

## Media Release

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### **Forest Industries congratulate Ben Sawyer: Winner! Innovation In Business Award: 2021 National Forest Industry Awards**

Australia's forest industries congratulate the Forest Products Commission of WA's (FPC) Ben Sawyer on winning the Visy Innovation in Business Award at the National Forest Industry Awards – organised by the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA).

Ben has been at FPC for 25 years and is the organisation's Aboriginal Engagement Manager. He created 'Sandalwood Dreaming' as an innovative way to engage Traditional Owners and support Aboriginal businesses to build forestry capacity and seek out Aboriginal entrepreneurs within Aboriginal Communities to work out business opportunities.

Ben has now established contracts that are working across Yamatji and Wongai Lands from Carnarvon to Laverton and has extended the concept into plantations in the Noongar Southwest. The supply chain includes contracting an Aboriginal engineering business to supply transport infrastructure and developing markets with customers by featuring and promoting forest products produced by Traditional Owners from Traditional Lands.

True to his way getting out and about, Ben sought to forge deals over the kitchen table rather than the internet and innovated away from standard contract processes, being culturally respectful and enabling Native Title Holders to determine and partner outcomes.

Ben's future goals include increasing the number of sandalwood services being supplied by Aboriginal businesses as well as developing products, certification, and markets to enable Aboriginal value-add of forest products.

AFPA CEO Ross Hampton said, "Ben's work with Aboriginal businesses absolutely encapsulates the concept of 'innovation in business' and I'm very proud that this award is going to someone so deserved of it.

"To be getting out and about and forging deals with Traditional Owners and establishing forestry businesses is absolutely terrific. Congratulations again Ben!"

Visy sponsored the Innovation in Business Award. Executive General Manager Jean-Yves Nouaze said it was excellent to see such meaningful innovation. "Congratulations to Ben. It's these sorts of ideas that will keep our forest industries moving and adapting into the future."

The National Forest Industry Awards are organised by AFPA.

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CAPTION: Ben Sawyer

**ENDS**

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