

Media Release

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Sixteen months on from bushfires, forest industries' mission to use as much burnt timber as possible for home construction is coming to an end

As demand for Australian timber soars off the back of the COVID-19 pandemic-induced housing construction boom, forest industries should be congratulated for the amazing work they have done to mill a huge volume of sawlogs that were blackened during the 2019-20 summer bushfires and getting that timber to market.

After 16 months, that hard work is now drawing to a close.

This week, the last truck load carrying salvaged, burnt logs entered the Hyne Mill at Tumbarumba, while AKD Softwoods will finish its salvage soon. Visy has also been processing the smaller salvaged logs.

The NSW South West Slopes forestry region around Tumut and Tumbarumba was hit particularly hard by the bushfires with around 45,000 hectares of softwood plantations (about 40 per cent of the area planted) burnt – creating major salvage challenges for the local forestry and sawmilling industries – to meet the uptick in demand.

Unfortunately, over half the burnt trees in the fires affected region were too young to save, with the salvage focus on getting all the trees older than 19 years and as much as possible of those over 12 years – resulting in harvest running 80 per cent above normal.

All up, around 2.7 million tonnes of timber has been salvaged in the Tumut/Tumbarumba region, with a great team effort from Hyne, AKD Softwoods and Visy.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Ross Hampton said this incredible feat demonstrates the commitment and drive of our industries to get the job done, no matter the setbacks.

“Our forest industries should be commended for getting the maximum timber supply and regional economic benefit from the blackened timber. It has proven critical to the housing construction market, with soaring timber demand nationwide off the back of the Government’s HomeBuilder stimulus,” Mr Hampton said.

Work is also well underway to regenerate the forests damaged during the blazes with 4,500 hectares replanted last year and another 7,000 hectares on track for this year.

“To still be salvaging timber 16 months after the devastating bushfires exceeded industry expectations. The way the industry supply chain has come together to meet the challenge has been magnificent,” Mr Hampton concluded.

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