

TimberTrader

news

NEW!
expanded
edition

**Protect &
preserve** Page 34



PLUS! Upping margins p40

PAGE 12

**PREDICTING THE RBA'S
EFFECT ON HOUSING STARTS**

PAGE 28

**HUME DOORS' NEW
PRODUCT STYLE GUIDE**

PAGE 38

**NEW WOODWISE: HOOP
PINE AND TASSIE OAK**



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Circulation: proprietors, managers and executives in all sectors of the timber and building materials industries including merchants, building material centres, hardware stores, timber window and door manufacturers, truss and frame manufacturers, timber flooring retailers, stair, balustrade and solid timber furniture manufacturers and their associated suppliers and industry associations throughout Australia.

Established October 1985
ISSN 1035/4298
Print Post Approved: 100002694

Email: query@timbertradernews.com
Website: www.timbertradernews.com

Subscriptions for 6 editions:

Australia: \$72 (incl GST)
New Zealand: A\$72
International: call 0406 223 007



Proudly Printed
In Australia



40



28



10

Contents

Industry update

News

New TTN owners; Timberlink turns 10;
Welcome to the NTHA; Predicting supply and
much more..... 4

People business

Six major HR issues and legal updates to
watch out for in 2023 18

Association update 20

Features

Doors

Home Doors & Timber's new style guide helps
customers navigate choice..... 28

Coatings

Intergrain has teamed up with ASH to deliver
long-lasting protection for the MASSLAM
timbers starring at Westfield Knox..... 34

COVER CREDIT: Courtesy Intergrain. Inset: Courtesy Westview.

Timber Trader acknowledges the Cammeraygal people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which this publication is produced, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Woodwise

Our new Know Your Timber column. This issue:
hoop pine and Tasmanian oak 38

Fabricator news

Fabricating for the future

Westview's Wayne Brady talks about staffing,
supply and how to find better margins through
specialising and education 40

Timber noggins

NCC 2022 is finally here! The major changes
explained 44

In the frame

Durability is less straightforward than you
might think, and more important 46

FTMA newsletter 48

Truss talk

Canada shows the future for more and bigger
timber builds. With Paul Davis 50

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News in brief

Publisher's note

This is to let you know that *Timber Trader News (TTN)* is now under new management. To start, a big thank you to Ian Brooks and his team from Paragon Media who have managed *TTN* for the past five years during some turbulent and difficult times for both the timber industry and for publishing.

Our new management team consists of a specialist group with strong timber industry connections and experience, editorial ability and supporting disciplines. We are delighted that Donyale Harrison, who has been the editor of *TTN* for the past five years, will continue in that role. Donyale will also now be part of the corporate management group to guide the future expansion, content and reach of *TTN*.

It is our intention to produce an edition of *TTN* every two months. In doing so, we are planning to expand our editorial coverage across the diversity of the timber supply chain, related manufacturing, technical, engineering, policy and advocacy activities. This will involve reorganising and beefing up the content of *TTN*. We are earnestly hoping to retain our existing readership and attract new readers and business support.

We sincerely trust that the timber and related industries will continue to support the magazine as we seek to expand our editorial coverage and navigate the challenges of 2023 and beyond. Join us for the ride.

John Halkett

John Halkett, Publisher



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AUSTRALASIA



Editor's note

I'm delighted to welcome the new ownership of *TTN*. John Halkett and the rest of the Timber Media Australasia team represent years of experience in fields ranging from forestry to merchanting to advocacy. This will add strength to *TTN*'s voice and reach as we tell the timber stories that matter. Over coming decades, Australia's timber sector will play a central role in solving complex national issues including the housing crisis, restarting manufacturing and reaching Net Zero. *TTN*'s readership is a vital part of those challenges. There's never been a more important time for us to get our message out!

Donyale Harrison

Donyale Harrison, Editor



Above: Tarpeena General Manager Mark Eaton, Chief Manufacturing Officer Richard Holder, New Forests Chair David Brand & Timberlink CEO Ian Tyson reveal new Timberlink logo.

Happy 10th birthday to Timberlink

A new look is just part of the company's plans as it starts its second successful decade

Team members at Timberlink's Bell Bay (Tas) and Tarpeena (SA) sites celebrated the company's 10th anniversary in style last month. In the decade since its launch, the Australian timber products manufacturing business has grown from 380 to nearly 600 personnel, moved into the NZ market in 2015 and expanded both its Australian business and range of timber products.

Timberlink CEO Ian Tyson, who has been at the helm of the company since its formation, said, "This is an important moment to reflect on the enormous amount of change and improvement that has happened in our business since February

"It's been a fantastic 10 years, but it's only the beginning."

2013. Change can only occur when a business has a vision and plan for its future, has an ownership structure and a Board that supports this and, then most importantly, has a great team of people who can add to and deliver on that vision and plan."



Last year saw the launch of Timberlink's NeXTimber brand, which starts supply to customers this year, making the company Australia's only combined CLT and GLT manufacturer. The product will be supplied out of the company's updated and expanded facilities at Tarpeena, delivering yet more secure and ongoing regional jobs to the area.

This year also sees the launch of a wood-plastic composites manufacturing facility at Bell Bay, which will upcycle plastic waste, as well as the introduction of Australia's only finger-jointed and primed outdoor timber line, also out of Tasmania.

"These projects will take Timberlink from being primarily a structural timber manufacturer to a structural engineered timber products and solutions business, a remarkable change in 10 years," said Tyson.

To reflect and support this growth, Timberlink has released a refreshed logo and a newly redeveloped website. Timberlink's new positioning statement, 'A future made better for all' reflects its commitment to helping build environmentally friendlier homes and buildings that support the world being a better place for future generations.

Tyson said "It's been a great start and a fantastic 10 years, but it's only the beginning. We will continue to build on what we've already done and look forward to our future. There is so much more opportunity for us."

For more, visit [www. timberlinkaustralia.com.au](http://www.timberlinkaustralia.com.au)



Above: Chief information officer Paula O'Toole (back row, third from right) with team members at the Bell Bay manufacturing facility. **Above right:** The birthday cake had a very appropriate shape!



Above: Paul Stewart (left), formerly chair of Hardware Australia, and Peter Hutchison, formerly chair of TABMA. Both are now co-chairs of the new NTHA.

“A single Association will create a truly national presence.”

David Little, formerly CEO of TABMA Australia and now CEO of NTHA, expressed his pride in the efforts made to create a compelling proposition for members. He highlighted that joining the two industries will yield significant advantages for members' businesses, such as expanded networking opportunities, increased services and resources, economies of scale, and more robust and unified advocacy.

“A single national Association will create a truly national presence for the industries and with a combined 700+ members from all aspects of the timber, building materials and hardware sectors this is a fantastic opportunity to learn from one another, further train and skill the workforce and fuel the future growth of the businesses within it,” said Little.

The NTHA will provide a range of services to its members, including apprentices through its Group Training Organisation, tailored training through its Registered Training Organisation, workplace health and safety audit and reporting services, the provision of industry-specific statistics, and a recruitment service to support members across all levels.

For the first time, members of the NTHA will have the chance to connect as a unified community at the upcoming National Conference and Awards in the Hunter Valley, Thursday 25 to Friday 26 May 2023.

To be more inclusive and reflective of the timber and hardware businesses within the membership, the award categories have been updated for 2023. This is important, as they acknowledge and honour outstanding achievements in delivering high-quality products and services, both at an individual and organisational level.

Joining and connecting with the NTHA is easy; interested parties can visit the Association's website at www.ntha.com.au

Welcome to the NTHA

The timber and hardware industry strengthens its voice with one single national Association.

On Thursday 9 March 2023, TABMA Australia and Hardware Australia members voted yes to join forces into a merged entity, creating a single Association to represent the timber and hardware industry: the National Timber and Hardware Association (NTHA).

The leadership team, comprising the two Boards, views this as a great opportunity to be stronger together, especially across national advocacy and policy issues when engaging with important stakeholders.

The two industries have seen a significant evolution over the recent years, with many businesses switching or expanding their offering from timber to hardware and vice versa – one of the reasons the new organisation will be a true representation of what the industry will be in the future. NTHA will now be able to properly support its members in this new and more diverse environment.

Paul Stewart, co-chair, NTHA (formerly Hardware Australia) and Peter Hutchinson, co-chair NTHA (formerly TABMA), recently met to discuss the ongoing relationship and

the benefits of bringing their members together to create a larger national voice for the industry.

“We are thrilled to announce the merger of our two former organisations. We believe that this move will strengthen the Association and increase our ability to make a positive impact for our community. We look forward to working together as one unified group to achieve our goals and objectives on behalf of our membership,” said Stewart.

For over 12 months, Hardware Australia had been seeking a new partner to support its members and provide greater services. TABMA was a natural choice for the merger, with 80+ years of experience delivering services to the timber and building materials industries.

Both Boards have worked closely to develop a new name and logo. It was important to acknowledge the 80-year history of TABMA and to also properly welcome Hardware Australia members. The name is highly inclusive whilst the logo honours TABMA's legacy, retaining its important equity.





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The bumpy road for timber supply

Government initiatives aimed at improving housing affordability have had significant knock-on effects.

Basic economic theory tells us that demand and supply are linked. In a timber industry context, consistent demand for building and construction activity means that in the absence of timber supply, the demand for building products will be filled on the supply side by substitute products such as steel framing for house construction.

A review of global statistics reveals that when it comes to timber use, Australia's timber products consumption is substantial. Given the extensive nature of our own forests, it is surprising to learn that Australia imports about a third of all the timber and timber products consumed here.

Building and construction industries recognise that the strong demand for timber products in recent years, notably structural softwoods, has been driven by government initiatives aimed at improving housing affordability, providing incentives for building activity directed at maintaining employment, funding aimed at enhancing the prospects of apprentice employment and related measures. Although the intention has been a positive one, to keep the nation building, Federal and State governments have acted without sufficient attention to the resultant pressures on the supply side.

Collectively these measures have increased residential and commercial construction activity, which has placed substantial pressures on supply chains for building products more broadly, but for timber products in particular given that, relative to other building products, timber is high bulk and low

Projections indicate that from about the second quarter of this year building and construction activity should pick up.

value. This has exacerbated related supply chain logistics and transport challenges.

This said, it is noted that since the latter part of 2022 many wholesalers have been carrying excessive stocks of most softwood timber lines. This is in large part a consequence of robust ordering in early 2022, noting the four to six months import transit period, only to be followed by an unexpected decline in building and construction activity because of a combination of issues, including inflation, rising interest rates, floods, labour shortages and a weakening in business confidence as the year progressed.

However, projections indicate that from about the second quarter of this year building and construction activity should pick up. This is because of the backlog of work and a range of Federal and State government incentives to 'prime pump' the industry, such as the \$350 million pledge in the 2022 Federal budget for so-called "affordable housing."

Another dose of reality is that domestic production of structural softwood products has flat-lined and hardwood production is destined to decline even further as the intentions of the Victorian and Western Australian governments to shut down native forest hardwood production operations are implemented. Western Australian sawmills are already closing well ahead of the official end date, leaving their customers scrambling to find alternate suppliers.

Also, the increasing dependence on imported softwood products over recent years has been disrupted because of the brutal, illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resultant dislocation of wood flows across the Northern Hemisphere. This has affected the capacity of some traditional softwood exporters to Australia to supply at levels prior to the disruptions caused by the Ukraine conflict, while others have not been able to supply their full range of product.

The Australian Timber Importers Federation (ATIF) is of the view that the Federal government should now prioritise working with the industry to assist in developing additional sources of supply to support domestic building and construction efforts. A failure to do so risks further increases in home prices, and hence more inflation, as well as a slowdown in construction activity – exactly the outcomes the original programs were seeking to avoid.

Currently, Federal and State programs designed at increasing timber supply are mostly focused on the growth of future plantations as part of a long-term transition away from native timber harvesting in key states. While this investment is welcome, it represents a solution to supply issues in 30 years time. Similarly, the Federal Government's commitment of \$100 million over 5 years to establish an Australia-wide National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI) will help to make better use of Australian forest resources, but that research will take time to flow into forestry and manufacturing practices.

The situation in relation to hardwood timber suppliers will become increasingly challenging this year as production in Victoria and Western Australia is likely to continue its decline. ATIF reports that new potential sources of hardwood supply are being investigated from South America and Africa. However, these prospects will need careful investigation because of issues such as compliance with building codes and legal logging legislation.

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Air New Zealand's 'Hangar 4' will be the largest single-span timber arch aircraft hangar in the southern hemisphere.

Aotearoa timber architecture

New NZ projects demonstrate the versatility of wood technology. By Michael Smith

Two upcoming timber-based construction projects in New Zealand are significantly raising the bar in terms of showcasing the material's versatility.

Air New Zealand's new 10,000m² 'Hangar 4' is planned for the company's engineering base at Mangere, Auckland. Designed with a

6-star green rating (certified by the New Zealand Green Building Council), it will be the largest single-span timber arch aircraft hangar in the southern hemisphere.

A spokesperson for the airline noted that its existing hangars were built in the 1960s and 1980s. "Our fleet has changed over the

decades ... and we now need a more modern, innovative structure that takes energy use and other sustainability factors into account."

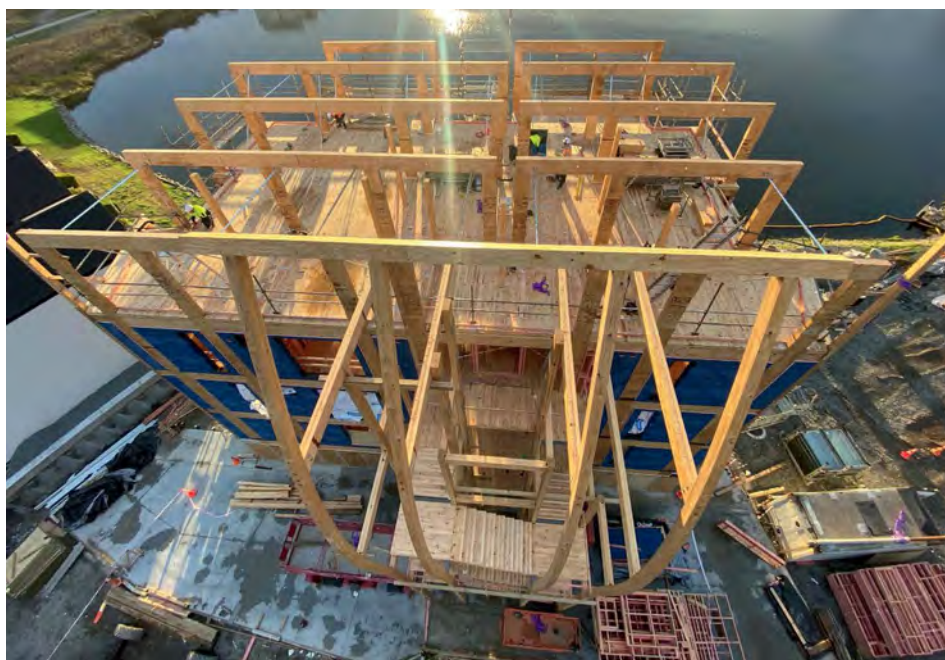
In Tauranga, the city council's new offices at 90 Devonport Road will become the country's largest mass timber office building. Given that architects, developers and builders are still getting to grips with timber technologies, the design relies on simplicity to achieve commercial viability.

Architects Warren and Mahoney say the eight-storey building is set to achieve a "60% reduction in upfront emissions when compared with its potential concrete-and-steel counterpart".

The project will also target the highest Green Star rating by incorporating EV charging, rainwater harvesting and facilities that accommodate 'active' transport options.

Meantime, a mid-rise wood construction case study of the Clearwater Quays Apartments in Christchurch has affirmed the structural advantages of building in engineered timber.

The five-storey, luxury residential building features cross-laminated timber, laminated veneer lumber, glulam and panelised framing timber. Its only structural, non-timber components are the concrete slab ground floor and footings.



Above: Clearwater Quays has shown how mass timber construction saves time.

At the planning stage, alternative 'digital twin' cost models in steel frame/concrete floors and full in-situ concrete were developed alongside the actual mass-timber costs. These allowed the quantity surveyors to estimate the cost implications of the time saved by constructing in mass timber – and enabled the construction manager to estimate the build time.

Interestingly, on a materials-only basis, mass timber generated the highest cost but was found to be 6% less expensive than steel/concrete, and 13% less than the all-concrete option, when 'preliminary and general items' were included in the tally (i.e. costs that aren't left on site, such as professional supervision, site fencing, utility costs and insurance).

Additionally, the mass timber build was calculated to have saved 2.5 months in construction time, which was mainly achieved during the critical frame-installation process. Consequently, there was minimal disruption to neighbouring properties – and following trades could come in noticeably earlier than would have occurred with other construction methods.

Carbon calculations were also modelled to



Above: Tauranga's new city council offices will be NZ's largest mass timber office building.

demonstrate the environmental impact of the three options. The steel/concrete and all-concrete scenarios would have resulted in the release of 800,000kg and 950,000kg of carbon respectively. The actual project was net negative 87,500 kg.

The case study noted that the construction

industry accounts for some 16% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. And because timber stores carbon for the life of a building, constructing in mass timber is "a significant step towards a regenerative form of architecture – thereby reducing net emissions".

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Putting the squeeze on

As interest rates rise, housing starts drop, which is bad news for builders, buyers and renters.

When it comes to policy, a good rule of thumb is that something is often a bad idea when parties who are usually at odds band together to fight against it. Pity Reserve Bank Governor Philip Lowe, whose strategy of multiple interest rate rises has proved so unpopular that not only are old friends Master Builders Australia and the Housing Industry Association (HIA) joining voices against it, the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has chimed in with a chorus of supportive disapproval.

With 10 consecutive rate rises since May

2022, the Reserve Bank has been criticised for overusing this blunt instrument for reining in inflation. Over this period, the cash rate target has lifted from 0.1% to 3.6%, while the annualised CPI inflation rate has shifted from 5.1% for the March 2022 quarter to a peak of 7.8% in the December 2022 quarter. This quarter's results are due at the end of April, but the ABS suggests inflation is easing with 7.4% for the year to the end of January.

While Lowe's language has led many to believe the next rate lift will be the last in this sequence, he has come in for heavy criticism.

"Leading indicators of housing activity have fallen to their lowest level in 15 years and will continue to decline as the full impact of the last nine months of rate increases continues to compound the decline in building activity," said HIA's chief economist, Tim Reardon.

Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn warned that without other fiscal and policy measures to control inflation, further interest rate rises would leave the industry and homeowners bearing the brunt of the current economic challenges.

Zach Smith, incoming national secretary, CFMEU, agreed strongly, though was more direct in his language, saying: "The RBA's model is broken and we need to do more than tinker with its charter — we need a complete refresh. Greedy corporations caused this inflation crisis by jacking up prices and trousering massive profits. And how does the RBA respond? By belting ordinary working people who did nothing to create the problem."

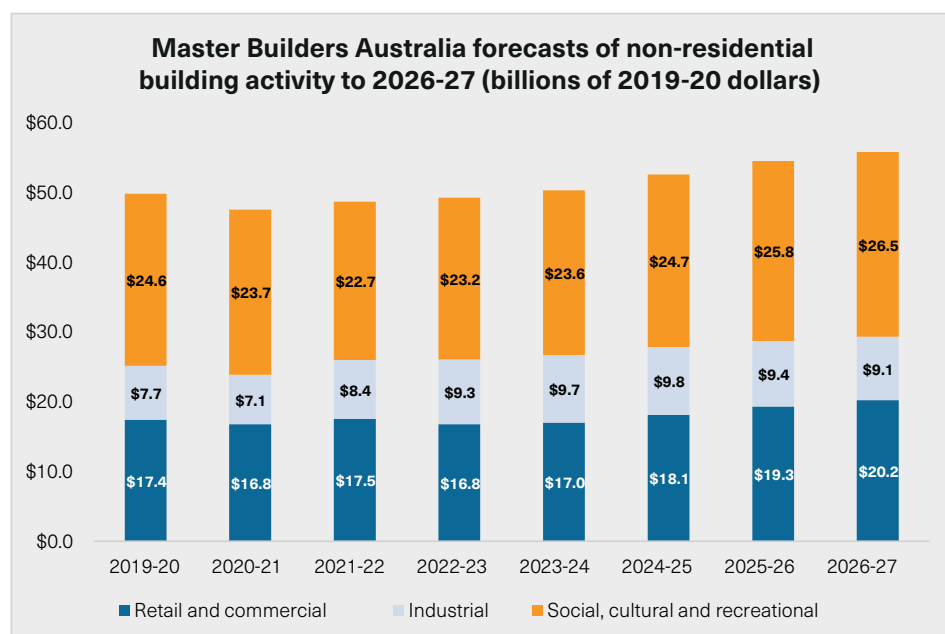
"These rate rises are causing unbelievable pain to blue collar workers and their families. I know these workers live a long way from Martin Place, but the RBA needs to consider what their day to day realities look like."

Lowering inflation is a worthy goal, but using the cash rate target to achieve that has painful consequences. Consumer confidence is at near-record lows, with the Westpac-Melbourne Institute of Consumer Sentiment having held below 80 for the second straight month for the first time since the early 1990s (100 is neutral) and the impacts are wide-reaching and look to last. Home building approvals have dropped to their lowest monthly figure in over a decade.

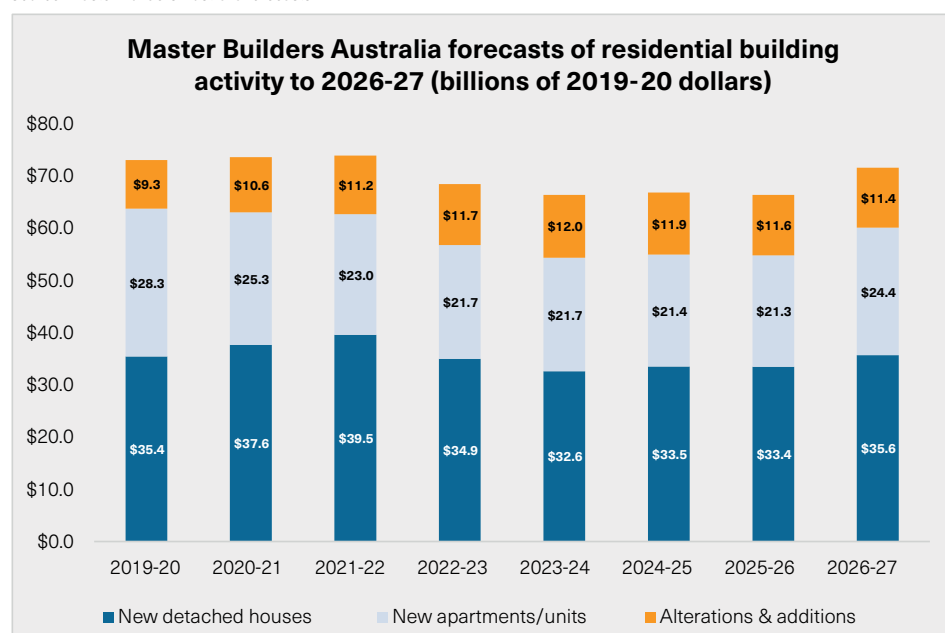
"There was a large volume of work in the pipeline when rates started to rise in May 2022, and there remains a record number of homes under construction, but this will shrink quickly as market confidence continues to fade," said Reardon. "Lending for the purchase or construction of a new home had already fallen to its lowest level since 2012 by the end of 2022, and the full impact of last year's rate increases is still to flow through to households."

HIA predicts the number of detached housing starts will fall below 100,000 starts/year for the first time in a decade to just 96,300 in 2024. There were 149,000 starts in 2021.

"Multi-unit starts were impaired last year by the acute shortage of labour and materials which has seen many projects postponed until 2023," Reardon said. "The number of multi-units commencing construction should



Source: Master Builders Australia forecasts



Source: Master Builders Australia forecasts

increase as the acute shortage of housing, returning migrants and students, and affordability constraints continue to drive demand for housing.

"Higher rates will further impair the ability of the market to respond to the acute shortage of housing stock."

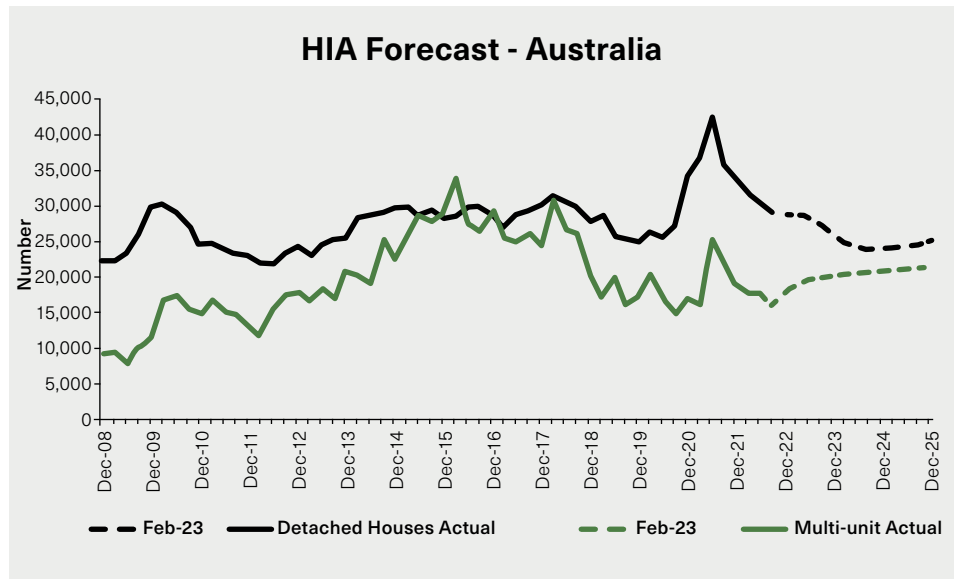
In its Master Builders Australia Submission For Federal Budget 2023–24 paper, Master Builders Australia anticipates a 1.8% drop in construction for the coming year, driven largely by a weakness in residential builds, before a slow recovery in the second half of the decade (see charts, opposite). While the association acknowledges there are multiple factors in play, the rate rise is singled out.

"Inflation is a hidden tax on everything," said Wawn. "It makes people and businesses poorer by eating our savings and making investments by businesses less attractive. It is particularly bad for construction because of the higher capital requirements for the work we do and how closely construction activity is tied to private sector investment decisions."

One set of people often overlooked in the discussion on home prices is renters. This year is different as rental costs have soared and availabilities have dropped to near-record lows. Housing is increasingly unaffordable for key workers in major cities and for older Australians, particularly women.

"Rent prices have increased ... reflecting low vacancy rates and a tight labour market," said Wawn. "This demonstrates the need for larger volumes of new home building in key parts of the rental market, especially for apartments and units."

"As inflation rises, fewer projects can be done for the same amount of capital. The



Detached housing starts are forecast to drop to the lowest levels in a decade. Source: HIA Economics

"The RBA doesn't need to crush the economy in order slow inflation."

interest hikes which follow end up smashing the spending power of consumers. We already see these stark impacts in new housing construction. Not addressing the symptoms of inflation now risks these symptoms spilling into other sectors of construction."

All three groups agree on the risks: high inflation threatens to lock a generation out of home ownership, dramatically lower the availability of labour and reduce the appeal of

business investment, all of which will further damage the economy in the long term.

"There are more tools in governments' fiscal tool belts than in the RBA's. The government needs to take the necessary steps to ensure interest rates do not need to rise any further and take some of the heavy lifting of our correction off mortgage holders and business owners," said Wawn.

HIA's Reardon agrees, adding: "The RBA isn't going to return the economy to stability by putting the building industry through boom-and-bust cycles. It doesn't need to crush the economy in order slow inflation."

Download Master Builders' budget submission at www.masterbuilders.com.au/Newsroom/Budget-should-focus-on-targeted-spending-to-build

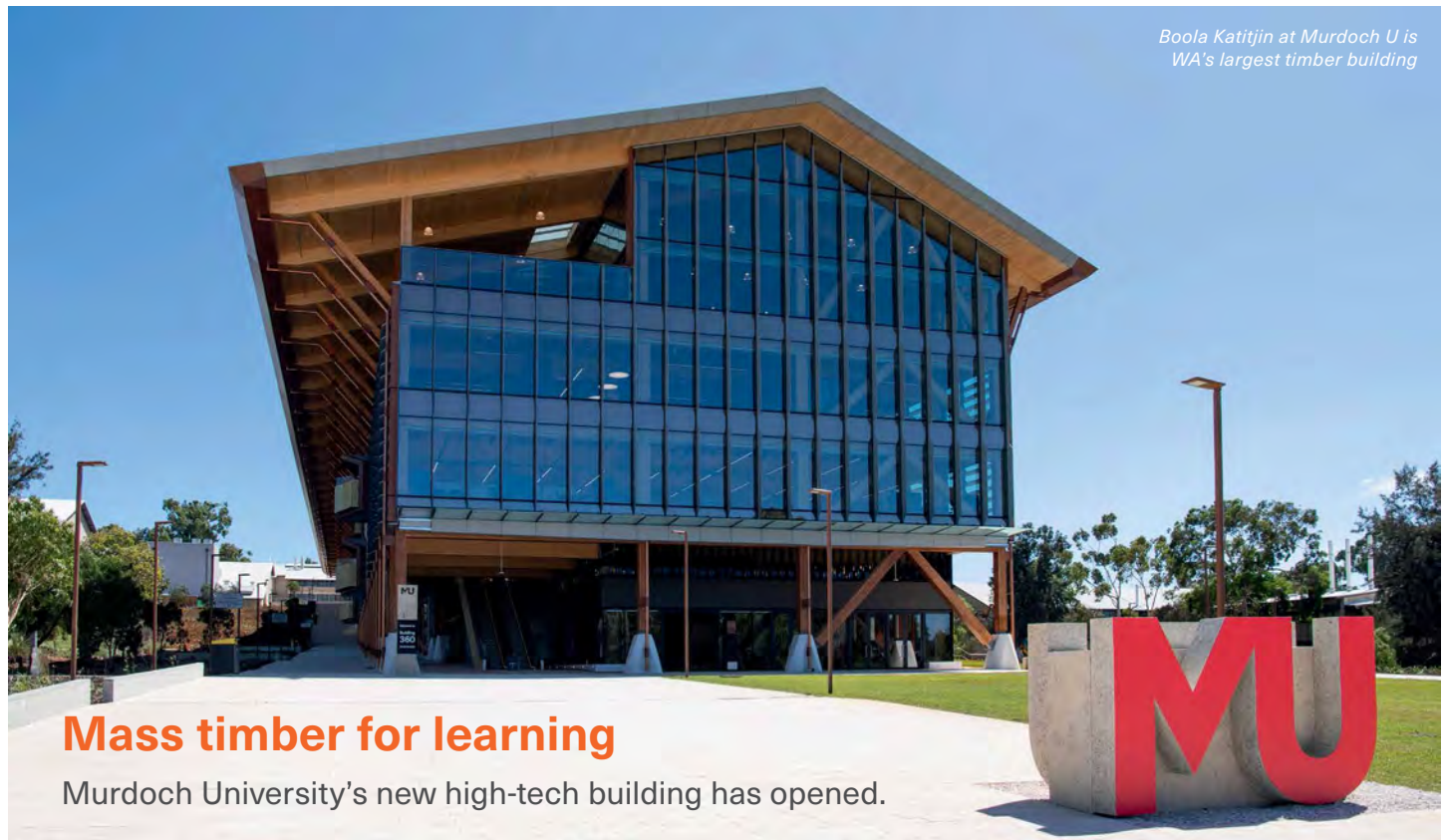
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Boola Katitjin at Murdoch U is
WA's largest timber building



Mass timber for learning

Murdoch University's new high-tech building has opened.

Boola Katitjin, Western Australia's largest timber building on Murdoch University's Perth campus, has opened in time for the 2023 academic year. There are 1796 pieces of glulam and CLT used across the 16,000m², building's structural system, including some of the largest glulam beams in Australia at 26m long and 7282kg, manufactured by HESS timber.

The name Boola Katitjin means "lots of learning" in Noongar and the building is made up of multiple places to learn, study and socialise. Technology Enabled Learning (TEL) desks in the building let students see, talk and collaborate with classmates anywhere in the world. "Through this

Australia-first technology, domestic and onshore international students will work seamlessly alongside their peers and academics based overseas," said Professor Andrew Deeks, Murdoch Vice Chancellor.

Deeks opened the building with International Education Minister David Templeman MLA in front of a crowd of dignitaries, students and local Indigenous peoples, who welcomed visitors with a smoking ceremony as part of their contribution to the day. Their involvement was more than symbolic as the building plays an important role in the university's 2023–2030 strategy Building a Brighter Future, Together – Ngala Kwop Bidji, reflecting the

three pillars of Sustainability; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Murdoch's goal to become the university of first choice for First Nations people.

"Boola Katitjin will offer a digital rich learning environment that uses Australian-first technology and flexible class formats to allow for more innovative teaching approaches and greater engagement with the community and industry," Deeks said.

"It reflects the University's commitment to sustainability – with Boola Katitjin designed to achieve the internationally recognised 6-star Green Star rating through a range of features including solar panels, stormwater harvesting, active design features and native landscaping.

"The name Boola Katitjin was given by Dr Richard Walley, who has a long association with Murdoch. The Beeliar Wetlands around the University have been place of learning for thousands of years and we are proud to be adapting to the future of education to continue this tradition. I thank the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group for not only gifting us the building's name, but also guiding the University on its digital engagement strategy, including some of the building's beautiful artistic elements."

The building had already delivered on its promise of innovation during construction, providing a trial venue for a robot designed at UTS to fasten some of the CLT, see www.murdoch.edu.au/news/videos/world-first-robotic-technology-to-construct-murdoch-s-building-360



A traditional Welcome and smoking ceremony at the opening.

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In brief

Simpson Strong-Tie's Australian subsidiary has acquired Sydney-based KlevaKlip Systems. Owned by Greg Doupe and Stephen Sanders, who are staying with the team, KlevaKlip offers a range of patented products for deck construction. The main product categories are composite, structural connectors, adjustable deck supports and a hidden deck fastening system.

"This acquisition enables Simpson Strong-Tie to increase its breadth of line in the Pacific Rim," says Rob Lawson, GM — Pacific Rim. "With the strength of Simpson Strong-Tie R&D and testing, and field service and distribution combined with KlevaKlips' quality products, we are adding value to our new and existing deck builder customers in Australia and New Zealand."

Dr Michelle Freeman has been elected president and Jim Wilson elected vice president of Forestry Australia, the peak organisation for forest scientists, professionals, managers and growers. Retiring President, Bob Gordon applauded the move, saying, "Michelle has been on the Board for a number of years and has already made a very significant contribution to Forestry Australia and I look forward to her leadership." Freeman is a forester with a double degree in Forestry and Science (Ecology) and a PhD from the University of Melbourne.

Western Australia's Farm Forestry Assist grant applications are now open for farmers and other landowners to plant pine tree plantations of 20–50ha. Visit www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/farm-forestry-assist-grant-applications-now-open

Australian Ethical investment fund has divested \$11 million in Lendlease shares over a planned housing development in south-west Sydney, which threatens the survival of Sydney's largest healthy koala population. The developer insisted it had catered for the koalas with nature corridors, but Australian Ethical is just one party to find that inadequate. For the full story, see www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/13/australian-ethical-offloads-lendlease-shares-over-development-threat-to-koala-population

Resilient timber homes

After years of the worst natural disasters in Australia's history, WoodSolutions is helping to design homes that will survive.

The most heartbreaking images to come out of the floods and fires over recent years are always of people standing beside the ruins of what was once a happy home, trying to work out how they can come back from this. It's never easy to rebuild, but too many factors combine to make it harder and more expensive than it should be.

WoodSolutions has partnered with research partners FTMA and OneFortyOne and a series of Contributing and Supporting Partners to launch the Resilient Timber Homes program. The program will demonstrate how timber homes can be designed and built with a resilience-focused 'Code+' approach, to provide better safety and wellness for their occupants, as well as increased value for the investors and the whole community.

Used appropriately, timber in homes has a long history of successfully standing up to fire, flood, earthquake and even cyclones. Its inherent durability and strength is coupled with other desirable qualities, including easy maintenance, sustainability and superior insulation properties. Timber homes are also a vital part of decarbonising construction, with their ability to store a huge amount of embodied carbon, the much smaller carbon footprint of their materials and the potential to re-use components, as well as the fact you can regrow all the timber with ease.

The Resilient Timber Homes program involves the partners working to develop and test a better method to design and construct, with respect to business-as-usual and

minimum Code requirements, in order to be beneficial to both the program partners and the homeowners/users (i.e. lower risk, future-proof real estate values, reduced maintenance costs, lower Council rates, etc).

As part of the program, the Resilient Timber Homes Design Competition is offering two \$50,000 prizes for designs that modify a benchmark home to two different briefs in order to:

1. achieve better resilience, with reference to the performances described in the brief.
2. estimate the cost premium associated with the modified design, and suggest cost-offset tool(s) and/or initiative(s) that would turn it into an investment.
3. quantify the carbon footprint, using the Green Star's Upfront Carbon Emissions calculation guide.

The competition has already launched, with the entry submission period opening 14 April and closing 26 May.

As insurers increasingly refuse to offer coverage at reasonable prices, building homes designed to survive may be the only way people can continue to live in some of the more disaster-prone areas of Australia. Particularly as climate change causes those disasters to worsen in scope and frequency and their zones to expand and overlap. This project aims to reduce the number of people displaced by disaster and to get people back into their homes faster and more cheaply.

For more, visit www.woodsolutions.com.au/resilient-timber-homes



Fire modelling

FWPA's podcast looks at minimising fire damage.

WoodChat Episode 27 looks at a recently completed FWPA-supported research project aimed at increasing the industry's capacity to minimise the impacts of future bushfire events. This work is focused on updating fuel accumulation and fire spread models for Australian forestry plantations.

Additional projects touched on include a sophisticated fire detection camera known as FireHawk and Dja Dja Wurrung Group's work on traditional, cultural and cool burning practices as a means of mitigating bushfire risk. You can listen to WoodChat on Soundcloud, iTunes and Spotify.

PHOTO: COURTESY FWPA

UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL

CHARTERED FORESTERS NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

The UK-based 'Connecting Trees, Farmers and Foresters' will also run live online on 25–26 April. Expert British and European speakers will examine integrating trees into the farmed landscape and building mutually beneficial relationships between the farming and forestry sectors. **Book at <https://phedloop.com/NC23/site/home/>**

MAY

LIGNA TRADE SHOW

The world's leading trade fair for the woodworking and wood processing industry runs 5–18 May in Hannover, Germany. It showcases the entire range of products and services for the primary and secondary industries – tools, machines and systems for

custom and mass production, surface technology, wood-based panel production, sawmill technology, energy from wood, machine components and automation technology, as well as machines and systems for forestry, round wood and sawn wood production.

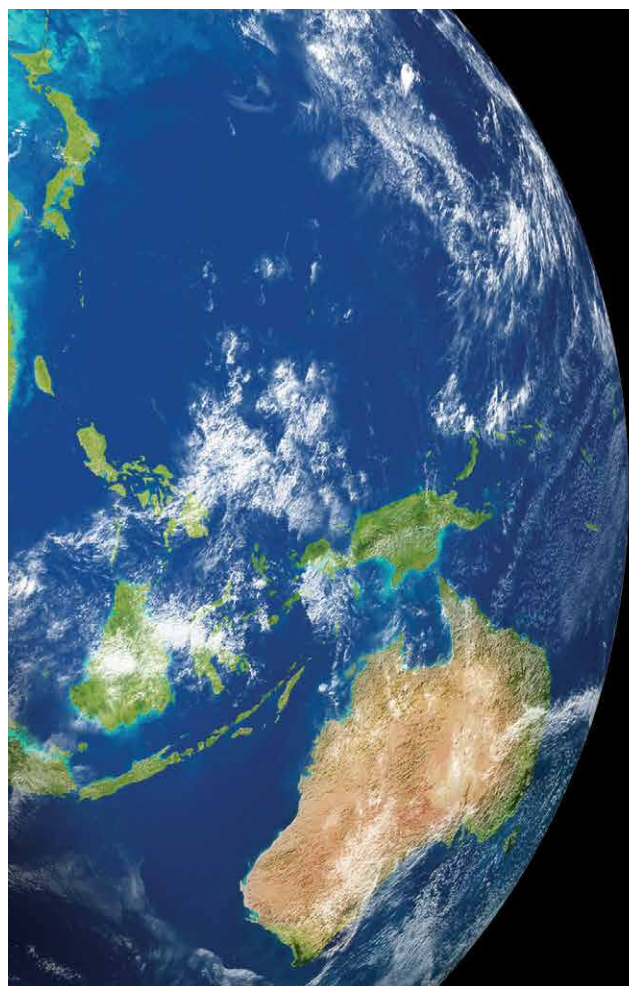
For details, visit www.ligna.de

NTHA NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AWARDS

The newly formed association will come together 25–26 May to plan for the year ahead and celebrate the industry's achievements at Crowne Plaza, Hunter Valley, NSW. The event combines networking, specialist talks on matters of both broad and specific industry interest, and a chance to honour outstanding achievements in delivering high-quality products and services, both at an individual and organisational level.

To book, visit www.trybooking.com/events/landing/993638

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Focusing on people

Six major HR issues to watch out for as 2023 hits its stride. **By Peter Maguire**

The last few years have been among the most challenging for human resources management in memory. Covid, staff shortages, remote working and continued legislative change as well as the highest increases in award wages for many years have all contributed to this.

That trend is set to continue big time. There is a lot of legislative and regulatory change in relation to both workplace relations and workplace health and safety coming in, courtesy of both State and Federal Governments and the effects of Covid on staff availability and working preferences continue to have an impact.

So now that we're back to the serious part of 2023, here is a heads-up on the HR agenda for the rest of this year.

#1: SKILLS SHORTAGES

The struggle to find and retain the right people for your business will remain a key challenge in 2023 and beyond. It continues to be a candidates' market, so it is imperative that you have a real Employer Value Proposition (EVP) – that is, you can tell candidates what you offer and why they should work for you.

Explore opportunities to differentiate your

business from your competitors in your industry and in your region, get the message out there and make sure that you deliver on your EVP for your employees, so they become your greatest advocates.

#2: PAID FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

This year, all employees, whether full-time, part-time or casual, will be able to access 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave.

For businesses with 15 or more employees, the full leave entitlement of 10 days entitlement is already available.

For small business employers with fewer than 15 employees, that entitlement is available from 1 August 2023.

Paid family and domestic violence leave does not accumulate but it does renew on the anniversary of an employee's commencement.

For example, an employee engaged by a large employer on 5 July 2022, would first have had entitlement to 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave on 5 February 2023. That entitlement would reset to 10 days on the employee's anniversary on 5 July 2023 and on 1 July each year thereafter.

#3: POSITIVE DUTY TO PREVENT SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION

In Victoria, this duty already exists under equal opportunity legislation. Now it is also being introduced federally through the Respect@Work reforms to the Fair Work Act.

Employees can already make application to the Fair Work Commission to issue stop sexual harassment orders but now they can also notify disputes and seek compensation for sexual harassment.

The new positive duty means that employers have to prevent sexual harassment from happening in the first place by proactively identifying and removing risks in the same way that is required for workplace health and safety hazards.

If you cannot demonstrate that you are meeting that positive duty test, it will be extremely difficult to offer effective defence against any complaint made.

#4: REQUESTS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Fair Work Act already provides employees in certain circumstances with the ability to apply for flexible working

arrangements which might, for example, be a temporary or ongoing variation to working hours or working location.

From 6 June 2023, employers are required to actively consult an employee who makes a request for a flexible working arrangement and, if the employee is dissatisfied, the Fair Work Commission can be called upon to conciliate and arbitrate.

With the current post-lockdown challenges that some employers are experiencing in getting people back to the physical workplace, this could be a big issue for the remainder of 2023.

#5: INCREASES IN COST OF LIVING AND WAGES

The Albanese Government clearly has better pay for workers as a cornerstone of its workplace relations policy platform.

Last year, the Fair Work Commission delivered its highest increase to the federal minimum wage and award wages that we have seen for decades.

Additionally, with the accelerated increases in cost of living/inflation of recent times plus staff shortages, it is necessary to raise the bar on wage increases to attract and retain good people.

#6: MANAGING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There are two elements to this.

The first is that we want to look after our employees so that they can perform at their best and they trust that we care for them.

The second is that if we do not have the appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to support mental health and wellbeing, we have little chance of being able to defend complaints of psychosocial injuries and related worker's compensation claims if they arise.

WHAT THIS ALL MEANS

Over the last few years, managing people and people issues has become a lot more complicated than it already was. This new raft of changes that will come into play

throughout 2023 just continues with that.

There are three really important things that employers need to do regardless of size or number of employees.

The first is to learn as much as you can about what these changes are and what they mean for you.

The second is related to that – it is to have access to competent professional HR/ workplace relations advice. You might obtain that from an industry or employer association, an employment law firm or a HR consultancy. Just make sure that they have the right balance between legal knowledge and cultural awareness.

The third is to engage with your people – educate them, listen to them and work with them on how to deal with all of these responsibilities in your business. **T**

Peter Maguire is the owner and practice leader of Ridgeline HR, an award winning HRM consulting practice which he founded in 2000. Peter is an acknowledged expert in workplace relations compliance and also a high-performance leadership coach with over 40 years' experience in HRM. Ridgeline HR's byline is Helping PEOPLE in BUSINESS and that is essentially what Peter does – help business people with their people business.



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AUSTRALIA'S MOST RELEVANT AND INSIGHTFUL TIMBER INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

Association news



The debate is over. Climate change is one of the biggest threats to our future. Around the world governments are responding to this threat and, in Tasmania, the forest industry is leading the charge.

We know natural forests and timber plantations are net absorbers of greenhouse gases, and forestry products such as framing timbers store this carbon and lock it away for the life of the product.

But unfortunately, not every government is proactively fighting climate change. For example, the recent reports that the Brazilian Amazon basin has switched from being a

carbon sink to a carbon source thanks to fires and deforestation.

We know that forests are one of the world's great natural resources, and when such a valuable resource is left unprotected, we will see the greed and recklessness that we are now seeing in the Amazon.

But what's happening in the Amazon is a world away from the way we manage forestry in Tasmania.

In Tasmania, every tree harvested is replaced by either regenerating natural forests or through the cycle of plantation harvesting. As new trees grow, they draw more carbon from the atmosphere.

We lead the world in sustainable forest practices with 59% of the state's forests protected, 87% of the state's old-growth

protected and an expanding plantation sector.

The reality is that only 14 of every 10,000 native trees are harvested in Tasmania and, remember, every single tree is regrown and replaced for the future.

Tasmania's forestry industry has invested in more than 302,000 hectares of softwood and hardwood plantation forests, and we are leading the way in developing new and innovative products from these plantation timbers.

The world needs wood and loves the products made from timber. We just need to make sure the timber we use is from responsible production systems like in Tasmania.

*Nick Steel
CEO*



PHOTO: COURTESY FIFWA



ILLEGAL LOGGING DUE DILIGENCE COMPLIANCE UPDATE

As part of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) Sunsetting Review of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Regulation (the Regulation), the Government has agreed to the recommended reforms to both the Regulation and the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012 (the Act), including:

- Requiring regulated entities to provide key due diligence information to DAFF upfront to verify legality, such as the timber species and origin of harvest.
- Adding powers to seize, sample and detain regulated timber products.
- Adding injunction and enforceable undertaking powers.
- Adding publication powers for compliance findings and instances of non-compliance.
- Adding or amending definitions in the Act.

As part of this process, DAFF used the feedback received from stakeholders during the public consultation phase to develop a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) exploring the costs and benefits of proposed reforms and other legislative options.

The Minister for Agriculture considered the RIS and agreed to pursue the recommended option to reform the legislation, over the options to either remake the Regulation as is or let it sunset. DAFF is now progressing the legislative reforms, which require changes to both the Act and the Regulation and will be considered by Government once substantially drafted. ATIF will continue to participate in this process.

ATIF MEETING WITH FEDERAL MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE MURRAY WATT

The Chairman and General Manager of ATIF have had a meeting with the Federal Minister for Agriculture Murray Watt. A briefing paper for the meeting and discussions covered:

1. Future softwood and hardwood timber products supply
2. Illegal logging compliance-related matters
3. Increased imports and softwood timber from Canada

SAWN SOFTWOOD TIMBER IMPORTS CONTINUE TO GROW

Australia's total imports of sawn softwood products lifted to 1,00,989m³ year-ended November 2022, an increase of 58.8% on the previous period, with the weighted average import price at a new record FOB AU\$877/m³. November itself saw imports at 61,073m³, the second strongest November recorded after 2018, when imports were 85,372m³ (see graph below).

Imports are mainly dominated by structural products. The dominance of a few grades is matched by the importance of just seven countries, delivering the significant bulk of supply. Between them, the following countries contributed 81% of the year-end total import volume. These countries are: Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, New Zealand and Sweden.

For further ATIF-related information contact John Halkett at: john.halkett@atif.asn.au or 0417 421 187.

*John Halkett
General manager*

The Taylors have planted more than 210,000 trees on their 1200ha property, sequestering carbon and increasing stocking capacity percentages



The inaugural Carbon & Farming Conference was held in WA on March 7, with 70 people attending the sold-out event.

The Carbon and Farming Conference explored the impact carbon will have on farming businesses going forward, with in-depth analysis from experts in business development, agriculture, sustainability and forestry.

A fantastic line up of speakers filled the program, which included the 2022 Australian Farmer of the Year, Michael Taylor.

A sixth-generation woolgrower from Kentucky, NSW, Michael shared his experience on how the family successfully integrated agroforestry into their sustainable farming enterprise, Taylors Run.

The Taylors have planted more than 210,000 trees, predominately radiata pine, on their 1200-hectare property.

This approach, combined with rotational grazing, has allowed them to sequester carbon and reduce degradation as well as increase stocking capacity and lambing percentages.

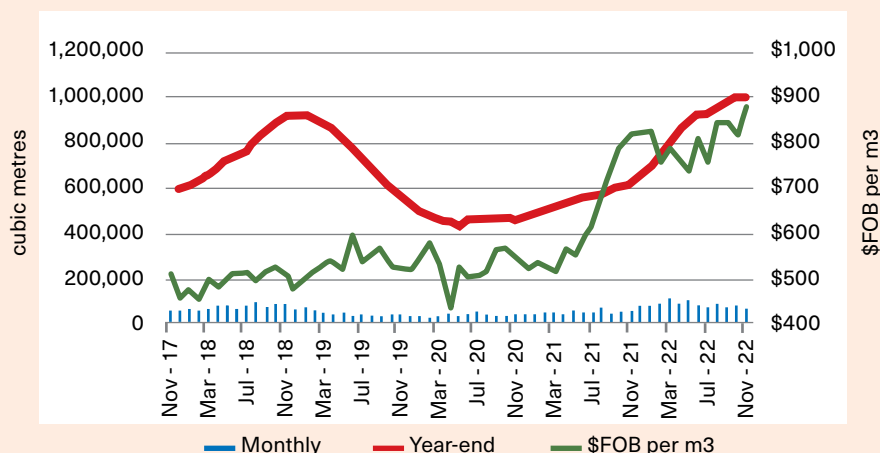
The Conference was organised by the South West Timber Hub, which also used the event to launch the new version of the Decision Tree program – aimed at increasing the softwood plantation estate through integrated farm forestry.

The new version of the Decision Tree calculator is a web-based application with farm-specific mapping capabilities.

The Decision Tree program was designed to rapidly assess the suitability of farms for commercial integrated tree planting, as well as provide information and assistance to landowners seeking to plant trees.

The launch of the new calculator was particularly relevant for farmers attending >>

4407.10 AU\$ Coniferous Sawnwood Monthly, Year-end, AU\$FOB



Graph: HireThinking Pty Ltd Source: Industry Edge

Above: Australia's total imports of sawn softwood lifted last November to the highest level in four years.



the Conference, interested in reducing their carbon footprint in a profitable manner.

They were also offered exclusive financial grants, available for early adopters of Decision Tree, to fund agricultural and forestry advisors to undertake full farm mapping and a viability report.

Through the program, farmers have a choice of investment models and how closely they choose to work with industry professionals to manage the trees and assist in maximising carbon credits.

They also have access to free seedlings, information to assist in optimising tree health and free carbon aggregation.

For more on Forest Industries Federation WA (FIFWA), visit www.forestindustries.com.au



It's great to have *TTN* back in print, so with this being our first inclusion for 2023, we'll take the opportunity to wish everyone all the best for a great remainder of the year.

In the past few years, our industry has faced significant challenges. Unfortunately, it still doesn't appear that this year will be smooth sailing. We will hope for the best and

In 2018, employees gained the right to take unpaid family and domestic violence leave as part of the National Employment Standards.

see how we all fare at the end of the year.

Our team of employment lawyers continue to support our members with their enquiries. They are also busy staying on top of updates and completing submissions on matters that affect our members and communicating with members on these.

MGA TMA INDUSTRY EVENT

MGA TMA is excited for our next industry event. Taking place at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on Wednesday 22 March 2023 from 7:30–10:45am, this is an event not to be missed.

Guests will look out to the hallowed turf of the MCG while hearing from Kevin Peachey, Statistics and Economics Manager at Forest and Wood Products Australia, motivational speaker, Kevin Sheedy and MGA TMA's

Head of Legal, Martin Stirling. Hot breakfast will be served. The event concludes with a guided tour of the MCG.

We welcome both MGA TMA members and non-members to attend. Places are limited so please visit mgatma.com.au for further information and to book your tickets.

TIMBER PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE TRAINING

We will be holding our successful Timber Product Knowledge training courses throughout the year. Dates are currently under consideration, but we will advertise available dates on our website (mgatma.com.au) once they are confirmed.

PAID FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

MGA TMA has long held the position that family and domestic violence, as with all acts of violence, creates lasting damage to individuals and communities.

In recent times the media and governments across Australia have shone a spotlight on this societal problem and debated solutions to assist those exposed.

In addition to strengthening the criminal justice system, governments have progressively implemented reforms which address the social disadvantage victims face, including consequences which flow from

TDA's role is at the market end of the timber supply, aimed at market maintenance and development activities.

interruptions to being able to engage in work.

In 2018, employees gained the right to take unpaid family and domestic violence leave as part of the National Employment Standards. Shortly after, the Australian Government began consultation regarding creating a paid entitlement to this form of leave. MGA TMA made a submission to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee on this matter.

In accordance with member feedback, MGA TMA agreed with the principle that workers require support when addressing family and domestic violence. We voiced concern relating to the financial burden that paid family and domestic violence leave would have on members, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, if required to fund this leave themselves. MGA TMA observed the Australian Government currently funds paid parental leave and a new form of paid leave should also be funded by the government.

Despite our concerns, the Australian Parliament proceeded to create the new paid family and domestic violence leave entitlement, to be funded by employers. This entitlement is now law and has commenced operation for businesses that employ 15 or more employees. Businesses that employ 14 or fewer employees will be required to provide this leave to employees from 1 August this year.

MGA TMA recently advised members of these changes and how they will operate, including new obligations and rights.

MGA TMA members should contact our **Employment Law team on 1800 888 479 or legal@mga.asn.au** to discuss this new entitlement and obligations for your particular circumstances.

If you are interested in learning about the benefits of MGA TMA membership, please contact us on (03) 9824 4111 to discuss.

*Marie-Claire McKiernan
National membership manager*

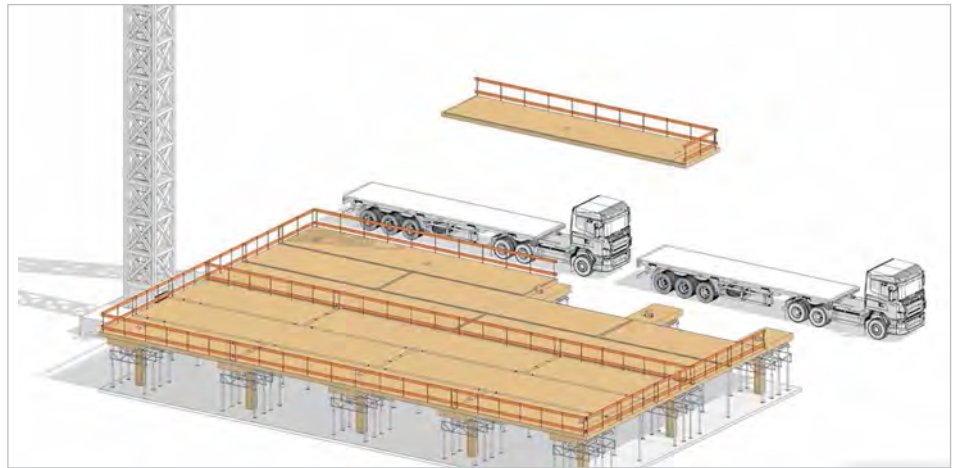


Figure 1 From TDA's band beam digital model.

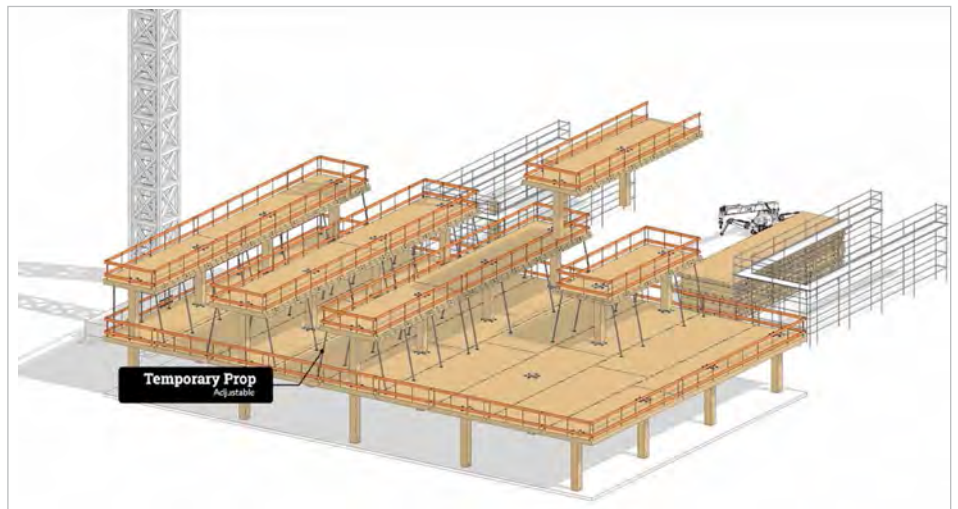


Figure 2 From TDA's Centre column support and infill digital model

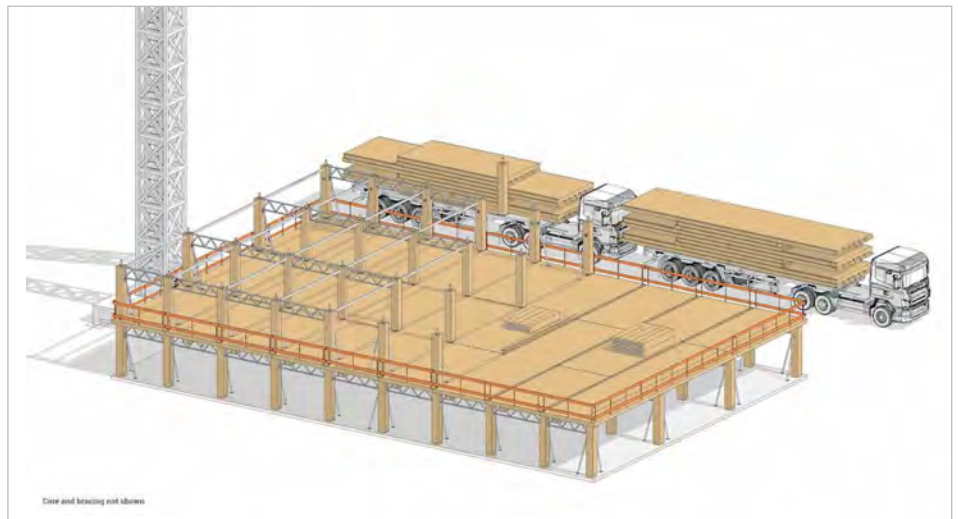


Figure 3 From TDA's Centre edge supported digital model

TDA Timber Development Association

It's been a while since I last wrote for *Timber Trader News*. It seems the only constant is change, and there has been a lot in the intervening years. TDA's role is at the market end of the timber supply, aimed at market maintenance and development activities.

These include **Promotion**

- NSW WoodSolutions face-to face events aimed at building professionals, including seminars, building professional networks and tours (more later)
- Australian Timber Design Awards – annual design awards, now in its 24th year >>

A Full Bench of the FWC issued a Decision to insert a new model clause into 78 Modern Awards regarding leave during shutdowns

Research

We recently completed a project on the post and flat plate system, the new mass timber building system. This system is the next evolution in mass timber design, and the project utilised digital modelling to resolve some issues. These include band beam systems (www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBX5EpGVZAo), centre column support and infill systems (www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdLoVbU_U00) and edge-supported systems (www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sBHBtFzXb0), see images on the previous page.

Market access

TDA has also been working on the Industry Cladding Installation Standard. Due to insurance issues with certifiers, cladding was not being accepted as a complying solution within building regulations. To circumvent this blockage, a project half funded by industry, and Forest and Wood Products Australia is developing an industry standard intended for call-up into building regulations. Drafts of the industry standard will be out shortly for review.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

WoodSolutions Sweden/Norway Tour, 11–17 June In partnership with WoodSolutions, we are organising a tour to Sweden and Norway to investigate the absolute latest in advance off-site timber fabrication. BoKlok, a joint venture between IKEA and Skanska, utilises advanced off-site manufacturing, much of it robotic-assisted. The tour will visit factories and building sites to see this form of construction in action.

Mass timber will also be on the agenda, as Sweden and Norway have over one-quarter of all the mass timber buildings over eight storeys in height. The tour intention is to stay one night at a hotel that is 18-storeys high. For more details, visit www.woodsolutions.com.au/events/woodsolutions-2023-study-tour-sweden-and-norway

Andrew Dunn
CEO



VARIATION TO ANNUAL LEAVE & SHUTDOWN PROVISIONS IN MODERN AWARDS

In a major decision that will pose significant difficulties for business in managing annual leave entitlements, on 22 December 2022, a Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission issued a Decision to insert a new model clause into 78 Modern Awards regarding leave during shutdowns (“the Decision”).

The Decision was made in the “plain language proceedings” as part of the continuing four-yearly review of modern awards (which commenced in 2014), and it affects 78 Modern Awards which already contain shutdown provisions.

Modern Awards affecting our Members are:

- Timber Industry Award 2020
- Clerks—Private Sector Award 2020
- Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2020
- Road Transport and Distribution Award 2020
- Joinery and Building Trades Award 2020
- General Retail Industry Award 2020

Existing Modern Award Shutdown clauses

Many Modern Awards currently contain clauses that permit an employer to direct employees to take annual leave during a shutdown period. Our industry award, the Timber Industry Award 2020 is one such award. Typically, under the current clauses, an employer must give employees a minimum of four (4) weeks’ notice of their intention to do so. In addition to this, some Modern Awards further permit employers to

direct staff to take unpaid leave during a period of shut down if the employee does not have sufficient annual leave accrued to cover the shutdown period.

The Model Clause – Direction to take annual leave during shutdown

Under the new model clause, an employer may only direct employees to take annual leave during a shutdown period if the employer provides 28 days’ written notice of a temporary shutdown period (although a shorter notice period can be given by agreement between the employer and the majority of affected employees). Notice must also be given to any employees who are engaged after the date notice was initially given to other staff.

If notice was given, then an employer may direct employees to take accrued annual leave during the shutdown period. The direction must be in writing and must be reasonable (including in relation to the length and frequency of shutdowns).

The model clause will replace any existing clauses on the matter in each affected Modern Award.

There will however be adaptations to the model clause in various Modern Awards to incorporate existing prescriptions which:

- limit the application of shutdown provisions by reference to the circumstances in which the shutdowns occur (such as restrictions relating to the time of year during which the shutdown occurs and the purpose of the shutdown (i.e. shutdowns may be limited to the Christmas/New Year holidays, and/or may be for the purpose of pre-planned maintenance); and
- prescribe a notice period of longer than 28 days for a shutdown.



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Where an employee does not have sufficient accrued annual leave for duration of the shutdown – removal of directions to take unpaid leave

In its Decision, the Full Bench concluded that a direction to take unpaid leave during a shutdown is in substance a 'stand-down', and modern awards are not permitted under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) to contain such terms. Accordingly, the amendments will remove/replace modern award provisions permitting an employer to direct an employee onto unpaid leave during a shutdown.

Under the amendments, an employee with insufficient accrued annual leave may take annual leave in advance during a shutdown in accordance with an agreement under the relevant Modern Award terms. Where there is a shutdown which is not the subject of a direction to take leave, an employer and an employee may agree in writing for the

employee to take leave without pay.

In relation to the implications of the amendments (and in response to concerns raised by employers), the Full Bench indicated:

1. In some circumstances, a shutdown may be due to circumstances which qualify for standing down employees (unpaid) without needing to rely on modern award terms.
- *The Full Bench gave the following example: "in the building industry, if a head contractor closes down a building site over Christmas/New Year, that is likely to cause a stoppage of work for which a subcontractor employer cannot reasonably be held responsible and thus enable [an unpaid] stand down under s524."*
2. Employers may manage annual leave requests (including reasonable refusal of requests under s88) throughout the year so that employees have sufficient accrued

leave to cover a shutdown period.

- *The Full Bench stated "...where it is an established feature of an employer's business, or a relevant part of it, to shut down in the Christmas/New Year period, it would be unlikely that a refusal to agree to a leave request which would leave the employee with insufficient accrued leave to cover the shutdown period would be unreasonable within the meaning of s88(2) unless there were some strong countervailing factors pertaining to the individual concerned."*

3. Employers may manage shortfalls of accrued annual leave in other ways including (where applicable) use of accrued rostered days off, TOIL, or granting requests to take annual leave in advance.
4. An employer could identify useful work that could be performed in a part of its operations by employees who do not have sufficient accrued annual leave to cover all or part of a shutdown, and who do not agree to take leave without pay, provided the work is within the terms of relevant modern award provisions dealing with employer and employee duties.

Employer Considerations flowing from the decision

TTIA advises when considering requests for annual leave during the year, an employer will need to ensure the employee will have enough leave to cover any shutdown period or obtain the employee's agreement that they will take unpaid leave.


It is the view of TTIA that when an employee does not have enough leave to cover the shutdown, the employer will either have to find work for the employee to perform or pay the employee for the period not covered by accrued annual leave or have the employee agree to leave in advance.

When do the variations take effect?

The Decision states that the variations **will take effect on 1 May 2023**.

After a forced interruption during the Covid period, TTIA will be resuming our popular Member Briefing sessions in May/June of this year in locations throughout various States. We will be dealing with this annual leave closedown change as well as many of the other substantive industrial relations/award changes including those as a result of the change of federal government last year.

If you would like details of venues and dates please phone (02) 9264 0011 or email ttia@ttia.asn.au

Brian Beecroft
CEO 



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Styles sorted

Hume Doors & Timber's new style guide is aimed at making business better. **By Donyale Harrison**

Decision fatigue is a real phenomenon in which people start to feel confused and unwell after having to – you guessed it – make a lot of decisions. Doctors call it a state of mental overload, and most of us have experienced it at least once.

For people building a new home or renovating an existing one, it can be a daily occurrence. Trying to decide on something as basic as a tap can mean looking at hundreds of different models available in a range of configurations, colours and combinations with other products. You find one that looks perfect, then realise it won't fit

the space or the rest of your kitchen. Back to square one.

Hume Doors & Timber have been providing doors to consumers and builders for 70 years and the team there has seen a lot of clients struggle with decision fatigue, particularly in recent years as the range has grown. Hume's elegant new solution is an easy-to-use style guide that matches each door to specific types of homes.

Every door Hume produces has been categorised into one or more styles. "We spent a lot of time looking at the major house styles our project builders have on their

books," says Ian Sengstock, marketing manager for Hume Doors & Timber. "They broke down fairly neatly into broader categories, which we were able to edit into five timeless styles that encompassed practically every home and door."

The five style brackets are: **Modern**, with its clean mid-century lines that work for multiple decades with little colour tweaks; **Scandi**, where minimalist urban luxe meets cosy bright light; **Hamptons**, with its monied casual coastal vibe; **Industrial**, for everything from warehouse renos to polished concrete chic; and **Classic**, which suits heritage home renos, inner city terraces and even some new country builds.

Each style has its own colour icon. The new Hume catalogue has those icons at the top of each door listing, so customers can see at a glance whether or not the door is designed for their style of home. Some doors, such as the geometrically elegant Accent interior door, will work with most home styles, while others, like the Haven entrance door, have a specific vibe (Hamptons in this case).

"It was a fun project," Sengstock says. "I was quite heavily involved in selecting the genres, but there's been significant input from team members across the company. From the start of research to this first implementation was probably about six months. Now our focus is on helping our customers learn how to use the style guide and implementing it into more parts of our business. Next up is our point-of-sale materials!"

THE RIGHT CHOICE, FAST

"We're hoping to make everyone's life a bit easier," says Sengstock. "The builder, the client and us. When you build a home, you've traditionally spent a huge amount of time looking through countless catalogues and trying to imagine what each item would look like in the finished home. Just in terms of our products, we have a lot of doors.

"Now, you can say, 'My house is Hamptons style, so I just need to look for the blue H icon.' There are still options, but you've narrowed down your work significantly." ➤



Above: The Illusion entrance door best suits Modern and Industrial style homes.

Clockwise from this image: Hume's Hampton double doors suit Hamptons and Scandi homes; Barn doors can star in a range of homes, here a Modern interior (image supplied by WA Country Builders); The guide also helps people identify their style, such as this Scandi Minimal.



“Look for the coloured icon that matches your house style. There are still options, but you’ve narrowed down your work significantly.”





Hamptons' coastal charm is exemplified by Hume's Haven entrance door.

“Most people live with their doors for many years. We want them to be sure they’ve made the right choices – it’s not just about looks.”

It’s already cut back the number of “I’m confused, can you help?” calls the Hume sales team receives, and their major clients are also seeing an improvement in the speed and certainty of client decisions.

“We’ve had very positive feedback from our builders,” Sengstock says. “Especially when they first got their hands on the guide and really started to use it. They could immediately see how much it simplified the process for their clients.

“Previously, it was a case of wading through multiple catalogues or spending hours in a showroom. Now, the builder gives them a single catalogue and they know to go to the specific icon and choose from that selection of doors.

“There are still some decisions to make,” he adds. “Most doors have several design options and there are glass and door face choices –

but it gives the customer who’s building the home an idea of what they want before they get in there. We’ve noticed a significant downturn in changed orders and returns, because the initial order is more considered and fits in better with the final design.”

The vast majority of designs can also be made in custom sizes and there are multiple BAL-rated designs for homes in areas that require BAL compliance.

The company also has an extensive sustainability program that includes using timber certified as sustainable by credible bodies (such as FSC, PEFC and AFS) and low-VOC adhesives recommended by the Green Building Council in its manufacturing process. Packaging is kept to a minimum and both recyclable and recycled where possible, deliveries are planned to minimise transport and the plant uses rainwater captured on site.

“Most people live with their doors for many years,” says Sengstock. “We want them to be sure they’ve made the right choices. That includes being happy with the environmental credentials and the performance of the door: it’s not just about looks.”

FUTURE THINKING

Sengstock isn’t worried about the style guide dating quickly. “Fashions shift, but in homes, that’s paint colours and throw cushions,” he says. “The types of homes we build in Australia have been consistent for a long time.”

Style is one of the few things that has been predictable of late. As an Australian manufacturer, Hume Doors & Timber has fared better than most businesses over the pandemic when it comes to supply.

“We’ve been very fortunate,” Sengstock says. “The company has always been run with stock control at a level that’s quite high; we very rarely run close to the break line. So when things went pear-shaped, we had a fair amount of product up our sleeve, which was great. Like everyone else, we’ve definitely had some challenges, but none of the horror stories you hear elsewhere.”

However, like so many businesses, there are staffing problems. “That’s one



HUME DOORS & TIMBER

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DOORS FOR EVERY HOME

HAMPTONS STYLE
HAVEN & HAMPTON RANGE



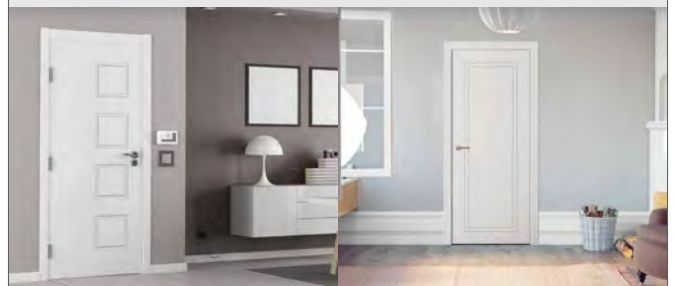
TRADITIONAL STYLE
VAUCLUSE PREMIER & MOULDED PANEL RANGE



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challenge I think all Australian businesses have at the moment," says Sengstock. "We've automated our processes to a degree, but there's only so much you can do there. We'd still need people to program the machines, to move the product, to sell it and keep up with all the admin, even if we became more like a car manufacturer and had more robots than personnel on the floor."

Which is frustrating, because orders are already up and Hume could be producing more if it had access to additional labour. "For all that there are fewer detached housing starts at the moment, we're unlikely to see any downturn till probably late this calendar year because of the amount of work flowing through," Sengstock says.

"Even then, it's not easy to predict. The last time the bubble burst in home building, it hammered the framing sector, but we more or less missed the slide. The demand for fitting out new homes and renos flowed on after the boom and then restarted pretty quickly. We're more insulated from downturns than many other parts of the chain."

There's much more certainty around the style guide. It will expand and connect across Hume's marketing over the next year or so, with each iteration being simpler to use. "We've started with an interactive PDF," says Sengstock. "So if you click on the range in the contents page, it will take you straight to the product that you want. And then you can always click the logo to go back to the



"Future iterations will be tied into the upcoming website redevelopment, with the ability to narrow down your options with a few simple clicks."



Inspirational images, such as this Industrial and the Classic above, help homeowners choose colours and accessories as well as doors.

contents page.

"Future iterations will be tied into the website redevelopment we'll be doing later this year, with the ability to narrow down your options with a few simple clicks."

There's also the prospect of Hume working with coatings suppliers to highlight a range of appropriate paint and stain colours for each style, making life even easier for homeowners. "We've got quite a bit of content on these styles," Sengstock says, "and most of them have a specific colour palette that dictates that type of style, which you could use to guide your paint, furnishings and accessories choices."

"For example, with the Hamptons look, there are many different styles within that style. You can go Classical Hamptons or Beach Style Hamptons, even Rustic. Each is defined by a particular colour palette and where you use it. All that sort of content and showing our builder and homeowner customers how to use it could be something we roll out in Stage Two of the guide: it's all there, waiting for us!" **T**

For more and to download the Style Guide, visit www.humedoors.com.au

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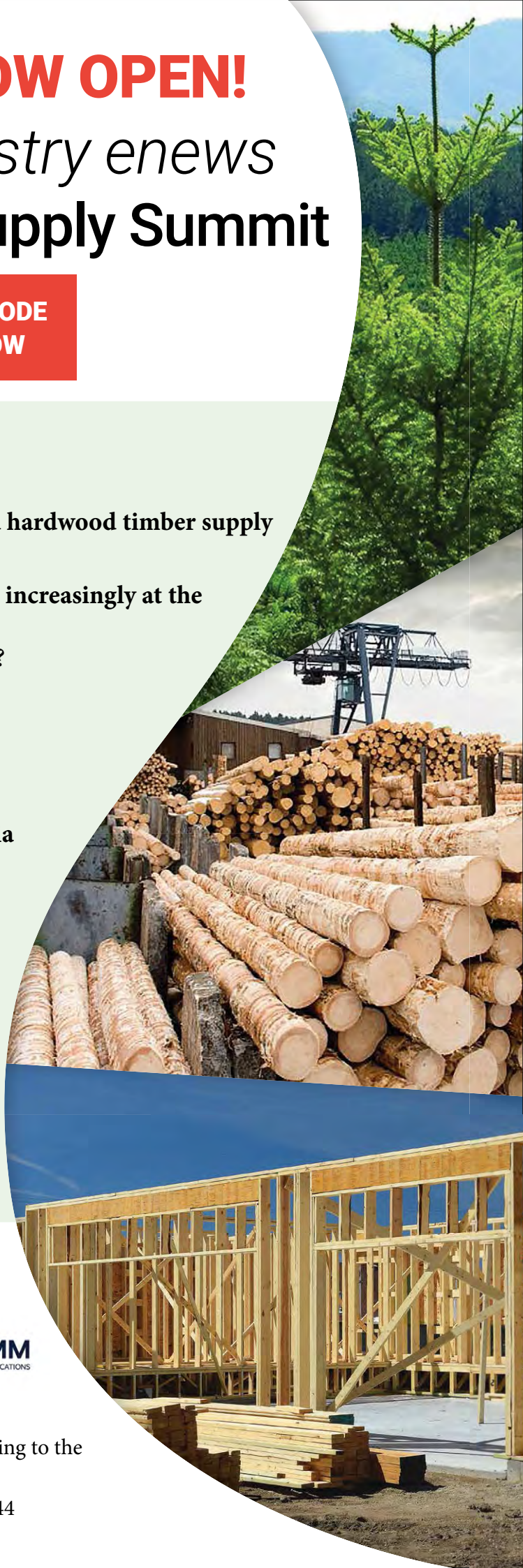
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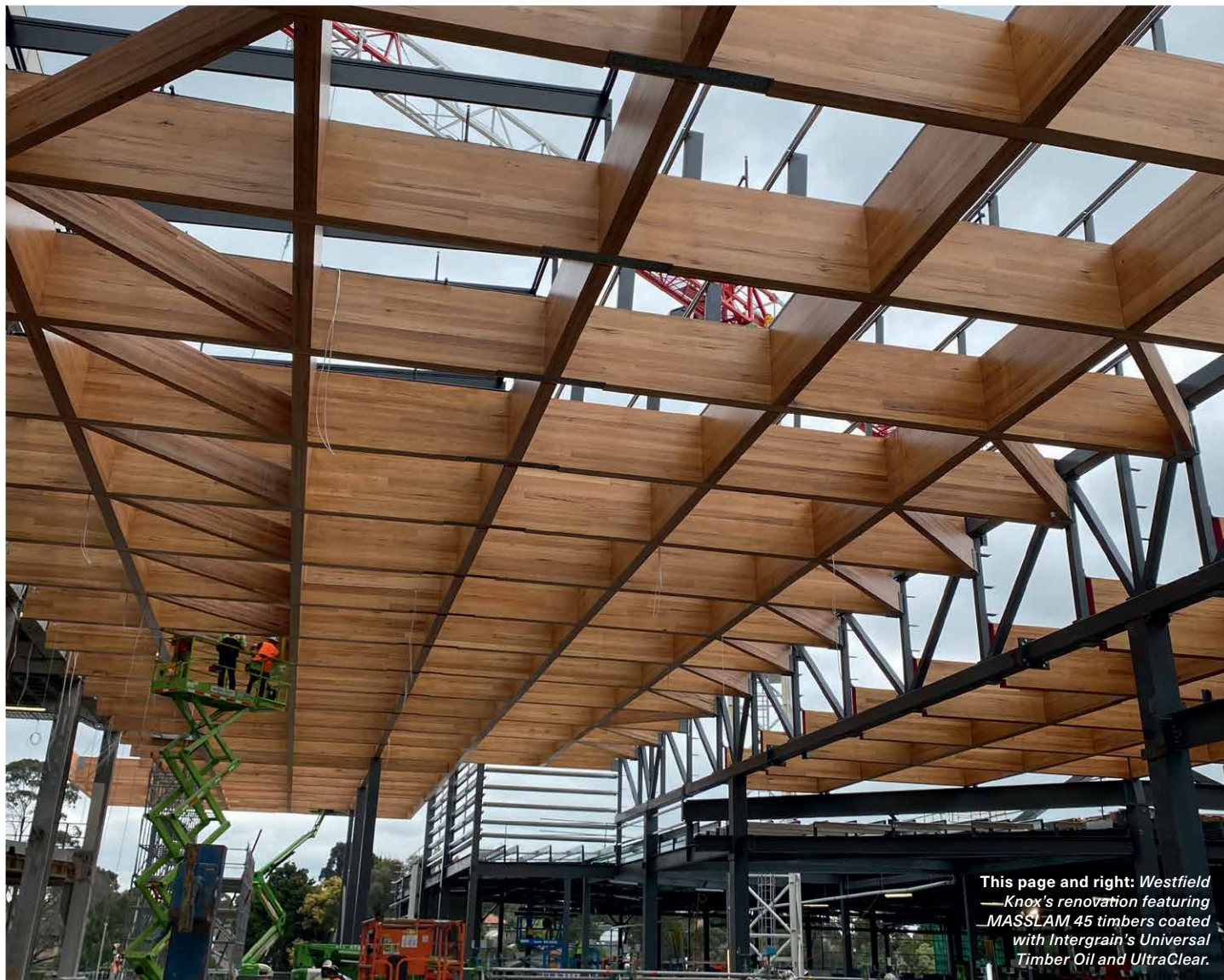
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This page and right: Westfield Knox's renovation featuring MASSLAM 45 timbers coated with Intergrain's Universal Timber Oil and UltraClear.

Full service coating

Intergrain's products and services are keeping Westfield Knox looking its best.

The number one thing that separates good builds from problem ones is collaboration. Because construction requires so many parts to come together well, the more each supplier can work with the others, the better the results, both at the start and for the lifetime of the structure.

The new Westfield Knox renovation in outer eastern Melbourne showcases this proposition. MASSLAM 45 glue-laminated timbers from Australian Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH) star in the graphic roofing system. And one key reason for the beauty of the design is the Intergrain coatings that protect those timbers.

"We've been working with ASH for several years now on a range of different finishing options," says Gareth Connell, national

specification manager at Intergrain Trade & Industrial. "That includes recommendations when people come to them with different proposals for their MASSLAM product."

Intergrain's Universal Timber Oil has become a significant part of that recommendation. "It's a protective oil that ASH can apply to the timber product at its factory as a primer," Connell says.

Daniel Wright is ASH's national business development manager and has been helping to lead the uptake of timber in place of steel and concrete in larger commercial builds with the company's range of MASSLAM products. "Our MASSLAM engineering team designed and engineered the mass timber roof system at Westfield Knox to be beautiful, strong and cost effective," he says.

"It also has significant sustainability and wellbeing credentials, which emerged as priorities in our discussions with Scentre Group (Westfield)."

Scentre and ASH spent 12 months in those discussions, during which the ASH team introduced the Intergrain coatings.

ASH already primes much of its MASSLAM with Intergrain's open-system (i.e. can be followed with water- or oil-based product) Universal Timber Oil. Because it can be wet-stacked, the oil is easy to apply in-house at the MASSLAM plant and the timber is then wrapped in a one-way vapour-permeable plastic wrap. This helps to deter damage as it's shipped and stored on site. When it came to the final coating, ASH's knowledge of Intergrain products again came to the fore. >>



Because it can be wet-stacked, Intergrain's Universal Timber Oil is easy to apply in-house at the MASSLAM plant before wrapping.



Above: The low-VOC requirement for the coatings delivers a healthy workplace during and after construction.

"Sustainability mattered. MASSLAM 45 uses third-party verified sustainable timber, locally made by Victorians, exceeding the strict requirements needed to achieve the Green Building Council's 6-star rating and also verified as being better-than-carbon-neutral through third-party EPD's," Wright says.

"We needed the coating system to both meet the low-VOC requirements of the specifications and perform well given the high level of prolonged UV exposure expected due to the large skylights. These timbers need to look good for a long time. Intergrain UltraClear has been proven by ASH's in-house R&D team to perform in these environments over years of tests in mass timber systems and its now one of the MASSLAM team's favourites."

TEAM APPROACH

"This project shows what happens when you have partners who are well informed and when you have early involvement in the design and build process," says Connell.

"We take a very consultative approach to component design, which includes: how these components are brought to site; how they're stored at site; whether they're assembled in situ... A major watch point for us at Knox was that most of the timber structure was being prefabricated at ground level and then stored for a period of time in areas that may not be protected from the elements."

Given the weather in recent years and the visual importance of the timbers, protection was vital, and the priming with Universal Timber Oil gave that added reassurance.

"With that early involvement, we can work through and pre-empt some of the issues that can be expected with externally exposed timber if it's not being protected," Connell says. "We might suggest some technical or practical work-arounds to lessen the risk and maintain the look. And then our partners like ASH are able to add further to those."

"And while that's vital on big builds like this, we can do the same for smaller builders, too, helping them to get the best results out of their timber with the fewest rectifications."

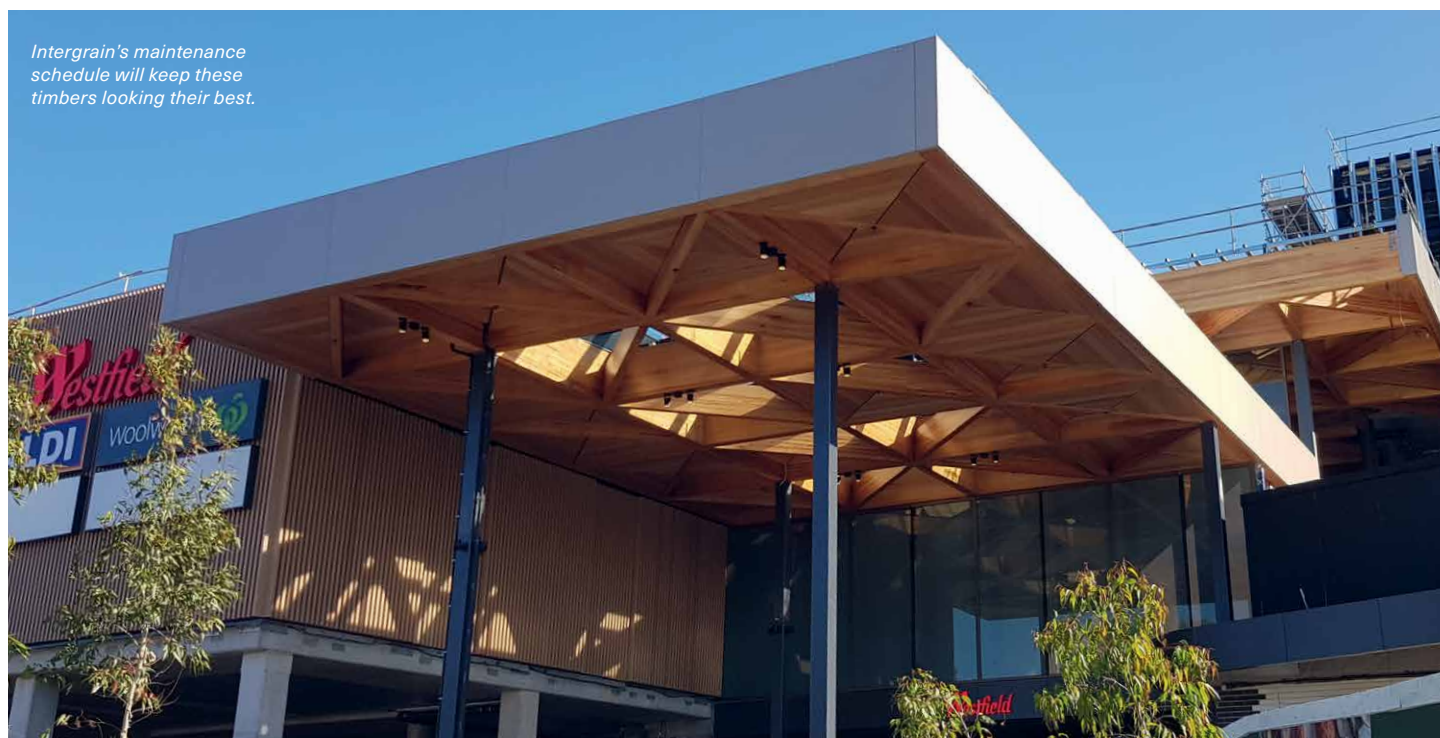
This advice doesn't end with completion. Intergrain has additional services available that offer a whole-of-life approach for their products in a building.

"We interface with the builder and client to organise an appropriate inspection schedule," Connell says. "The team will use that to do a regular check of all the timber work and make sure there are no signs of any degradation. If there are, we provide solutions, which might be maintenance specifications, such as extra cleaning by their property service people, or using our network of accredited coaters to recoat when needed."

It's a level of care their clients appreciate. "When ASH is engaged to deliver a mass timber solution, we rely on our historic R&D to advise coating options tailored to the long term intent of the structure," says Wright.

"There are a number of selection pathways you can take to meet each service life and Intergrain has these options. Intergrain's service helps clients make an informed decision and that gives all of us confidence."

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Plywood and veneer produced in Queensland is made from hoop pine. Sawn timber has excellent quality for indoor work.



Woodwise: Hoop pine

This distinctive Queensland timber is versatile and appealing.

Hoop pine is a plantation-grown softwood widely used in general construction purposes, interiors, and for furniture.

Other names: Colonial pine, Queensland pine, Dorrigo pine, Moreton Bay pine and Richmond River pine.

Botanical name: The botanical name, *Araucaria cunninghamii* honours the botanist and explorer Allan Cunningham who collected the first official specimens of the tree in the 1820s.

CHARACTERISTICS

Hoop pine is a distinctive, specular Queensland tree that can live to 450 years. It's a large tree characterised by a crown that is less symmetrical than is usual in the genus. It generally attains heights of about 30m and diameters of 1–1.5m, but older trees can be significantly larger. Its main range is in SE Queensland, from between Rockhampton and Bundaberg southwards to the border of NSW. In NSW, there are small areas of hoop pine as far south as the Macleay River. There are also isolated occurrences near Townsville, Bowen, and Mackay in tropical Queensland. Hoop pine also occurs in New Guinea.

APPEARANCE

The heartwood ranges from pale cream to light yellow brown with little difference between heartwood and sapwood, though the heartwood is a little darker. It is a very fine and evenly textured wood with a straight

grain. The growth rings are visible but not distinct and the figure is plain or mottled.

The sapwood of hoop pine is easily treatable with preservatives, but the heartwood is not. It is resistant to lyctid borer attack, but not to termites. It is of low durability, with the heartwood having a life expectancy of less than seven years above ground and five below.

Hoop pine is a straight-grained wood, evenly textured and very fine. The growth rings are not distinct, but they are visible, and the figure is mottled and plain. The heartwood ranges in tones from light yellow brown to pale cream, and although there is little difference in colour between the heartwood and the sapwood, the heartwood is a little darker.



Above: Hoop pine plywood is versatile but not suited to steam bending.

APPLICATIONS

The timber is used for general construction purposes, flooring, joinery, shelving and cupboards, furniture and as plywood. The ease of use has made Hoop pine popular in all these applications.

When treated with preservatives it is suitable for outdoor uses such as fencing, pergolas, landscaping, retaining walls, and playground equipment. It is also popular for a variety of non-architectural and non-building purposes, such as the manufacture of musical instruments, drafting instruments and brushware.

Specialised uses include cask heads, broom handles, boxes, printers' blocks, battery separators and boat building. In former times, it was used extensively for case making.

WORKABILITY

Hoop pine machines and turns well, but is not suitable for steam bending. It can be polished, painted and stained with ease, and works well with fittings and fastenings. It glues well and can be painted, stained and polished easily. It can be used with standard fittings and fastenings. **T**

Further information

Content based on the WoodSolutions website. For more information, visit www.woodsolutions.com.au/wood-species/softwood/pine-hoop

Woodwise: Tasmanian oak

Three eucalyptus species make up one of Australia's premium hardwoods.

Tasmanian oak (aka Tassie oak) is a premium Australian hardwood timber encompassing three species that grow in Tasmania. It is a versatile timber perfect for both construction and interior applications, including flooring, panelling, architraves and skirting boards.

Other names: Mountain ash, alpine ash, gum-topped stringybark, Australian oak, whitetop stringybark, white-top, woollybutt, blue leaf, mountain white gum.

Botanical names: Tasmanian oak is produced by any of three trees: *Eucalyptus regnans*, *E. obliqua* or *E. delegatensis*. Despite the common name 'oak', none of the species are in the genus *Quercus*.

That are normally marketed collectively. *E. delegatensis* (alpine ash) occurs at higher altitudes, while *E. regnans* (mountain ash) is found in wetter sites. *E. obliqua* (messmate) has a wide distribution, occurring in wet forests but also extending into drier areas.

CHARACTERISTICS

Warm, dense and resilient, Tasmanian oak is the preferred hardwood for a wide range of applications. It works extremely well and produces an excellent finish. It can be used in all forms of construction and in interior applications, such as panelling and flooring.

It can be glue-laminated to cover long spans. Veneers, plywood and engineered products are also available. It is also a popular furniture timber and its fibre is sought after for reconstituted board and the production of high-quality paper.

Tasmanian oak is marketed under different names depending on where it is being sold. In Victoria and NSW, it is also sometimes mistakenly referred to as Victorian ash. It should be noted however that, unlike Victorian ash, Tasmanian oak also includes messmate. Consequently, Tasmanian oak has a wider and less consistent colour mix. Importantly, it should also be noted that unlike Victorian ash, Tasmanian oak is susceptible to lyctid borer.

APPEARANCE

Tasmanian oak is light in colour, varying from straw to reddish brown with intermediate shades of cream to pink. It is recognised for its excellent staining qualities, which allow ready colour matching with other timbers, finishes or furnishings.

APPLICATIONS

Tasmanian oak can be used for protected structural applications, such as timber framing, but it is best suited to indoor applications and furniture manufacturing due to its low to moderate durability. Flooring, interior panelling, mouldings, stairs, rails and balustrades and high-end joinery are some of its more common applications, although it is also used for agricultural implements, oars, cooperage, boxes, crates, paper pulp and in the manufacture of plywood.

WORKABILITY

A strong and stable timber, Tasmanian oak offers good all-round workability. It planes, sands, finishes and glues well, and will readily steam and bend. This makes Tasmanian oak ideal for internal applications and furniture. **T**

Further information

Content based on the WoodSolutions website. For more information, visit www.woodsolutions.com.au/wood-species/hardwood/oak-tasmanian

It is a versatile timber perfect for both construction and interior applications.



Above: Tasmanian oak is light in colour, varying from straw to reddish brown with intermediate shades of cream to pink.



Above: Tasmanian oak coffee table and flooring: it's best used for indoor applications and furniture manufacturing due to its low to moderate durability.

Fabricating for the future

We talk with Wayne Brady of Westview Frames & Trusses about increasing margins within the sector and dealing with ongoing labour issues. **By Donyale Harrison**

Wayne Brady doesn't focus on the lowest prices. "That's not our market," he says of Westview Frames & Trusses. "At our plant, our work is of higher grade. We do a lot of extras, like an LVL plate on top of our wall frames, which are in a bigger section size with bigger nails, apex plates and more substantial engineered trenching.

"Think of it like a car: you happily pay more for something with more reliability and quality. Our builders get fewer deflections, less cracking and less movement in the frames. In a car you might pay double for special features; we ask for an extra \$500 or \$1000. On a million dollar house, that's nothing."

Westview has been under Wayne's directorship since 2011. In his over-30-year career, he estimates he's manufactured more than 20,000 homes. "It's a tough business, and the margins aren't great," he says. "But there are ways we can do things better, both as businesses and as a sector – even when the times force us into a series of difficult situations like the past few years."

SPECIALTY BUILDS

Fabricators are often pressured by price fluctuations and tight margins. One way Wayne has worked around this is taking on more specialty jobs.

"I've been doing wall panels for Blue Eco Homes for several years," he says. "The owner, Joe Mercieca, was put onto us by a business that supplies both of us. He builds to Passivhaus standards, so when he came to us, he had really specific goals in mind."

Passivhaus builds require a fine degree of accuracy so that the final structure has very high airtightness and energy efficiency.

"In a car you might pay double for special features; in a house they add \$500–\$1000."

"Joe's a great client because he was happy to sit down with us and explain what he wanted and why, and together we worked out how to achieve it," Wayne says.

"We've built a custom framing jig to make his panels. There were some excellent ones on the market, but at a price I couldn't justify. So we worked out what we needed – essentially it's just a squaring table that lets you flip the frames so you can work on both sides – and we made it ourselves out of parts. It's ugly, but it works and it takes up about half the space of the ideal machine available from a supplier. That was \$150,000; we built this for \$14,000 and my staff love it."

Despite requiring specialist tooling and collaboration on the wall panel design, the partnership has been lucrative. "Joe's turning out a prestige product," says Wayne. "It requires significantly more accuracy from us – it's more like joinery than standard framing and takes a lot longer. But the margins are 10-15% better overall because of the volume of timber, the time involved and the fact that you're marking up a higher-costed item."

One of the advantages of Passivhaus is that its buyers are highly motivated clients who understand the value of the product and the importance of quality.

"That said, we save them a lot of money," Wayne says. "Because we do so much of the work in the plant, it's much faster for Joe to put them up on site. He gets a level of finish and precision they just wouldn't be able to manage on site and my labour rates are charged out at, say, \$25 or \$28 an hour, while on site he's paying trades \$70 an hour."

Wayne encourages other fabricators to look for similar opportunities, including Passivhaus, insulated panels and cassettes. He says, "The margins are better, because there's a higher volume of timber. But it's about more than that. If you think you're selling timber in a truss plant, you're not. What you're really selling is time. Timber is just a component."

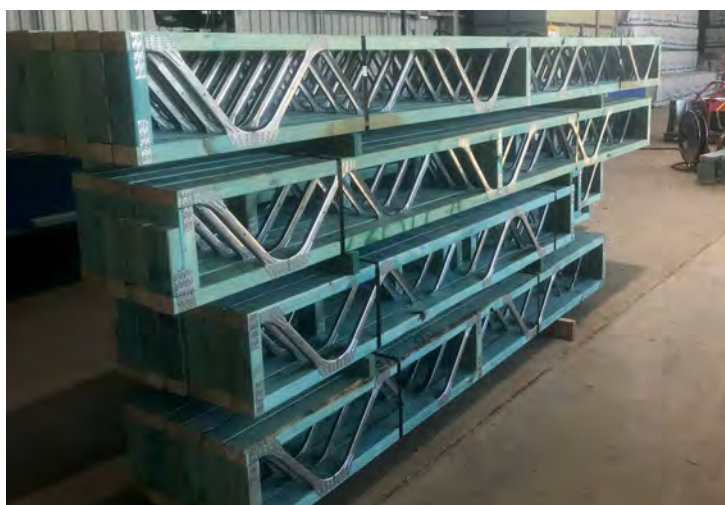
One note of caution: he has had a number of builders ask for 'like you do for Joe', to which he answers no. "If you have a client come to you with a specific system, that's their intellectual property," Wayne says. "Yes, it puts you in a good position to be able to do something similar, but you need that second builder to work out their own system."



Above: Wayne Brady has been running Westview Frames & Trusses since 2011, but the company goes back to 1992. New panelised offerings are helping to keep the margins up, despite staffing difficulties.



“When things went south, they were able to keep up my supply.”



Above: Precision on elements like wall studs, combined with flexibility (posi-joists replacing I-joist) has seen Westview come through the pandemic mostly unscathed.

MANAGING SUPPLY

At one stage during the timber shortages of the past three years, Wayne was supplying other local truss plants from his store.

“I was lucky,” he says. “We have very good long-term relationships with our main timber suppliers: Timberlink, OneFortyOne and Meyer Timbers. We’ve consistently bought from them for many years because of their reliability. In a normal market, they may not be the cheapest but, like us, they bring quality. When things went south, they were able to keep up my timber feed.”

Very early in the pandemic, Wayne realised the likelihood of shipping delays: “So I got onto my LVL supplier and asked how much I could buy. They said whatever I could pay for,

so I pretty much bought them out of their higher grade product. A month later the price had doubled and they were on the phone trying to get some of it back. It was like a stock market gamble that paid off.”

More difficult was sourcing I-joists for the plant’s floor systems. Westview’s key supplier is in WA and the lead times blew out dramatically over the pandemic.

“We were at 12 weeks at one point, which was just holding everyone up,” says Wayne. “We worked with Mi-Tek to deliver a posi-joist alternative, which was effective, even though I had to buy extra equipment. One of my major builders has gone over to them entirely and he’s not going back. We like to buy local, but we do need more supply in Australia.”

It was a difficult period because builders were conscious that every month’s delay meant a rise in prices and so were pushing for uncertified alternatives, which he refused.

Wayne does buy some quality European timber, particularly for wall studs, which he buys pre-cut at very specific sizes. “They’re reliably exact. There’s a market for our local sawmills to deliver extremely consistent, precise cuts if they wanted to,” he says.

CHANGING THE FUTURE

While supply issues have improved, staffing is an ongoing problem.

“My older workers are very stable, but the younger generation – it’s very hard to keep. Their way of work and life is so different”



Fabricating is technical work that would benefit from an apprenticeship.

nowadays," Wayne says. "Pay is a big part of that. My trainees are getting less than they can earn in retail and doing a much more demanding job."

One solution would be to institute a framing apprenticeship. "Tradies get paid nearly three times what our experienced staff are getting," Wayne says, "and, as apprentices, have a lot more government support in their funding. The guys and girls here work physically harder than the people on site. They're building structural components, which is technical manufacturing work. That should be acknowledged."

He points out that staffing shortages are inhibiting productivity across much of the sector: "And that's a real risk, because if we can't grow, we'll lose market. Maybe to steel, maybe to big-box operations like Bunnings."

"F&T plants can't compete against big firms backed by shareholders," Wayne adds. "Most of us aren't able to expand because we can't compete with superannuation funds when it comes to buying up land. It's making life hard for privately owned companies who don't have spare millions at the ready."

He does, however, see areas where improvements could be made without restructuring the industry or economy.

"Like everyone, I've got a few opinions," Wayne says with a grin. "I don't get why we use concrete slabs so much in this country. They're rarely level and most builders don't level their frames, despite the fact they're told to in the Australian standards. Blue Eco does, and Ichijo homes – a Japanese company I've worked with – but they're the exceptions. Most tradies just put the frames up without adjusting the levels and a lot of problems start that way."

If Wayne had his way, we'd be using a lot more sub floor systems. "There are so many advantages. You can get under house storage, you pay vastly less in earthworks, you take all

"Go with the lay of the land and save \$100,000 in landscaping."

those trucks lugging dirt around off the roads and you disrupt the flow of water over the land much less. Cut in for the garage, sure, but otherwise just go with the lay of the land and save \$100,000 in landscaping and drainage."

He recommends keeping an open mind when it comes to machinery supply. "I've worked with great teams, like Ed from Vekta and Randek," says Wayne, "but I'm as likely to commission my own design from a local engineering company when we want something really specific. I think all those small firms will be gone in another 20 years, so this is our last chance for that diversity."

At the other end of the process, Wayne wishes customers knew more about their

frames and trusses. "They're missing out on a lot what they could be offered," he says. "The clients don't know what they can get."

"I keep coming back to the car analogy. Right now, most builders are offering people a basic car when it comes to their frame. But most customers want heated seats and a good sound system, and they'll pay for that. If you told people they could get a home that has a squarer frame, is much less likely to develop problems and will be stronger for the life of the home, and it will only cost them \$500-\$1000 more, they would absolutely go for that."

Westview's builder clients are already, in effect, paying for the heated seats, but only the specialist ones like Joe Merceica are explaining the 'why' to the homeowners, which Wayne sees as a missed opportunity.

"As a sector, we need to be making the case for why people should be building in timber," Wayne says. "These are all parts of the one issue and we need to sort them now because there's going to be a huge demand on us when the Green Star requirements start lifting on new builds. You won't be able to get those insulation ratings in steel and we need to be ready for the demand that will come. With the extreme heat and cold of our climate, only timber delivers the natural insulation qualities that will help keep people's energy bills low. Plus the fact you can just plant more trees to replace the ones in your house frame."

This focus on the near future makes the uncertainties of the coming year less of a concern for Wayne. "I'm not too fazed about the reports of an upcoming slowdown," he says. "If only half the homes are going to be built, then I'll just supply to that half and it may mean that the F&T plants start to get a more reasonable commitment in staff." **T**

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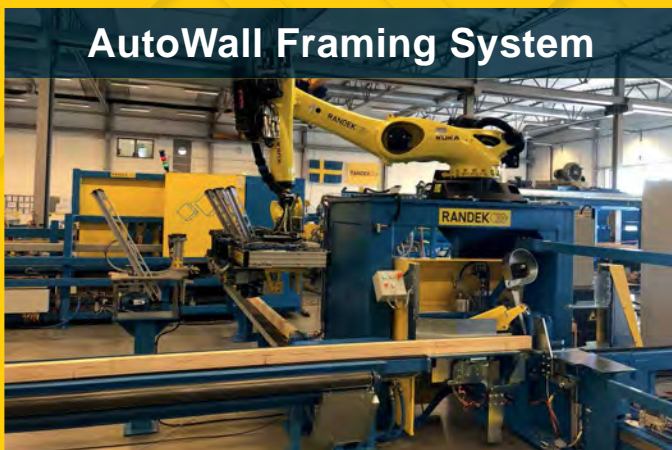


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NCC 2022 changes explained

The new code has finally been launched and there are some key changes coming into force.

By George Dolezal, Principal Engineer, Meyer Timber Pty Ltd.

You could be mistaken in thinking this article was a *Back to the Future* tribute. It's 2023 and we are about to talk through the major changes in the 2022 version of the National Construction Code. You may well ask, why so late?

The National Construction Code was originally updated every year, but in 2016 it was decided to go to a three-year amendment cycle to give builders more continuity for project specific requirements. The latest version was due to be released in 2022 but good old Covid got in the way and slowed down both the editing and adoption approval from the states. The final version of NCC 2022, with some editorial amendments, was released in December 2022 and is available on the ABCB (Australian Building Codes Board) website (<https://ncc.abcb.gov.au/>).

The main parts of NCC 2022 are not officially legislated by the states until 1 May 2023, which is why this article is timely. Provisions which deal with liveable housing, energy efficiency, and condensation mitigation have been delayed until 1 October 2023. Here we will deal with the main changes to NCC Volume 2 and the housing provisions, focusing on timber related items.

Change of format To start with, the format of Volume 2 has had a major overhaul to bring it into line with Volume 1 (Class 2 to 9 buildings). All the same information is there,

just in a different format. In NCC 2022, the acceptable construction section has been separated and is now called the Housing Provisions, to keep the formats of Volume 1 and Volume 2 consistent. As can be seen in Figure 1 (below), Volume 2 and the housing provisions can be downloaded as a single document to make it similar to NCC 2019. If you get stuck finding anything, there is also a document on the ABCB website which cross-references NCC 2019 clauses with the new NCC 2022 edition.

Wet Area Waterproofing This is probably the main area that has caused confusion. Back in NCC 2011, Volume 2 had comprehensive details on waterproofing as part of the acceptable construction section. This was removed in NCC 2012 in favour of referencing AS 3740 – *Waterproofing of wet areas in residential buildings*.

In NCC 2022, the wet area waterproofing deemed to comply section has been expanded again in the housing provisions (Part 10.2), although AS 3740 is still a suitable construction method.

After much discussion with the technical division of the ABCB, I can confirm that timber flooring can continue to be used as part of NCC 2022. Where a waterproof or water-resistant system is required, if timber-based sheet flooring such as particleboard, plywood or OSB are used, the floor of the

room must be waterproof. This is normally achieved using a waterproof membrane (complying with AS/NZS 4858) or waterproof sheet flooring with waterproof joins.

The other item of conjecture was the inclusion of "compressed fibre cement sheeting manufactured in accordance with AS/NZS 2908.2 and supported on a structural floor" as a water-resistant substrate. Does this mean fibre cement sheeting must be over the top of timber flooring, or does the structural floor suggest floor joists, which can then support a lightweight fibre cement sheet like meyFC? According to the ABCB either explanation can be implied, although, from a personal view, putting thin fibre cement sheets over particleboard without proper edge/joint sealing and calling this water-resistant is asking for trouble.

So the builder can keep on doing what they have always done? Maybe not, and this is where the joy of Australian Standards comes into play. AS/NZS 4858 for waterproofing systems, which is the most commonly used in residential housing, refers back to AS 3740. In turn, AS 3740 states that components throughout the entire waterproofing system shall be compatible. So the builder must check with the supplier of the waterproofing membrane that it is compatible to be used over the top of a particleboard floor. Only once this is confirmed is the system deemed compliant to the housing provisions of NCC 2022.

For completeness, this is not really different to what is stated in AS 3740, so the builder has been required to do this process even before the changes to NCC 2022.

Clearance around openings Section 8.2.2 of the Housing Provisions is a new clause which deals with Installation of windows. This states that a minimum 10mm gap must be provided between the top of the window and any loadbearing framing. This is to prevent deflection of framing over time, which then sits on the window making it difficult to open. Builders should be aware of this as it is a minor clause which may be

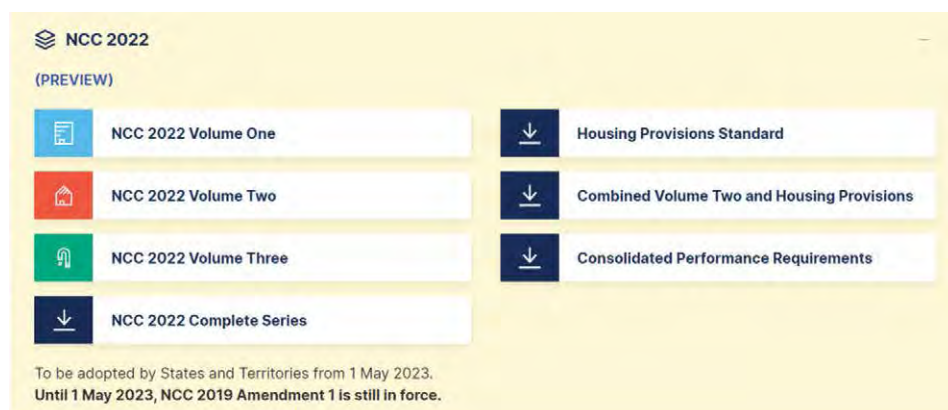


Figure 1: NCC 2022 change in format

picked up by building certifiers/surveyors and used to fail a framing inspection.

Attachment of decks This has been updated again in the housing provisions (Part 12.3) with a minimum waling plate size of 140x45 F5 and also fixings reduced from M12 coach screws back to 14g Type 17 screws. A welcome change but note that strap bracing is still required for all balconies that are over 1m above the ground.

Falls in floor wastes Although not directly related to timber framing, these may affect the floor system of two-storey houses. Falls in floor wastes have increased in some cases (from 1:100 to 1:80) and where a floor waste is installed when it is not required, there needs to be a fall in the floor. This could increase the required stepdown if a level threshold is needed at the doorway.

Liveable Housing Provision Coming into effect in October, the liveable housing provisions provide more options for accessible housing for older Australians or those with a disability. Items included in this section include step-free access to the

dwelling and 820mm CLEAR width for certain doors – so door

openings will be larger for these to accommodate 870mm doors. Installation of noggins in sanitary compartments in pre-determined spots is also required for future installation of grab rails.

The National Construction Code, or NCC, is a constantly changing document which protects consumers and ensures that houses in Australia are built in a suitable manner for

long term habitation. It is important that we understand the changes and continue to evolve to future needs. I mean, in 1985 when we saw Marty McFly on his hoverboard we all thought it was so cool but something that probably not happen in our lifetime. And today there are standards for hoverboards to make them safe and prevent accidents... **T**



Figure 2: Waterproofing of floors in wet areas



For more information on this topic, contact George Dolezal via email at GeorgeD@meyertimber.com.au

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Durability lessons from my fence

How long timber will last in a specific application is a complicated question. It's important to work out the answer to it. **By Craig Kay, national product engineer, Tilling**

When I purchased the house that I currently live in, I was encouraged to see there was a brand-new treated timber paling fencing on one side and the back. A cursory inspection revealed treated palings and rails with hardwood posts concreted to the ground level. The fence was new, right, and surely the fencing contractor knew what he was doing and had selected a durable hardwood for the posts?

While the condition of the fencing was not a make-or-break issue when considering the purchase of the house, I had naively expected not to have to do maintenance on this fence for quite a number of years. Alas, such was not the case. The hardwood posts were not long for this world.

The story about this fence exposes once again one of the myths about the natural durability of some indigenous eucalypts. It is a commonly held belief that because a piece of timber is a native hardwood, it's going to give long service in exposed applications. Not necessarily.

WHAT DOES NATURAL DURABILITY MEAN?

The heartwood of many timber species is to some degree resistant to biological breakdown. This is termed natural durability and may refer to a wood's resistance to decay, marine borers, termites or other insects, though it is commonly used in exclusive reference to decay.

The underlying aim of all natural durability classification systems is to facilitate the appropriate use of wood. Woods with resistance to a specific threat should be

used in products and environments where this will be of greatest advantage.

Conversely, woods with poor natural durability should only be used in low-hazard environments unless they are modified (for example by heat) or preservative treated to withstand greater hazards.

Standards Australia first published AS 5604 Timber – Natural Durability Ratings in 2003. An updated second edition of the standard was released in 2005 and a 2022 version is about to be published. This standard provides a classification system for resistance to lyctids, termites, decay above-ground, decay in-ground and marine borers. Only the sapwood of some hardwood species is susceptible to lyctids (Standards Australia, 2005). These are reported as “susceptible” or “not susceptible”.

Termite resistance was determined from in-ground durability tests of heartwood

where possible. In the absence of such data, termite resistance was determined from experience with timber in service. Timbers are classified as “resistant” or “not resistant” to termite attack. Resistance to decay is based on a four-point scale (Table 2 in the standard – see table below left). In-ground data was obtained from tests on 50 x 50mm stakes at four sites. Above-ground data was obtained from tests on 35 x 35mm stakes at 11 sites.

There are several key points to understand about the natural durability of timber as a building material:

- Structural timber building elements are made from the trunk of the tree which in itself is made up of five different layers.
- The two layers likely to be found in structural timber elements are the sapwood, an outer layer through which the tree carries nutrients in sap, and the heartwood, the latter often known as truewood.
- No sapwood is naturally durable, irrespective of the species. All sapwood is classed as In Ground or Above Ground Class 4 durability, (0–4 years and 0–7 years respectively)
- Sapwood of many species may be made durable by preservative treating. However, it is important to understand that not all sapwood can be preservative treated because some species are classed as refractory and are difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate with preservatives.



Above: Cross section of a log.

Australian Classifications of Decay Resistance (AS 5604: 2005) Table 2:

Class	Probable In-ground life expectancy (years)	Probable above-ground life expectancy (years)
1	> 25	> 40
2	15–25	15–40
3	5–15	7–15
4	0–5	0–7

Above: The Australian standard's classification system for decay in timbers.

When a technical publication refers to the natural durability of a timber species, it is referring to the heartwood only. Technically, one could buy a piece of structural timber that is designated as having a Natural Durability of Class 1 but, because it is cut from all sapwood, when placed in the ground it could fail because of decay within the first year.

Also, the outer heartwood is more durable than the inner heartwood, especially near the pith, and there can be a variation in durability within the given species and also within the same tree. Durability ratings are a general



guide, not an absolute rule.

Returning to my fence example, because I live in Victoria, the hardwood post used by the fencer was most likely from the *Eucalypt spp.* Alpine Ash or Mountain Ash, that are marketed as Victorian Ash. While it is a very strong timber, both have Class 4 in-ground contact durability (ie. 0–7 years) and are thus totally unsuited for the application.

To add insult to injury, the fence builder – I assume out of a lack of knowledge – set the hardwood posts in concrete. ‘Doesn’t everybody do that?’ you may reasonably ask.

Setting hardwood post in concrete is deadly sin No 6 listed in an excellent book called *The Seven Deadly Sins of External Timber Design* by Ted Stubbersfield, lead timber consultant at BCRC Durability Consultants.

As the timber ages and shrinks, a gap develops between the post and the concrete and moisture is trapped in that gap. In a garden situation where there is frequent watering and the addition of fertiliser, this moisture and fertiliser promotes decay organisms which rapidly decompose the post

at ground level. Any hardwood post used in landscaping applications should be backfilled with either natural earth if suitable or fine crushed rock, or else using no fines concrete, which has a high drainage capacity.

So, what is the moral to this tale about my fence, and how does it relate to the broader issue of designing timber for durability? Ignorance is not a defence! (Oh dear, an engineer making a pun...)

I would argue that it is incumbent upon us all who design and specify wood as a building element that durability design stands equally with structural design. It is very short-term thinking to allow a wood-based structure to be placed in an environment where it’s not suited.

Everybody loses: the customer because the product fails prematurely; the supplier who may have to replace it under some consumer warranty; and, perhaps worst of all, the reputation of wood as a durable building material is diminished to the point where it is no longer used and is replaced by other materials.

There is a wealth of easily understood

information available on this topic, with a few options listed below:

- WoodSolutions Website (www.woodsolutions.com.au)
- WoodSolutions Design Guide #5 Timber service life design (www.woodsolutions.com.au/publications)
- WoodSolutions Design Guide #14 Timber in Internal Design (www.woodsolutions.com.au/publications)
- Technical Guides on weather exposed timber by Ted Stubbersfield (www.deckwood.com.au/timber-technical-design-guides.php)

If anyone is designing important outdoor structures such as timber decks, boardworks and footbridges, especially where they are to be used by the public, the Technical Guides by Ted Stubbersfield should form an integral part of pre-design research.

For the sake of an ongoing timber industry, we all have a duty of care to design only to wood’s strengths and not place it in areas where we know it will fail. **T**



Craig Kay is the national product engineer for Tilling.
For more information on this topic, contact Craig Kay and the Tilling engineers via email at techsupport@tilling.com.au





FTMA's 3 Year Plan

The association is changing: here's a rundown of what we are doing. **By Kersten Gentle**

FTMA wants to support our members to become better businesses, which in turn will make them better customers for suppliers and better suppliers to the construction industry, consequently helping grow our markets.

To able to achieve this, we needed more funds to invest in various projects that help grow and strengthen the professionalism of the timber fabrication market and viability of our members. So, we began to focus on restructuring our sponsorship, as our sponsorship levels had not changed, nor had the cost, since our inception in 2007.

This was the biggest change to our association since our inception and a lot of

work went into making this happen.

First, we brought the three nail-plate CEOs to the table to talk through the key issues they see in our industry, before bringing together all our partners in late November 2022, to get their feedback and input into the areas we should be focusing on.

After a lot of discussions with all of our partners, board, strategic networks and members, we created a three-year plan, which we believe will allow us to continue to support our members, whilst investing into future programs that will help grow the sector and our markets.

As a result of the review and the creation of our three-year plan, FTMA has increased

our income from partners by 170%, which will allow us to invest more heavily in to your future and these six key areas which were identified by industry and members:

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- Creating online training with our Designer Short Course
- Creating job descriptions and job advertisements
- Continuing FTMA's Rebuild & Design program.
- Developing Employee Wellbeing programs
- Employing a TAE to support fabricators with increased training.



Our three-year plan will allow us to continue to support our members.

TIMBER PROJECTS

- FTMA Strategic Technical Committee
- Timber Waste program looking at the circular economy.
- Explore an independent Engineering Testing Panel for inclusion of timber in nail plate software.
- Develop targets for Timber Social Housing based on Carbon Stored

FORECASTS & DATA COLLECTION

- Quarterly Trussted Insight forecasts publications
- Industry Census*
- Salary Benchmarking*

- Australian House Framing & Fabrication Review & Outlook
- An ongoing quarterly Frame & Truss Sector Outlook (FATSO)
- * *Industry Census & Salary Benchmarking to occur in alternating years*

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESSES

- HR Platform for FTMA Members
- DFV Policy
- Employee Wellbeing Programs
- Current Wage Rate & Award Breakdowns
- Credit Application Forms
- Mental Health First Aid training
- Employment Contracts
- FTMA Safety SOP Videos with FTMA NZ

CARBON WARRIOR

- Promoting the environmental benefits of timber offsite fabrication
- Lobbying for policy changes recognising the benefits of timber
- Educating builders on Carbon Warrior policy
- Further developing and promoting the Carbon Warrior program

RESILIENT TIMBER HOMES PROJECTS

- FTMA is one of two Research Partners for the FWPA Program.
- Investing in this program on behalf of FTMA Members to ensure future resilient timber homes can be manufactured by our sector and are environmentally friendly.

I hope you all thank the FTMA Partners for their continued efforts in supporting FTMA Australia, as their support allows us to continue our high-quality support of the Australian frame and truss industry.


The **FTMA Partners include:**

Principal Partners: MiTek, Multinail and Pryda

Strategic Partners: AB Phillips, AKD, Australian Panel Products, Dindas Australia, Meyer Timber, Staxa (Wespine), Timberlink Australia, Vekta Automation and Vida Wood Australia

Supporting Partners: Bliss & Reels, CombiLift, Daw Trading, Hundegger Australasia, Hyne Timber, Independent Hardware Group, McCormacks Australia, OneFortyOne Wood Products, Pinewood Products, Programmed Timber Supplies, Roadpod, StoraEnso Australia, Tilling Timber and VTW

There's a lot of work to be done; I am super excited to begin executing our three-year plan, and I hope you are too.

Kersten Gentle
FTMA CEO 



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Oh, Canada!

North America's greenest country has a lot to teach us about timber buildings. **By Paul Davis**

I don't know if anybody has told them, but all Canadian light switches are upside down. In Australia, you occasionally and inconveniently get an upside down switch. But how could a whole country get it wrong; it's almost like they *meant* it this way. Look, I get that they didn't have much choice in driving on the wrong side of the road. We can blame the Americans for that who, presumably, started having collisions when they tried to fix their mistakes and just decided to stick to the wrong way for good. I am pretty sure they're regretful every time they get into a car.

It's not like Canada has it all wrong; they are definitely more patient and cautious drivers than Australians. Maybe that's because they are always stressed by being on the wrong side of the road, although, probably, the icy roads mean that the tailgaters and impatient overtakers just remove themselves from the gene pool. The dire state of their roads would also help

weed out the weak links: their roads' standards are like Australia in the 1980s and, mysteriously, line markings on the main Trans Canadian Highway seem to be optional!

One thing that our overseas friends definitely have right is their use of timber in construction. It's everywhere! Lots of LVL, CLT floors, solid timbers, bearers and joists, OSB – the full set of materials. Whereas in Australia structural steel or concrete are the default materials, in Canada it's timber. Every public building, every medium-rise accommodation, every shop, every house, every ski resort uses timber. And it all looks wonderful and warm... which is what you need when the temperature outside is cold enough to freeze your nose shut. No exaggeration.

So, how did they get this so right? For the start, a large part of the country is one giant forest with very straight trees. So many trees! Presumably, the relative cost of timber there

is significantly less than in Australia. And they don't have termites, which must be a help. But some of it must be cultural – if pretty much every building is timber, every material supplier stocks engineered timber, every builder is an expert in timber and every engineer is a proficient timber designer, then of course when a client embarks on a new project, timber will be the default material.

I don't think that Australia could ever get to Canada's level of enlightenment in the use of timber. However, we shouldn't accept our status quo, where timber is reserved for domestic housing and a few architectural wonders. There is every possibility that engineered timbers could be used far more widely than now but, given how things move in the Australian industry, that will have to be an evolutionary change rather than a revolution.

I do think that you as fabricators and timber suppliers can have a role in improving the uptake of timber in construction. When you get that commercial job where the engineers have designed the major elements in steel or concrete, discuss substituting engineered timber. Even in domestic housing and unit construction, there is plenty of scope to kick out concrete and steel and bring in timber.

To do that you need to have a toolkit of timber products available to design with, timber engineers you can rely upon, and clients with an open mind – or, more, precisely whose mind you have opened! After all, it's far better that you take the mark-up on the timbers you supply than the steel fabricator.

As the recent take-up of CLT and glulam has shown, there is an appetite for more timber use in Australia. Our Canadian cousins have shown us the way. We can reciprocate by teaching them to use less food packaging, improve their deeply disturbing toilets (a topic I can't properly go into in the pages of *TTN*) and how to make decent coffee! ☕



CLT and glulam star in this Canadian retail outlet.

Paul Davis is an independent structural engineer managing his own consulting firm Project X Solutions Pty Ltd. The views in this column are Paul's and do not reflect the opinions of *TimberTrader News*.
Phone: 02 4576 1555 | Email: paul@projectxsolutions.com.au



PHOTO: PAUL DAVIS

PRESS RELEASE

FRAMEQUIP
Pty Ltd



Vekta Automation strengthens its Frame & Truss Solutions offering with the acquisition of Framequip

Perth, Australia. Vekta Automation, a global technology solutions leader, specialising in quality automation systems for the Timber Frame & Truss industry.

Framequip boasts a 37 year reputation for providing its clients with innovative and dependable framing line manufacturing system solutions, including its deep domain knowledge across Nog Nailers, Component Nailers and integration of proprietary software automation. Framequip system solution are currently deployed across a multitude of local plants across Australia.

Framequip's expertise and technologies will be incorporated into the Vekta Automation offerings, with enhanced specialised service and support capability.

As a result, Vekta Automation will provide an even greater range of complementary and state-of-the-art technology solutions to the global market.

Ed Serrano, CEO of Vekta, said, *"We are delighted to welcome Framequip to the Vekta family. Rob Armour and his team have built a proven Frameline solution business over the years, and their knowledge of manufacturing systems and technology automation offerings will support the growing demands in this sector, as we continue to strive to transform the Frame & Truss industry with leading edge technology."*

Framequip will continue to function under the leadership of founder Rob Armour whilst closely collaborating with Vekta's sales and operations teams. *"Joining Vekta is a fantastic opportunity for Framequip," said Rob Armour. "I am thrilled to contribute to Vekta's mission to provide and deliver leading automation solutions & services to support the Timber Frame & Truss industry globally. Systems level disruption will continue to evolve as will Vekta to meet new industry challenges & market forces, whilst investing continually in research & workforce development programs".*

The acquisition is expected to bring significant benefits to both companies and to their clients.

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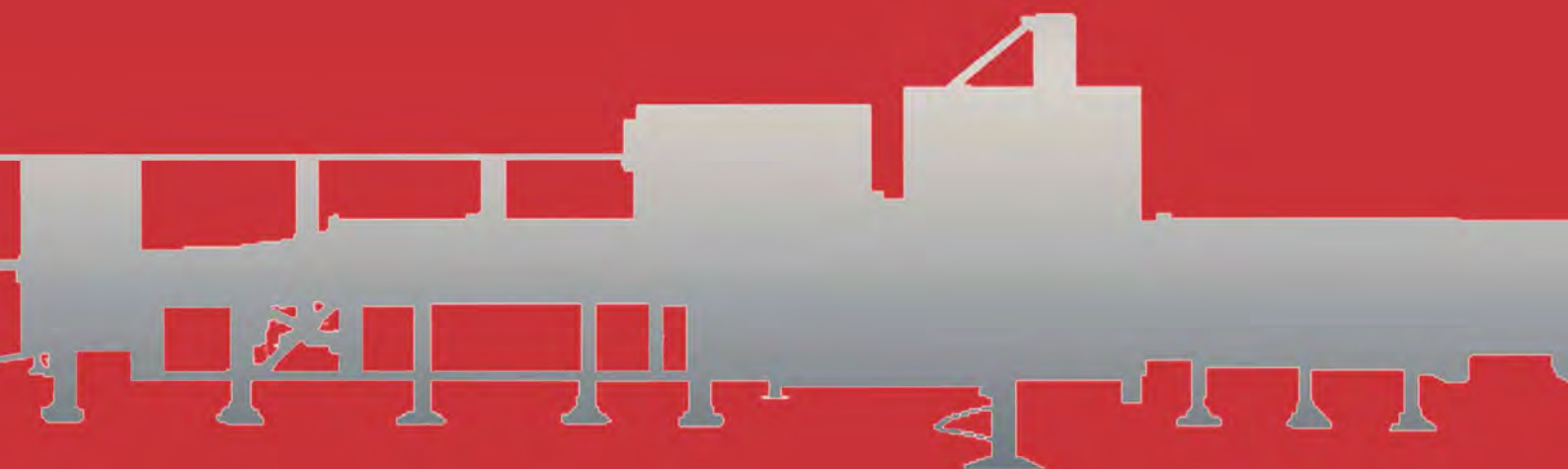
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