

Media Release

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The new Gippsland Forestry Hub is ready to support Gippsland

The Gippsland Forest Industries Hub (GF Hub) has officially been launched and stands ready to contribute to the future of the forest and wood products industry in regional Victoria.

The Gippsland forest and wood products industry is a dynamic and sustainable provider of regional employment in the community, driving economic activity and delivering essential products based on a renewable resource that sequesters carbon. The Gippsland Region is home to some 1.43 million hectares of productive forests, including 90,000 hectares of plantations as well as native forests. The forest growing, harvesting, transport, processing and manufacturing sectors in Gippsland employ some 3,400 people directly.

The GFHub, including members from the forest growing, timber processing, contracting, education and local government sectors, is the latest of 10 similar Hubs located in key forestry regions throughout Australia and established as part of the Commonwealth Government's 2018 forest policy commitments.

Mr Simon Gatt said he was humbled to have been nominated as Chair of the GH Hub and was looking forward to working with the committee as it focuses on three key goals for the next year: the development of a 30 year Strategic Plan for the growth of the industry; facilitating the role of innovation and regional research, in consultation with local education institutions to develop a framework for future skill needs; and to determine the technical issues, needs, and opportunities for development of the region's timber industry into the future.

Mr Gatt has worked in the forest industry for the past three decades and is the operations manager for Hancock Victoria Plantation where he is responsible for the delivery of operations across their Gippsland estate. He has worked in both public and private sectors across a range of native forest and plantation settings.

"We are looking to identify opportunities for a growing industry into the future to make the industry sustainable while supporting local regional communities to thrive and assist in the dissemination and promotion of strategies and solutions to industry and community for the benefit of regional towns in Gippsland. The effects of COVID19 have had a dreadful impact in Victoria, but at the same time have highlighted the importance of the forestry sector in domestic made products such as paper and packaging products and additional opportunities that could be developed.

"To assist us in the delivery of this work, I am delighted to announce the appointment of Lesia Clark to the GF Hub following a competitive hiring process. With more than two decades experience in the forest industry, including education and training, client relationship management and stakeholder engagement, Mr Gatt said Ms Clark is the ideal candidate to drive the Hub's important work Lesia will commence as the General Manager on the 30th November 2020," said Mr Gatt.

Ms Clark said she was looking forward to getting stuck into the essential job of promoting and growing the industry in Gippsland. "The GF Hub has been formed with a focus on constructively and effectively engaging the community, industry, educators and government to contribute to the development of a strong, deliverable strategy and action plan that will guide the sustainable growth of our industry for decades to come in Gippsland" she said.

For media inquiries please contact Lesia Clark 0455552094.