

18 November 2015

AFPA urges Government to support Forest Products Innovation

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has called on the Coalition Government to revitalise the Australian forest products industry and back regional jobs with \$40 million over four years to establish a *National Institute for Forest Products Innovation*.

As best articulated by international architect Alex de Rijke, the world's foremost designer of high-rise commercial and residential timber buildings, "If the 19th century was the century of steel, and the 20th century of concrete, then the 21st century is about engineered timber."

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Mr Ross Hampton said "Australia has a competitive advantage in growing trees and producing timber and other wood-based products."

"To grasp the opportunities of the environmentally focused 21st century, what we need is an innovative, nationally organised, well-funded, future-focused research and development (R&D) organisation for the forest, wood and paper products industries", said Mr Hampton.

"The proposed *National Institute for Forest Products Innovation* would focus on key areas of competitive strength and accelerate the emergence of innovative, higher-value focused sectors of the industry."

The National Institute would bring together Australia's forest, wood and paper products R&D effort in a coordinated national structure to maximise impact in traditional areas such as tree growth and wood products, as well as cutting edge fronts such as biomaterials, biochemical and bioenergy.

Investment in forest sector R&D has dramatically declined in recent years, falling from \$100 million in 2007-08 to less than \$30 million today. There has been a similar decline in research capacity over this period, with the number of forest researchers falling from 730 to fewer than 250. As a result, the forest sector's R&D effort is fragmented.

The Turnbull Government, with a clear focus on Innovation, has an unprecedented opportunity to drive the future growth trajectory for the Australian forest product industries through an expansion of the sector's R&D effort.

AFPA's National Institute for Forest Products Innovation proposal can be found at <http://www.ausfpa.com.au>.

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

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