, my study could provide essential evidence for integrating durable eucalyptus into New Zealand's wood-to-energy strategy."





1/ ***Prolific seed capsule development on an E. bosistoana clonal tree in Proseed's Orchard, Amberley.***

2/ ***Four-and-a-half-year-old elite E. globoidea in NZDFI's second-generation 2021 seedling orchard, Hawke's Bay.*** All images: NZDFI

His research into *Eucalyptus bosistoana* and *E. globoidea* has focused on quantifying the variation in moisture content, biomass distribution, and density across different tree components (stem, bark, leaves and branches).

"Statistical modelling has shown variability depending on tree size, which serves as the foundation for estimating the green-basis energy content. The green energy content is significant as it directly measures the usable energy stored in freshly harvested biomass, which is essential for evaluating its potential as a renewable fuel source.

"Since higher moisture lowers heating value, and because moisture content in green wood is inversely related to basic density, dense eucalypts generally deliver higher green-basis energy yields. At the plantation scale, such estimates enable foresters and land managers to calculate the total energy yield (on a mass basis) per hectare of eucalyptus stand, supporting decisions on bioenergy production, carbon sequestration, and sustainable land use."

He notes that another measurement of biomass quality is the concentration of inorganic compounds or ash content. "Low overall ash content is advantageous for solid-fuel applications, while elevated concentrations of alkali and alkaline-earth metals can accelerate thermal degradation pathways and alter product yields. Inorganic elemental concentrations will be measured in eucalyptus wood with wave-dispersive X-ray fluorescence analysis."

In conclusion, Mr Torres says that "leveraging biomass from eucalyptus production offers opportunities to contribute to national greenhouse gas reductions during the energy transition. Importantly, harnessing these biomass residues enhances resource efficiency and strengthens the commercial viability of durable eucalypt forestry in New Zealand."

XYLOGENE® SEEDLINGS

Mr Millen says NZDFI has made significant progress with its tree breeding programme. "Our selected germplasm has been tested in New Zealand environments with varying biotic and abiotic factors that influence tree growth. This ensures an advantage over unpedigreed provenance collections imported from Australia, or

Cont P 9

From P 8

those made from local stands planted with only one or two provenances."

NZDFI's first-generation improved seed of mixed elite family origin will express outcrossing vigour and improved wood properties, for example, an increase in productivity, resistance to disease, heartwood volume and durability.

The organisation's licensed nurseries, located from the upper South Island to north of Auckland, are skilled propagators who can produce high-grade forestry seedlings from XyloGene® improved seedlots, including *E. bosistoana* and *E. globoidea*.

"Royalty fees are paid to the nurseries as part of the seedling cost. Nurseries then pay these fees to NZDFIP Ltd to support our R&D programme." (Note: NZDFIP was set up as a separate commercial company to promote and sell improved XyloGene® seed and nursery stock.)

MARKET PROMISE

In a previous update, Mr Millen commented on the end of native logging in the state-owned eucalypt forests of Victoria and Western Australia, with many sawmills closing and hundreds of jobs lost. "This occurred despite domestic demand for these visually attractive, strong and durable native timbers.

"In July 2025, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES 2025) published *ABARES Insights* (Issue 5). It noted a significant decline in the 'average annual volume of sawlogs, pulp logs and other hardwood products harvested from Australia's native forests during the period 2016-17 to 2020-21' – compared with the annual harvest during the 1996-97 to 2000-01 period.

"Then in September 2025, the New South Wales Government announced plans for a Great Koala National Park, which will further reduce log supply.

"Only a few Australian eucalypt plantations are growing durable hardwood, while almost all are *E. globulus* or *E. nitens* intended for chip rather than high-value sawn timber."

He says this reinforces that New Zealand has an immediate market opportunity to sell locally-grown durable eucalypt logs to wood processors in Victoria and NSW. "While there is only a modest area of maturing durable eucalypt plantations and woodlots, these offer the basis for a research and development project to evaluate this opportunity."



Alfie Torres' research "could provide essential evidence for integrating durable eucalyptus into New Zealand's wood-to-energy strategy."
Image: Alfie Torres

Given that much of the older durable eucalypt resource is located in Northland, "the region's forest owners could partner with south-east Australian sawmillers to evaluate the economic value of a trans-Tasman log (or slabbed log) trade. This could extend to evaluating logs at Queensland's Department of Primary Industries Salisbury (Wood) Research Facility in Brisbane."

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

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Ready before the smoke rises this summer

WHEN a wildfire spreads through a forest, there is little room for hesitation as crucial decisions are made on the move.

Fire crews need to trust in each other's ability and every firefighter must know their role.

That capability is built well before the smoke rises and the embers fall.

In NSW, Forestry Corporation firefighters have now completed three intensive training camps designed to prepare crews for the realities of fighting fires in native forests and pine plantations.

Held over the past three months at Mount Seaview near Wauchope, Wallerawang near Lithgow and Bondi Forest Lodge near Bombala, the camps brought firefighters together for classroom learning, practical field exercises and realistic firefighting scenarios.

For Fire Training and Operations Officer Adrien Thompson, the annual camps are about ensuring firefighters have the skills, experience and confidence to perform when they are called to a fireground.

"These camps basically prepare our firefighters, whether they be seasonals or existing employees who are skilling up or working

> TEAMWORK AND CHAIN OF COMMAND IS CRITICAL TO FIREGROUND SUCCESS



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*1/ **Forestry Corporation firefighters practise drafting water from a river during a training exercise. In remote native forest and plantation country, the ability to quickly establish a reliable water supply from creeks and rivers is essential before tankers and pumps can support crews on the fireground.***

*2/ **Infrared drones provide real-time heat mapping and situational awareness to Group Leaders and Incident Controllers, helping them track fire spread and direct ground crews more effectively.***

*3/ **Aerial resources are a key part of Forestry Corporation's response capability, and the camps include work-safely-around-aircraft sessions so ground crews can coordinate smoothly with pilots during operations.***

*4/ **Two firefighters in full protective gear work through smoke in a pine plantation. Live-fire and mop-up scenarios like this form the final stage of the intensive camps, giving crews practical experience with fire behaviour, hose handling and working as a team under realistic conditions.***

All images: FCNSW

to get higher firefighting qualifications," Adrien recently told ABC Sydney.

The camps, conducted in partnership with training organisation Fireground, develop firefighters' understanding of fire behaviour, tactics, communications, leadership and equipment operation before crews put those skills into practice in assessed scenarios.

"It's a real-world simulation that culminates in a live-fire exercise at the end of the week, so it builds teamwork," Adrien explained.

On the fireground, firefighters are assigned tasks such as backburning and the use of rake hoes and fire hoses by Crew Leaders, who monitor the fire's behaviour and spread and report 'sit-reps' and live weather updates via UHF

Cont P 11

From P 10

radio.

Overseeing the operation, Group Leaders and Incident Controllers use advanced mapping applications, satellite and weather technology, infrared drones and live feeds from early fire detection cameras and fire towers to plan containment strategies that safeguard local communities and ensure the safety of all involved in the operation.

This information communicated from the fire lines is also crucial to fire tanker and heavy plant operators as well as pilots, who offer aerial support to the ground crews.

This teamwork and chain of command is critical to fireground success and enables Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) crews to regularly work alongside the state's other three firefighting agencies, the NSW Rural Fire Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Fire and Rescue NSW.

The wider timber industry also plays a major role in safeguarding state forests and regional communities, operating heavy plant machinery that complements Forestry's statewide fire fleet comprising 400 light firefighting vehicles and 50

> "OUR HIGHEST-RISK AREAS ARE OUR HIGH-VALUE PLANTATIONS



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1/ ***Firefighters at the Wallerawang camp examine a portable pump during a practical equipment session. Setting up and operating pumps, hoses and other gear is a core skill covered in the training.***

2/ ***Fire Training and Operations Officer Adrien Thompson. He oversees the annual camps at Mount Seaview, Wallerawang and Bondi Forest Lodge, ensuring seasonal and permanent firefighters gain the qualifications, practical experience and confidence required before the summer season begins.***

3/ ***Smoke drifts through tall eucalypts as Forestry Corporation appliances hold position on a dirt road during a training burn. These exercises let fire-fighters and operators refine the chain of command, from Crew Leaders on the line through to tanker drivers, under conditions that closely mirror an actual fireground.*** All images: FCNSW

Category 1 fire tankers.

"We have different forest protection areas. That's how we split up our fire management arrangements across the business," Adrien said.

"The north of the state normally kicks off the season with fires contained in coastal and inland native forests in Spring. From there the fire risk spreads south with fire danger moving to the softwood plantations of the Central West and throughout the season to the native forests of the South Coast in summer.

"We're responsible for any fires that start on our tenure, and we work to keep them within our tenure as best as we possibly can, depending on the conditions, the weather and where they occur in the environment.

"Our highest-risk areas are our high-value plantations that supply the timber industry with sawlogs and serve as the state's future timber supplies, but elevated fire conditions can enable ignitions to start anywhere and when that happens, we will respond as quickly as we possibly can," he said.

This summer FCNSW will have more than 500 firefighters rostered on and working on-call to protect around two million hectares of state forests.

"We're preparing as best we can and we're confident once again we'll be ready with the right resources to respond effectively," he added.

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Australia's deadly asbestos legacy

November is National Asbestos Awareness Month – Friday 27 November is Asbestos Awareness Day 2026.

EVERY two hours and eleven minutes, one Australian dies from an asbestos-related disease caused by exposure to asbestos fibres; that's 11 Australians every day, 77 every week and 334 every month totalling over 4000 preventable deaths every year - three times the national road toll (1,334 deaths in 12 months to September 2026).

Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee, Clare Collins said, "Australia's national asbestos crisis will continue because many remain unaware or complacent of the risks of disturbing asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) found in one-in-three Australian homes.

"Prior to 2004, asbestos was used in the manufacture of a broad range of building and decorator products (over 3000), meaning a large number of 'legacy' ACMs can still be lurking in any home built or renovated before 1990, and in commercial properties built before 2004," said Ms Collins.

"Despite a complete asbestos ban in Australia almost 23 years ago, deaths from exposure to asbestos fibres are rising and will continue to rise due to a lack of education and awareness of the risks if legacy ACMs are disturbed during renovations, demolition or maintenance when people unnecessarily expose themselves to asbestos fibres," she said.

"With around 6 million tonnes of ageing ACMs remaining in our built environment including in one-third of Australian homes, asbestos remains an ever-present danger for those who fail to take the warnings seriously," Ms Collins said.

Recently, the World Health Organization's (WHO) *Asbestos* paper (11 August 2026), reported that all six forms of asbestos are carcinogenic causing a range of cancers including cancer of the lung, larynx, ovaries and malignant mesothelioma (there is no cure), noting that "Anyone engaging in construction, maintenance and demolition of buildings where asbestos has been used is potentially at risk even many years or decades after the asbestos was put in place."





1/ ***Subfloor areas of pre-1990 homes are a frequent hiding place for asbestos.***

2/ ***Licensed removalists use proper PPE and sampling techniques to identify asbestos-containing materials. DIY testing or disturbance puts you and your family at risk.***

All images: Asbestos Education Committee & Advocacy Australia

The consistent need to grow awareness of asbestos risks was reinforced with the most recent National Asbestos Awareness Survey (2025) that found that while 91% of respondents knew a little bit about asbestos, but in general, people reported being poor at identifying ACMs, while only 30% of people said that they could afford asbestos removal.

Cherie Barber, Australia's Renovation Queen™ and Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness Month campaign said, "Because there's no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres, increasing awareness of the dangers of asbestos during renovations and maintenance, and improving education among homeowners, renovators, DIYers and tradies on what to do to identify and manage ACMs safely in accordance with legislation, is vital in saving lives."

"With Housing Industry Association (HIA) analysis revealing $4.15 billion was spent on renovations in the 2026 June quarter, the highest three-month period of spending since 1974. The lack of public knowledge on ACM identification and the risks associated with disturbing asbestos; together with the current cost of living crisis and rising interest rates; the fear is people could put their lives and the lives of loved ones at risk if they try to remove ACMs themselves to save costs," Ms Barber said.

"With asbestos-related deaths projected to increase, and with so many older homes (one-in-three) containing ACMs, it's vital that those working on homes take the warnings seriously and visit **www.asbestosawareness.com.au** to learn what they need to know and importantly, only use licensed asbestos professionals to identify and remove ACMs," she said.

"Put simply, renovators, DIYers and tradies could be risking their lives and the lives of anyone who may be present including children when ACMs are disturbed or when asbestos-containing dust is taken home on clothes or tools," said Clare Collins.

Asbestos can be found in any home built before 1990, lurking under floor coverings such as carpets, linoleum and vinyl tiles. It could be in ceiling space (insulation), around hot water pipes, under kitchen sinks, behind wall and floor tiles, in cement floors, in flat and corrugated sheeting in internal and external walls, ceilings, eaves, roofs,

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Growing a stronger future with plantation support program

AUSTRALIAN Forest Products Association (AFPA) has welcomed the opening of the next round of the Federal Government's successful Support Plantation Establishment Program (SPEP) for Australia's sustainable forestry industry.

As part of the Forestry Growth Fund, Federal Minister for Agriculture and Forestry the Hon Julie Collins MP announced the latest round of vital plantation grants under the SPEP.

AFPA Acting CEO Richard Hyett said the funding was a welcome boost and recognition of the strong government-industry partnership delivering important growth and investment across the sector.

"Given the current economic and trade challenges facing our sector, this latest round of funding is essential and will continue to reverse declining plantation investment while strengthening regional economies, future timber supplies and Australia's sovereign manufacturing capability," Mr Hyett said.

"We sincerely thank the Government for supporting plantation expansion and providing the long-term policy certainty needed to grow Australia's renewable forestry industries.

"The funding for new plantations will help to provide future timber supplies, support carbon sequestration and biodiversity, and play a fundamental role in meeting Australia's housing and construction needs."

The SPEP has so far provided more than $72 million in funding to support almost 40,000 hectares of hardwood and softwood plantations across Australia.

"Before the introduction of this program, plantations declined by 230,000 hectares in six years. This program has been critical in reversing the decline in plantation investment that was occurring before it was introduced," Mr Hyett said.

"Continued and long-term investment is essential to build on the program's success and secure Australia's future timber and fibre supply.

"We hope the SPEP can be further extended, and continue delivering tangible economic, environmental and community benefits right across Australia."

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fences, extensions, garages, outdoor toilets, backyard and farm structures, chook sheds and even dog kennels. It could be anywhere!

The risks were pointedly clear in a joint study conducted by the WHO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which estimated that exposure in the workplace was responsible for over 200,000 deaths globally each year, accounting for more than 70% of all deaths from work-related cancers. A substantial burden of asbestos-related disease also arises from non-occupational exposure.

"Preventing exposure to asbestos fibres is the only way to prevent asbestos-related diseases, and awareness and education are critical, so homeowners should respect asbestos and visit **www.asbestosawareness.com.au** and avoid asbestos risks by engaging licensed asbestos professionals because the cost could be far greater if they or their loved ones are exposed to asbestos fibres that can kill," she said.

> "AVOID ASBESTOS RISKS BY ENGAGING LICENSED ASBESTOS PROFESSIONALS

"With another Australian life lost to asbestos every two hours and eleven minutes, when it comes to asbestos: Don't cut it! Don't drill it! Don't drop it! Don't sand it! Don't saw it! Don't scrape it! Don't scrub it! Don't dismantle it! Don't tip it! Don't waterblast it! Don't demolish it! Don't dump it! And whatever you do... DON'T remove asbestos yourself," Ms Collins said.

If planning a renovation, before taking up tools visit **www.asbestosawareness.com.au** because it's not worth the risk!

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Timber industry welcomes funding to expand AI-powered bushfire cameras

THE Victorian Forest Products Association (VFPA) has warmly welcomed a commitment from the Victorian Government to co-fund the expansion of Victoria's AI-powered bushfire detection cameras, matching industry investment with $1.9 million ($3.8 million project total) over three years.

"With the State Government's support, the bushfire camera network will now expand to 18 sites across regional Victoria," said VFPA CEO, Andrew White.

"With up to 85% coverage of non-plantation land, the camera network will help protect Victoria's rural communities and timber plantations from bushfires."

"The need for increased fire detection capability was devastatingly highlighted by the fires affecting North-East and South-West Victoria earlier this year."

"Fire cameras act as smoke detectors in the sky, allowing fires to be detected earlier and responders to deploy quicker," Mr White said.



The expanded AI camera network will be able to pick up smoke earlier and faster, allowing rapid fire response and better protection of plantations and communities. Image: Shutterstock

"Fire risk is escalating in Victoria as summers grow drier, with unpredictable weather and lightning strikes remaining the most common cause of ignition," he said.

The network will consist of 10 sites in Western Vic, covering over 820,000 hectares, and 8 in Eastern Vic, covering over 640,000 hectares, for a total coverage of over 1.46 million hectares.

"Victorian plantations underpin 17,000 regional jobs and supply essential products for housing construction, as well as other wood-based products. As a long rotation crop that is in the ground for up to 25 years, bushfire remains the single greatest threat to plantations and timber supply."

"The expansion of the Victorian bushfire detection camera network is a significant step towards protecting regional jobs and livelihoods from the devastation of bushfire. Industry has advocated strongly for the expansion of the bushfire detection camera network, and we're pleased to see this commitment ahead of the election," said Mr White.

VFPA remains committed to working with all political parties ahead of the November election and delivering policy settings that support investment, innovation and improve industry viability.

Congratulations to HVP Plantations and the Green Triangle Fire Alliance (via Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub) on being recipients of the funding.

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Yard organisation is the key

Help protect your timber inventory and improve fulfilment.

By MATT IVES

TIMBER yards have to balance two priorities: protecting valuable inventory and keeping materials moving efficiently. Poorly arranged inventory can make both harder. Timber may be exposed to unsuitable storage conditions, while employees spend additional time locating, moving, or restacking materials before an order can be prepared.

A well-organised yard creates a clearer path from receiving to storage, picking, and dispatch. For timber and building materials suppliers, practical improvements to layout, inventory tracking, and material handling can help protect inventory while supporting faster, more reliable fulfilment.

PLAN STORAGE AREAS AROUND TIMBER REQUIREMENTS

Yard organisation should start with the material itself. Timber needs appropriate support and storage conditions to help maintain its quality before it reaches the customer.

Timber should generally be stored off the ground on level supports and in an area where water can easily drain away. Adequate ventilation is also important, particularly when timber is covered. Proper stacking and support can help reduce the risk of moisture-related problems, warping, and other damage, which are critical considerations when storing timber.

The layout should also reflect how frequently different products move through the yard. Fast-moving stock can be positioned closer to picking and dispatch areas, while products ordered less often may be suitable for locations farther from the main workflow.

Space requirements can change as inventory levels rise or large orders arrive. When evaluating overflow options, additional space such as a construction storage yard for rent may be one consideration for keeping excess materials from interfering with active picking and loading areas.



Proper stacking, level supports and weather protection help maintain timber quality while keeping packs accessible for picking. Image: Shutterstock

MAKE TIMBER INVENTORY EASIER TO FIND

An efficient layout works best when employees can determine what stock is available and where it is located. Timber suppliers may be managing full packs, opened packs, loose lengths, and products in multiple sizes, grades, or specifications.

A location system can make that inventory easier to manage. Depending on the size and complexity of the yard, this could involve assigning stock to specific racks and bays or recording inventory by broader storage zones.

Clearly marking those locations gives employees a common system to follow. It can also reduce reliance on individual employees remembering where a particular pack was placed.

The appropriate level of detail will vary by operation. A large yard with a high volume of stock movements may benefit from precise location tracking, while a smaller operation may only need a straightforward zoning system.

> “FEWER MOVEMENTS MEAN FEWER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TIMBER TO BE DAMAGED

KEEP INVENTORY RECORDS CONNECTED TO YARD ACTIVITY

Physical organisation and inventory records need to support each other. If stock is moved, opened, cut, or dispatched without the records being updated, the system can quickly become less useful.

Timber packs are a good example. Once a pack is opened, its original quantity should no longer automatically be treated as intact. Recording changes as material is used helps provide a more accurate picture of the remaining inventory.

Technology can support this process. Mobile devices and barcode scanning can allow yard employees to record receiving, picking, and dispatch activity closer to the point where the stock is handled.

The objective is not to create more administrative work. Inventory processes should be simple enough that employees

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can follow them consistently throughout the working day.

CREATE CLEAR ROUTES FOR PICKING AND MATERIAL HANDLING

Organisation also affects how easily employees and equipment can move through the yard. Storage areas should provide sufficient space for the material-handling equipment used by the operation and avoid unnecessary obstructions between stock and dispatch areas.

Frequently picked products should be accessible without repeatedly moving unrelated packs. Designated areas for receiving, order staging, and dispatch can also help prevent incoming stock from becoming mixed with materials that have already been allocated to customer orders.

These practices can reduce unnecessary handling. Fewer movements mean fewer opportunities for timber to be damaged, and less time spent rearranging stock before an order can leave the yard.



Clear routes and sufficient space for material-handling equipment help reduce unnecessary movements and the risk of damage during picking and dispatch. Image: Shutterstock

BETTER ORGANISATION SUPPORTS MORE RELIABLE FULFILMENT

A timber yard does not need a complicated system to operate effectively. It needs a storage layout and inventory process that employees can understand and maintain.

Keeping timber appropriately stored, assigning clear locations, updating stock records as materials move, and maintaining practical picking routes can all contribute to a more orderly operation. When these elements work together, suppliers are better positioned to protect inventory, reduce avoidable handling, and move customer orders from the yard to dispatch more efficiently.

Matt Ives is Director of Revenue and Marketing at Otter Storage Management and leads revenue optimisation, marketing, budget deployment, and sales process improvements for Lynx Contractor Storage, as well as the Honeybee RV Storage and Otter Self Storage brands.



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