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ISSUE 925 // 19 November 2026

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Nick Hewson wins inaugural Colin MacKenzie Award

COVER STORY P4



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Anti-dumping investigation welcomed

Claims that structural timbers and LVL are being dumped in Australia will be tested.

TWO seemingly contradictory things can both be true. Australia has a reliable set of major timber importers who have worked hard for many years to ensure the security and sustainability of their supply chains. At the same time, we are an attractive country for other nations to dump timber into, with our significant housing needs seeing many customers looking for ready, cheap supply. Not every timber importer is a member of the Australian Timber Importers Federation (ATIF) and bound by its strict code of practice, so it is possible for timbers outside the industry-regulated supply chain to make it onto our market.



A timber truck in Koryazhma. Conflict timbers from Russia are one of the products suspected of being dumped in Australia. Image: CC/Georg Pic

Leading forestry groups and unions have welcomed Monday's announcement by the Australian Trade Remedies Commission (ATRC) of an anti-dumping and countervailing investigation into claims that structural timber, particularly LVL, from China is being sold into Australia at unfairly low, subsidised prices, undercutting local manufacturers and putting Australian jobs at risk.

Australia's largest sawn softwood timber manufacturers are applicants in the anti-dumping case relating to imported LVL from China. Other businesses throughout the softwood manufacturing and supply chain are supporting the application. Work on the application commenced in April 2026 and was lodged on 30 September 2026. The ATRC initiated its investigation on 13 November 2026. The Trade Remedy Notice dated 16/11/2026 can be found by **clicking here**.

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) noted: "Imported structural timber products play an important role in supplementing local supply. Australian manufacturers of plantation-grown pine have competed successfully alongside imported products for many years in a stable and competitive market. In recent years, however, imports from China have increased significantly. The extremely low cost of some imported structural timber products, particularly LVL, is suppressing prices across the market and placing pressure on Australian manufacturers."

Australian producers have alleged dumping margins as high as 143%, with the investigation examining claims of unfair competition and injury to local industry.

Timber, Furnishing and Textiles Union (TFTU) national secretary Michael O'Connor said, "Australian timber workers and producers deserve a level playing field. Fair competition matters for local jobs, the families who depend on them and the regional communities built around our timber industry.

"That means backing Australian manufacturing jobs and ensuring

Cont P 3



From P 2

local producers aren't undermined by dumped imports."

AFPA acting CEO Richard Hyett said Australian timber played an essential role for housing and construction and the investigation was fundamentally about maintaining the long-term strength of Australia's timber supply chain.

"Our industry is under extreme pressure and has made this application to the Commission because we believe Australian timber manufacturers are not competing on a level playing field. The ATRC has examined the evidence and has initiated an investigation," he said.

"Dumping is about an unfair advantage over all other suppliers in the market. Dumping also damages local industry and can lead to business closures, destroying Australian jobs and manufacturing capacity. Once local competition is eliminated, price rises are expected to follow."

Hyett acknowledged the argument that construction prices have risen sharply in recent years, but pointed out that – all other concerns regarding regulations, sustainability and conflict timbers aside – "The cost of timber in the frame is a very small fraction of the overall cost of a house, so there should be no short-term impact on house prices while ensuring resilient supply in the long-term."

He added: "Recent analysis from the Housing Industry Association (HIA) showed almost half of the cost of a new house and land package is government taxes [and] the value of taxes and charges has increased by almost 40% since 2019."

O'Connor said defending Australian timber manufacturing against unfair trade was vital to the country's long-term economic security. As the nation's sixth largest manufacturing sector, timber supports thousands of skilled jobs, but mill closures have seen job losses in recent years.

> "YOU CAN'T HAVE A RESILIENT HOUSING SECTOR WITHOUT A RESILIENT LOCAL SUPPLY CHAIN

"Our union has long been at the forefront of the fight for stronger anti-dumping laws," said O'Connor.

"Strong anti-dumping laws aren't just about defending jobs today — they're about ensuring Australia retains the sovereign manufacturing capability we need for the future.

"You can't have a resilient housing sector without a strong, resilient local supply chain for timber and other building products."

Hyett agreed, saying: "Maintaining domestic timber manufacturing capability is especially important for regional Australia.

"A number of softwood timber manufacturers have been forced to reduce production to manage costs resulting from this unfair competition. There is existing capacity for the mills to increase production, which means more hours for workers and more timber for builders.

"Industry is seeking fair competition, not barriers to trade."



Technical excellence rewarded

Nick Hewson wins inaugural Colin MacKenzie Award.

AT last Friday's Queensland HIA Building Awards, timber engineer Nick Hewson, director of Arboralis, was named the inaugural recipient of the Colin MacKenzie Award for Technical Excellence in Timber Application and Use.

Established in honour of Colin MacKenzie (1949–2025), the award celebrates individuals and small teams whose work reflects excellence in engineering rigour, innovation and leadership in advancing the use of timber as a high-performance, compliant construction material.



(From left) Timber Queensland CEO Mick Stephens, Nick Hewson, Arboralis, and Angelo Lambrinos, QBCC. Image: Timber Queensland

Hewson was recognised for his work on the GTT Kit of Parts Homes NSW Program which manufactured and delivered 32 townhouses across 16 sites in Western Sydney, and his broader contribution to advancing timber construction, industry capability and modern methods of construction.

Timber Queensland CEO Mick Stephens said Hewson was selected from a strong field of finalists by an independent panel of industry experts representing timber engineering, architecture, research, manufacturing and specification. "[His] project submission demonstrated how innovative timber engineering can help solve real-world challenges, including the need to deliver more housing, more efficiently and at greater scale," said Stephens.

"Many of us knew Colin as someone who was always willing to help, share knowledge and looking for ways to advance timber. The judging panel noted that Mr Hewson has brought that same spirit to our industry over his 20-year professional career."

Stephens noted the award attracted an exceptional field of entries spanning timber engineering, research, design and construction. Runner-up recognition was awarded to the meyBRACE Timber Portal System, developed by Afzal Laphir and George Dolezal of Meyer Timber (names which will be familiar to readers of our sister publication *Timber Trader News*), and the Brisbane Ziggurat Staircase, submitted by Julia Cepon and Carsten Moeller of Arup.

Colin MacKenzie's four-decade-plus career shaped the development of timber design and construction standards in Australia. From the start of his career at CSIRO to later senior roles with TRADAC and Timber Queensland, he became a leading authority on the use of timber in building and construction, particularly in ensuring structural integrity and safe, effective design.

Hewson's work on the GTT Kit of Parts Homes NSW Program directly relates to MacKenzie's legacy: the kit-of-parts four-bedroom townhouses were designed with floor, wall and roof panels manufactured offsite in a system ready for two- to five-storey residential applications.



The first wall panels going up at the GTT St Mary's build. Offsite construction meant the build was quick, accurate and had minimal waste. Image: GTT

Writing on LinkedIn, Hewson said, "In submitting the project, I was unsure of how it would compare to other entrants, with the buildings not being the most glamorous compared to some other potential entries. From speaking to others on the night, it's clear that this is exactly the sort of work that Colin was well known for, and I was told he would have very much approved!"

He also noted: "It was an honour to meet Colin's family and see the respect and outsized impact he had across the construction industry. While I never had the pleasure of meeting Colin in person, I see his fingerprints across so much of what the industry is built on. It's humbling to win the award bearing his name and I can only hope my own career can have a fraction of the impact that his had."

Stephens thanked the industry organisations that provided seed funding to establish the award. Timber Queensland also acknowledged the support of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC) as inaugural Presentation Sponsor, recognising the organisation's commitment to promoting regulatory compliance, technical excellence and high standards across the building and construction industry.

QBCC Commissioner Angelo Lambrinos congratulated Hewson, saying: "Through his initiative and innovation, Nick has demonstrated the value of combining technical expertise with a willingness to challenge conventional approaches to construction.

"His contribution to advancing timber construction and modern building methods is a great example of the skill and ingenuity that will help shape the industry's future."

On the cover: (From left) Nick Hewson with Christine MacKenzie, Aleisha MacKenzie and Trina MacKenzie. Image: Timber Queensland

Victorian election priorities

VFPA CEO Andrew White spoke with AFPA about industry needs.

AFPA recently interviewed VFPA CEO Andrew White on the tightly contested Victorian election being held on 28 November this year. The full Q&A is published in *AFPA News*, and *Enews* has been given permission to publish some of his key responses and highlights about issues, policies and funding proposals announced in recent weeks.

White said: "We've deliberately kept our election campaign focused on a small number of practical priorities that can make a real difference to the industry overall. These include a 10-Year Wood Fibre 'Action Plan' & Timber Strategy, stronger recognition of the industry across government, and protecting our plantation resource and regional communities from bushfire with new funding for fire cameras.

"We're also continuing to advocate separately on the underlying barriers to investment and long-term viability, particularly plantation establishment, regulation, housing demand and manufacturing competitiveness … there is a growing recognition Victoria needs a long-term plan for an industry that supports regional jobs, local timber manufacturing and the homes we need to build."

An important part of VFPA's advocacy has been reaching out to all parties. White said: "We've been engaging broadly across the political spectrum and will continue to do so through until the election date. Our engagement has involved discussions with current Labor, Liberal and National MPs, One Nation, the Greens and Independents, as well as MPs and candidates in key wood fibre and manufacturing regions.



VFPA CEO Andrew White spoke with AFPA News about the upcoming Victorian election.
Image: AFPA

> "OUR FOCUS IS ON BUILDING BROAD SUPPORT FOR THE INDUSTRY

"Importantly, we've also been getting decision-makers from all sides of politics out to see plantations, mills and manufacturing facilities firsthand as much as we can in the past 12 months. The conversations have been positive, and our focus is on building broad support for the industry."

The results have been positive, with White describing "strong commitments recently from the Coalition and One Nation for better management of public forests and bushfire prevention, including doubling prescribed burning and making by-products from proactive forest health management available to their highest and best use by hardwood mills.

"The Victorian Government committing matched funding for 18 AI-enabled fire detection camera sites over three years is an important advocacy win for the industry."

White added that this initiative has attracted bipartisan support, noting its particular importance to both the timber industry and regional communities following last year's significant fire losses.

"The Coalition [has committed] $2.52 million over four years, alongside industry co-investment, to deliver an expanded $4.41 million bushfire detection camera network," he said.

To read the full interview, **click here**.

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NSW plantation futures

Stronger government and industry collaboration sought.

LAST week, the Softwoods Working Group (SWG) brought together Members of Parliament, industry leaders and regional stakeholders at NSW Parliament House to discuss the future of plantation timber investment, regional jobs and the long-term sustainability of one of NSW's most important manufacturing industries.





*1/ **Political attendees at the SWG parliamentary networking event. From left, Dr Joe McGirr MP, Mark Buttigieg MLC, Minister Tara Moriarty, Justin Clancy MP, Mark Banasiak MLC, Nichole Overall MLC and Emily Suvaal MLC.***

*2/ **Carlie Porteous, general manager of the SWG, speaking at the event.***

All images: SWG

Held in the Preston Stanley Room under the theme 'Supporting the Communities that Support Us: A Roadmap for Future Plantation Timber Investment', the parliamentary networking event provided an opportunity to highlight the economic and social contribution of the softwood timber industry and the practical actions needed to secure its future.

The event featured contributions from Dr Joe McGirr MP, Minister Tara Moriarty, Minister Jenny Aitchison, Justin Clancy MP and SWG chairperson Dean Anderson, with discussions focused on plantation expansion, infrastructure investment, fire protection, regional manufacturing and reducing barriers to private investment.

SWG general manager Carlie Porteous said the event reinforced the importance of bringing government and industry together to deliver practical solutions for regional NSW: "Our plantation timber industry is fundamental to the economic strength of our regional communities, supporting local jobs, manufacturing businesses and the supply of timber products essential to building Australian homes.

"However, securing the industry's future requires more than recognising its contribution. We need practical policy settings that encourage plantation expansion, reduce investment barriers and provide the confidence needed for businesses to invest and grow.

"This event was about having meaningful conversations with decision-makers and demonstrating how targeted government action, supported by industry expertise, can deliver lasting benefits for regional NSW," Porteous concluded.

A key focus of the discussions was the need to address barriers that continue to constrain plantation investment, including bushfire risk, invasive weeds, regulatory complexity and infrastructure limitations.

The SWG highlighted opportunities for a more coordinated approach to plantation development, including exploring Strategic Plantation Economic Zones, which could bring together suitable land, infrastructure planning, investment incentives and targeted risk-reduction measures.

The event also provided an opportunity to highlight the industry's contribution to housing supply and the importance of maintaining a strong domestic timber manufacturing sector.

SWG Chairperson Dean Anderson said long-term investment certainty was critical to ensuring the industry could continue supporting regional communities and meeting Australia's future timber needs.

"The softwood industry has demonstrated its resilience and commitment to regional NSW, particularly following the devastating 2019–20 bushfires," Anderson said. "Our industry is ready to invest, innovate and grow, but we need government to work alongside us to create the conditions that make future investment possible.

"Growing our plantation estate, protecting existing resources and supporting regional manufacturing are essential if we want to maintain jobs, strengthen sovereign timber supply and ensure our communities continue to thrive.

"The message is simple: supporting the timber industry means supporting the communities that depend on it."

The parliamentary event formed part of SWG's broader advocacy efforts to strengthen engagement with government and promote practical, evidence-based solutions to the challenges facing the NSW plantation timber sector.

Porteous said continued collaboration would be essential to translating discussions into meaningful outcomes.

"We appreciate the willingness of parliamentarians, government representatives and industry stakeholders to engage in these important conversations," she said.

"Our focus now is on building on that engagement and working together to turn opportunities into action, ensuring the plantation timber industry remains a strong contributor to regional prosperity for generations to come."

NOVEMBER

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**.

DECEMBER

1: 2026 WoodSolutions Webinar – ONLINE EVENT, 11.00Am AEDT. A special webinar featuring the winner from Timber Design Awards, Hoskins Building - Australia's First CLT Passivhaus School. For more information and to register, **click here**.

2027 EVENTS

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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/

18-19 MAY: Forestry Australia 'Forests & Natural Capital' Summit 2027 - Melbourne. Save the date and join us for two days of thought-provoking discussions, interesting perspectives, practical insights and valuable connections. For more information, visit https://www.forestry.org.au/sponsorship-forests-natural-capital-summit-2027/

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New FWPA Board members

Expertise and experience combine to continue FWPA's influence.

FOLLOWING last week's 2026 Annual General Meeting, Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) has announced changes to its Board. Matt Crapp has been appointed chair and Shane Vicary, Clare Sowden and Fred Chaney have been elected as non-executive directors.

The Board renewal follows the retirement of outgoing chair Craig Taylor and deputy chair Katie Fowden at the AGM, both having completed the maximum number of terms permitted under FWPA's Constitution. FWPA thanked the two for their service.

Fowden was a director for eight years and deputy chair for the past year. She has chaired both the People and Culture Committee of the Board and the Director Selection Committee. FWPA said, "In these roles Katie has brought a level of professionalism which has strengthened the culture of the organisation and ensured the Board is both high calibre and diverse."

Craig Taylor has served as a director for a total of 11 years across two periods, including six years as Chair. FWPA said, "[Craig] has contributed extensively to the operations of the organisation, including Chairing the Growers Research Advisory Committee and, more recently, serving for three months as Acting CEO of FWPA. His commitment to FWPA and its members has been outstanding."

The new director appointments bring experience spanning forestry and wood processing, architecture, construction, property, investment and governance.

Matt Crapp is a senior adviser at New Forests with more than 30 years' experience across forestry and agriculture asset management. His career has encompassed operational forestry, investment management, executive leadership and non-executive board roles.

New Board chair Matt Crapp said, "On behalf of FWPA, I would like to thank outgoing directors Craig Taylor and Katie Fowden and acknowledge their significant contributions to meeting the governance and program delivery expectations of our members. They have been exceptional role models as directors and have actively supported the recruitment of high-calibre leadership to ensure FWPA continues to be successful.



New FWPA Board members, clockwise from top left: Matt Crapp, Shane Vicary, Clare Sowden and Fred Chaney. Images: supplied

"Along with my fellow directors, incoming CEO Julianne O'Reilly-Wapstra and our fantastic staff, I'm proud to continue their legacy as we support the profitable growth of the forest and wood products sector."

New non-executive director Shane Vicary is managing director of AKD Softwoods and was its CEO from 2011 to 2020. He has held senior supply chain and fibre supply roles in Australia and New Zealand and is also a Board member of the Australian Forest Products Association.

"The market for forest and wood products in Australia is changing, and the industry is facing some tough conditions," Vicary said. "That makes FWPA's work as important as ever. The Government matches the levy for research, so this is a big investment, and growers, processors and importers all want to see results from it. FWPA represents all levy payers which means supporting a strong supply side and growing demand.

"I'm looking forward to working with the Board, building on the good work already done and supporting management to deliver real value to the industry now and into the future."

Clare Sowden, managing director of Precinct Partners, brings 25 years' experience spanning architecture, property, major residential and urban development, infrastructure delivery and strategic advisory. Her career has included senior roles with Stockland, Mirvac, AECOM, PwC, and Transport for NSW.

"There are exciting opportunities to strengthen the connection between the forest and wood products sector and Australia's built environment," Sowden said. "I look forward to contributing my experience in construction, development and major projects to the Board and supporting the industry's future opportunities."

Fred Chaney is an architect and director of Perth-based architecture practice TRCB, with 15 years of non-executive and governance experience. He is a Registered Architect in Victoria and Western Australia and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects. Chaney has already served on the FWPA Board through a casual vacancy since November 2025 and has now been elected by members for a four-year term.

"Having already had the opportunity to contribute to the Board, I'm delighted to continue that work following my election by members," he said. "I look forward to supporting stronger connections between our industry, architects, designers and the broader construction sector."

Union highlights timber needs as mill closes

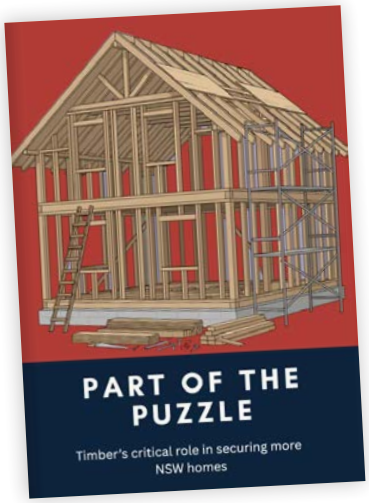
JUST as the Timber, Furnishing and Textiles Union (TFTU) was launching its new 'Part of the puzzle' report on the critical role of the NSW timber industry when it comes to meeting housing targets, Kyogle's Pentarch Forestry mill was closing its doors for the final time.

The TFTU report tied in with last week's meeting with NSW parliamentarians (see page 6 of this issue) and surveyed over 500 timber workers, finding that over 80% of them were currently helping to supply the housing industry.

Despite this, some of the respondents were unable to afford their own home loan as banks considered their job within the NSW timber industry as too insecure to be a reliable loan risk.

TFTU Union NSW Secretary Alison Rudman said governments need to get real and connect their housing targets with the workers and materials required to deliver them.

"You can't build a house out of a housing target," Rudman said.



The new TFTU report makes it clear that reliable jobs, regional communities and housing needs all have timber supply in common. Image: supplied

"You need building materials, you need skilled workers and you need businesses with the confidence to invest.

"Our members help put roofs over people's heads. They deserve certainty about their own future."

In a sad underscoring of this message, the Kyogle mill closure has seen some 31 workers made redundant. The *North Coast Times* reports that it is uncertain whether or not these workers will qualify for the extended NSW-government redundancy package associated with the announcement of the GKNP.

Nationals candidate for Lismore Dylan Butcher told journalist RK Crosby, "Once these mills close, they are very difficult to bring back.

"We risk losing local jobs, infrastructure and specialised skills that have been built up over generations."

And NSW risks losing yet another supply of housing timbers.

You can read the full *North Coast Times* story on the Kyogle mill closure by **clicking here**, and the TFTU report by **clicking here**.

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Photo comp winners announced

OneFortyOne celebrates student's artistry.

ONEFORTYONE has announced the winners of its 2026 photo competition, with entries celebrating forests and bringing families together.

Students from across the Limestone Coast and Western Victoria submitted a record 242 entries this year, sharing photos and stories about what local forests mean to them.

Entries were assessed by a judging panel including photographer Casey Moore, and Member for Mount Gambier Travis Fatchen MP.





1/ ***'Rainy Days' by Sophie Lock. The photo was inspired by the walks she takes with her sister and dog.***
2/ ***Alissa Sedman won the secondary school prize with her photo, 'The Beginning of our Future'.*** All images: OneFortyOne

After serious deliberation, the judges awarded the primary prize to Reidy Park Year 2 student Sophie Lock, the secondary prize to Penola High School Year 11 Alissa Sedman, and the school prize to Dartmoor Primary School.

OneFortyOne CEO Andrew Leighton said he was impressed by the standard of entries and the thoughtful stories students submitted.

"The photos were very impressive, and [it was] the stories that made the biggest impact," he said. "With so many quality entries received this year, selecting the winners was no easy task.

"The creativity and thought that students put into their entries were outstanding, with many sharing personal stories about time spent with family and friends and the special connection they have with local forests."

The two young artists were both inspired by their life among the trees in producing their work. Primary school winner Sophie Lock said of her photo, 'Rainy Days': "I love going on walks with my sister and my dog Marley in the forest on rainy days. We sit on the chopped logs and play with the pine cones and rocks."

Alissa Sedman's secondary school-winning 'The Beginning of our Future' was similarly rooted in personal experience. As Alissa said: "The bush has been a part of my life since I was a very young girl, this image represents the love that mother nature brings to our family. From a small seed to a big tall tree we all grow up together as one."

> "THE CREATIVITY AND THOUGHT THAT STUDENTS PUT INTO THEIR ENTRIES WERE OUTSTANDING

An additional prize of $500 in funding towards a school project was on offer for a school that had five or more student entries.

"I'd also like to congratulate Dartmoor Primary School for winning the schools category, with 16 of its 21 students entering photos," Andrew Leighton said.

"The enthusiasm shown by the students and staff at Dartmoor really stood out."

Sophie and Alissa will each receive 4 x $250 local business vouchers.

The winning photos will be featured on OneFortyOne's social media channels and website, and a selection of entries will be exhibited from 5 December at the Mount Gambier airport Hangar Gallery, thanks to the Southern Limestone Coast Council.

McVicar hailed as export leader

The Combilift CEO has been recognised for his international drive.

COMBILIFT CEO and co-founder Martin McVicar has been crowned Export Leader of the Year at Ireland's Business Post Leadership Awards 2026, powered by Grant Thornton Ireland, recognising his role in building one of Ireland's leading export-focused manufacturing businesses.

McVicar co-founded Combilift in Monaghan, Ireland, alongside Technical Director Robert Moffett. Looking back on Combilift's international growth since, he said: "Being recognised as Export Leader of the Year means so much to our organisation because, when Robert and I set up the business 28 years ago, Combilift was very much export-focused from day one. Of the first 18 units we produced during our first year, 17 were exported off the island of Ireland. Today, 97% of our products are exported worldwide."

Combilift has grown from a small rural start-up into a global manufacturer of specialist material handling solutions with annual revenues exceeding €500 million.





1/ ***Paul Johnston from the judging panel presenting Martin McVicar, co-founder and CEO of Combilift, with the Export Leader of the Year award.***

2/ ***Niall Hughes, Combilift project manager; Amanda Ward, partner at Grant Thornton; Daniel McConnell, editor of the Business Post; Martin and Pauline McVicar; with Shona Judge and Michael Treanor, both from Combilift.*** All photos by Maura Hickey, courtesy Combilift

"Even though I have an engineering background, I realised early on that no matter how good your product is, customers will not simply make a path to your door. You have to get out there," McVicar explained. "For Combilift, we've established a presence in multiple overseas markets. To be successful in exporting, you need to have 'your boots on the ground' and get out into those overseas markets."

Today, Combilift has over 100,000 machines operating across 85 countries, supported by a network of over 300 dealers worldwide.



Five numbers that will shape Australia's forest and wood products sector

FROM housing demand and timber sales to plantation productivity and economic pressures, five key figures provide valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges facing Australia's forest and wood products sector.

While longer-term demand fundamentals remain encouraging, the industry continues to navigate uneven construction activity, changing product markets, supply constraints and cost pressures. Understanding how these factors interact will be important for businesses planning for the year ahead.

1. 225,400 new homes annually: the scale of Australia's housing challenge

Australia needs approximately 2.48 million additional dwellings by 2034, averaging 225,400 annually, according to FWPA's More Houses Sooner report.

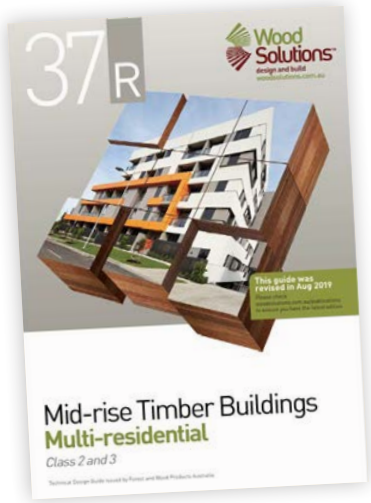
This represents substantial potential demand for timber, particularly in detached housing, townhouses and mid-rise construction.

However, housing need does not automatically translate into construction activity. Financing costs, labour availability, project feasibility and construction capacity will influence how quickly demand becomes completed homes.

For industry, the opportunity lies in improving productivity and expanding timber's applications, supported by practical resources such as WoodSolutions' mid-rise timber construction guidance.

2. 2.5 million cubic metres: projected structural timber demand

FWPA's housing research projects annual demand for sawn structural timber could exceed 2.5 million m3 by 2027. This is a scenario-based projection, not a guaranteed sales outcome. Actual demand will depend on housing delivery, building design, timber's market share and the mix of construction types.



Australia needs over 220,000 additional dwellings annually: WoodSolutions is helping to expand the ability of timber to meet this need with mid-rise timber construction guidance. Image: FWPA

For growers, processors and manufacturers, the figure highlights the importance of aligning production capacity, product development and investment with evolving construction requirements.

3. 2.7 million cubic metres: signs of stabilisation in softwood sales

FWPA's October 2026 softwood market analysis reported total annual rolling sales of approximately 2.7 million m3 by mid-2026, following a gradual recovery from 2025. However, performance varied between product categories. Structural timber remained relatively stable, while packaging timber experienced stronger growth.

This distinction matters. Improving aggregate sales do not necessarily indicate recovery across every business or market segment.

4. 1.71 million hectares: Australia's plantation resource

Australia's commercial plantation estate covered approximately 1.71 million hectares in 2023–24, according to ABARES, with relatively little change from the previous year.

Maintaining future wood supply involves more than plantation area alone. Productivity, rotation lengths, resource location, climate risks and processing capacity all influence commercially available timber.

FWPA's plantation productivity research with ABARES demonstrates how improved genetics, silviculture and research can support resource productivity, while recognising significant regional differences.

5. 4.85% official cash rate: economic pressures remain influential

Costs add further pressure with the RBA raising interest rates five times this year to 4.85%. For industry, inflation affects both demand and supply-side costs. Higher energy, transport, labour and financing costs put pressure on operating margins, while also influencing investment decisions.

Changes in interest rates and construction affordability will therefore remain important indicators throughout 2027.

These figures reveal an industry balancing significant longer-term opportunities with immediate commercial realities. No single indicator captures the outlook. Housing activity, timber demand, resource availability and economic conditions must be considered together.

Through its Statistics and Economics Program, FWPA provides members with access to market intelligence, forecasts and industry analysis. The FWPA Data Dashboard (**click here**) brings these datasets together, helping businesses monitor emerging trends, test assumptions and make more informed decisions in a changing market.



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The Pilliga warning

How many more forests must NSW lock up before we learn from history?

By STEVE DOBBYNS, FOREST AND WOOD COMMUNITIES AUSTRALIA

TWENTY years ago, the NSW Government locked up substantial areas of the Pilliga forests in the name of conservation.

Timber mills closed, workers lost their livelihoods and regional communities suffered.

Yet one of Australia's most significant koala populations still suffered a dramatic decline.

Now, even after legislating the Great Koala National Park, conservation activists are demanding more forests be withdrawn from timber production – and ultimately an end to native forest harvesting across NSW.

Before history repeats itself, the Government needs to answer a fundamental question: where is the evidence that further forest closures will deliver better conservation outcomes?

During the 1990s, the Pilliga forests of north-western NSW supported an estimated 15,000 koalas, the largest koala population west of the Great Dividing Range.





1/ ***View from the public fire tower, located at Salt Caves picnic area, Pilliga Scrub, NSW, part of the Timmallallie National Park within the Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area. Taken in April 2018 after extensive fires in the area.*** Image: CC/Julie May

2/ ***January 2018 fires in the Pilliga (modified data from Sentinel 2 satellites).*** Image: CC/Pierre Markuse

Significantly, these koalas lived in forests actively managed for timber production.

Commercial harvesting included approximately 50,000m³ of white cypress pine and 7000m³ of ironbark annually. While cypress is not a koala feed species, ironbark forms part of the eucalypt communities used by koalas.

Timber harvesting, fire management, forest access and wildlife conservation coexisted within this landscape.

In 2005, the Carr Labor Government established the Brigalow and Nandewar Community Conservation Area, transferring substantial areas of production forest into conservation reserves.

The consequences were not confined to lines on a map.

Timber supplies were reduced. Mills closed or restructured. Workers lost jobs. Contractors, truck drivers, mechanics and local businesses lost customers.

In country towns, losing an industry means more than losing wages. Families can be forced to move away, shops struggle, school enrolments decline and community organisations lose the people who keep them going.

What politicians celebrate as a conservation achievement can leave regional families wondering how they will pay their mortgages or where they will find their next job.

But what happened to the koalas?

Research published in 2017 found koalas at only 21% of previously occupied survey sites: nearly four out of five habitats gone in less than two decades.

Researchers identified drought, climatic pressures and fire among the factors associated with the decline.

Nearby Gunnedah, once proudly described as the koala capital of the world, has suffered its own devastating decline. By May 2026, researchers were describing its remaining population as functionally extinct, with surviving animals reportedly no longer reproducing. Extreme heat, prolonged drought, habitat fragmentation and other pressures have taken a terrible toll.

These declines cannot simply be attributed to changes in forest tenure. Equally, reserving forests did not prevent them. Indeed, in 2014 the NSW Natural Resources Commission recommended active and adaptive management of dense cypress forest vegetation within the Brigalow and Nandewar conservation areas to improve ecological outcomes.

The lesson is not that conservation is unnecessary. It is that changing the name on a forest gate does not guarantee healthier forests or more wildlife.

Successful conservation requires active management and attention to the threats actually affecting species.

FORESTRY LOSSES

The NSW Government has now legislated the Great Koala National Park, adding

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approximately 178,000 hectares of State forest and other Crown land to an expanded reserve system exceeding 475,000 hectares.

That decision is proceeding.

But conservation activists are already pursuing further restrictions on native timber production.

The National Parks Association of NSW is promoting a Great Southern Forest National Park, combining approximately 824,000 hectares of existing conservation reserves with another 365,000 hectares of State forests and flora reserves.

On the North Coast, the Richmond River Koala Parks proposal targets approximately 56,200 hectares of native State forests, even after the Great Koala National Park decision.

Meanwhile, the Nature Conservation Council is campaigning to end native forest harvesting and transition timber supply to plantations, while the NSW Greens want public native forest harvesting stopped.



Hawkemount North Fire Trail in Awaba State Forest is popular with walkers and 4WD enthusiasts as well as being used for fire management. This mixed-use scenario is common in State forests, at less than a third the management costs of NSW national parks. Image: CC/Akamanda

These are not simply isolated proposals to protect individual forests.

Together, they represent a wider push to eliminate commercial native timber production from NSW public forests. And the scale of existing conservation protection is largely missing from the debate.

Even before the Great Koala National Park, approximately 88% of NSW's public native forest estate was unavailable for commercial timber harvesting, encompassing conservation reserves and exclusions within multiple-use State forests.

Only around 12% was available and suitable for timber production.

Across the entire public native forest estate, approximately 0.15% is harvested annually, with operations distributed spatially and temporally across a mosaic of forest stands.

Habitat trees, recruitment trees, riparian areas and other environmental features are protected under harvesting prescriptions. Forests regenerate and remain forests.

This is not wholesale forest clearing. This is not deforestation. It is regulated timber production within a very small annual footprint.

The Great Koala National Park has further reduced the productive estate.

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Yet conservation groups want more.

WHERE IS THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN?

Before the 2023 election, NSW Labor promised the Great Koala National Park alongside a sustainable timber industry.

The park has been legislated.

But where is the promised Forestry Industry Action Plan?

Where is the certainty for sawmills, harvesting contractors, haulage operators, private forest owners and the regional communities that depend on them?

Instead, affected workers hear repeated references to transition assistance.

Transition to what, exactly? New industries, secure employment and a future for their families? Or simply the dole queue?

Calling something a transition does not create a job, replace decades of specialist skills or pay a family's mortgage.

Nor does closing native forests eliminate Australia's demand for hardwood.

Our industries still need structural timber, durable poles, flooring, decking, fencing and other products.

Hardwood plantations are important, but many were established for pulpwood, not high-quality sawlogs or durable poles. Developing replacement resources takes substantial investment and decades of growth.

Stopping timber production in Australia doesn't stop Australians using timber. It shifts production, investment and employment elsewhere when domestic alternatives are unavailable.

That also raises the question of environmental impacts transferred to overseas forests.

CONSERVATION HAS A COST

There is another uncomfortable issue in proposals for more national parks: who pays to manage them?

Recent analysis of published financial records found Forestry Corporation NSW's five-year average native forest land management expenditure was approximately $24 per hectare annually, compared with historical National Parks and Wildlife Service expenditure of approximately $92-98 per hectare annually (adjusted to June 2025 dollars).



Koalas are great headlines – one here with President Barack Obama prior to the G20 Welcome to Country Ceremony in Brisbane, 2014 – but the reality is that some conservation efforts look good on paper and do not bear fruit in reality. Image: Pete Souza/public domain.

The comparison matters.

Forestry Corporation performs the core public land management functions undertaken by NPWS (fire management, roads, pest and weed control, biodiversity protection and public access) while also producing sustainable timber, supporting regional employment and generating commercial revenue.

Transferring forests to national parks does not eliminate these responsibilities.

The roads still need maintaining. Fires still need controlling. Pests and weeds still need managing. Wildlife habitat still needs protecting.

But the timber revenue disappears.

Before governments transfer hundreds of thousands more hectares into national parks, taxpayers deserve an independently costed assessment of the long-term management obligations and the conservation benefits expected.

NSW deserves evidence, not another promise

The Pilliga experience should be a warning to every government contemplating further large-scale forest reservation.

Timber production was curtailed. Regional communities bore the consequences. Yet koalas still declined dramatically.

The Great Koala National Park is proceeding, and its success should be judged by measurable improvements in koala populations, habitat quality and forest resilience, not simply hectares added to a map.

But further proposals for the Great Southern Forest, Richmond River Koala Parks and a statewide end to native forest harvesting require their own justification.

The NSW Government must now answer:

- Where is the promised Forestry Industry Action Plan?
- What additional conservation benefits will further forest closures deliver?
- What active management will protect wildlife from drought, wildfire and deteriorating habitat?
- Who will pay the ongoing management costs?
- Where will replacement hardwood come from?
- What happens to the workers, families and regional businesses left behind?

NSW cannot keep removing sustainably managed forests from timber production, sacrificing regional livelihoods and promising better conservation outcomes without demonstrating that those promises will be delivered.

Twenty years after the Pilliga decision, we should have learned that creating national parks and achieving conservation outcomes are not the same thing.

Conservation should not be measured by how many hectares politicians lock up. It should be measured by the health of our forests, the survival of our wildlife and the effectiveness of their management.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Kavanagh and Barrott — Koala populations in the Pilliga forests (download, see pages 93–103)

Lunney et al. (2017) — The remaining koalas of the Pilliga forests

NSW Natural Resources Commission — Cypress forest management review

University of Sydney (2026) — Heat stress increases koala hospitalisation and mortality

NSW Government — Western Slopes and Plains Koala Management Area

ABC News — Great Southern Forest proposal

Richmond River Koala Parks

Nature Conservation Council NSW — End Native Forest Logging

Forestry Corporation NSW — Planning coastal native forestry operations

NSW EPA — Reducing the cumulative impacts of forestry operations

From source to specification

Architects able to trace materials back to the forest with AHEC.

THE American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) took American hardwoods from forest to finished furniture at the Australian Architecture Conference in Brisbane, where more than 1200 delegates gathered at the end of last month.

The story began on 29 October at the State Library of Queensland, with an official fringe screening of Forested Future. Architect Alison Brooks OBE, who plays an important role in the film, introduced it and spoke about her involvement and the opportunity to trace her favourite material, American black cherry, back to the forest after more than 20 years of working with the timber. "It's very rare that we architects have the opportunity to go to the source, the true origin of materials we specify," said Brooks.

She carried that message into the conference itself, where she gave a keynote on the theme of provenance.

On the adjacent partner expo floor, AHEC shared selected pieces from KEEP, its 2025 collaboration with leading Australian architecture practices: the David Console by Kennedy Nolan, the Lamella Chair by Richards Stanisich and Meg Ashforth, and the Pedal Lamp by Lineburg Wang, in American cherry and American maple. The Lamella Chair, covered in hand-sewn maple shingles, arrived in Brisbane fresh off the back of a win in the furniture and joinery category at the 27th Australian Timber Design Awards.



1



2



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4

1/ ***The Lamella Chair by Richards Stanisich and Meg Ashforth had just won the furniture and joinery category at the Timber Design Awards before coming to Brisbane.***

2/ ***American cherry and American maple combine in the sleek lines of the Pedal Lamp by Lineburg Wang***

3/ ***Alison Brooks introduces Forested Future at the State Library of Queensland.***

4/ ***The AHEC stand at the Australian Architecture Conference in Brisbane.*** All images by Jonathan Tibbits, courtesy of AHEC

For AHEC, it was a chance to bring the forest, the makers and the architects into one conversation and to share knowledge, experiences and friendships along the way. Rod Wiles, regional director for AHEC, said, "The conference was a full and rewarding experience for the team. We were delighted to be able to facilitate Alison Brooks' participation in the event, to reconnect with Australian architects we have worked with before and meet many new faces who we hope to work with in the future."

AHEC is the leading international hardwood trade association for North America and has operated a non-profit program for over three decades representing thousands of businesses engaged in the production and export of timber, ranging from small family-run sawmills to major flooring manufacturers.

You can see more from AHEC's KEEP exhibition, plus read about the designers' visions and the timbers used, by **clicking here**.

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