



MediaRelease

PAGE 1 of 1

02 June 2008

Australia joins consortium to lead innovative structural timber use

Australia will contribute to an international research consortium that aims to revolutionise the construction of low-rise, multi-storey building developments for commercial, educational, recreational and residential purposes.

Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) is one of the partners in the Structural Timber Innovation Company (STIC) research consortium announced in New Zealand last week.

The project has total industry funding of \$1 million a year for five years, with an annual contribution from FWPA of \$250,000. The Western Australian forest industries company Wesbeam is also a consortium member. The New Zealand Government will match the industry investment on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

FWPA managing director Ric Sinclair says contributing to the project will allow Australia access to the new technology being developed for laminated timber use in wide-span, multi-storey buildings.

"Joining with this international effort potentially offers us leadership opportunities in adopting this new technology and will speed the research efforts, so that market opportunities can be developed more quickly. It will increase the use of timber in construction of these buildings, and our capacity to store carbon and offset emissions," Mr Sinclair said.

The aim is to develop new building solutions that will reduce environmental impacts. It will also add value to lower grade wood products by incorporating them as part of pre-fabricated components of a higher-value structural construction system. The research largely relates to plantation timber and laminated veneer lumber, but there may be some benefits for the traditional timber industry.

In announcing the successful STIC consortium application Chief Executive of the New Zealand Wood Processors Association Peter Bodeker said buildings making use of the new construction technology would have a lower structural weight, allowing for easier transportation of components, with less expensive foundations.

They would be easier to heat and cool, with better acoustic performance and would be more resistant to major earthquakes and extreme weather. The research will be co-ordinated through universities in Canterbury and Auckland and the University of Technology Sydney.

STIC is expected to formally start operating from 1 July 2008.