

Media Release

Science and Innovation Awards recognise forest carbon sinks

Since 1991, the Science and Innovation Awards for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has been awarding grants of up to 50,000 dollars to talented and committed young people. Coordinated by the Bureau of Rural Sciences, the awards are in 15 different categories across the primary industries. Judges award the grants to proposals which show innovation, creativity and the potential to deliver long-term benefits to rural industries. Open only to 18-35 year olds, it's a tightly contested competition and attracts the best and brightest minds from across the country. Forest & Wood Products Australia are proud sponsors of the award.

This year, Dr Lyndall Bull from ANU beat 85 high quality applications from around the nation. She was presented the award at a gala presentation dinner on the 15 September in the Great Hall at Parliament House. Her winning proposal is research about how landowners feel about forest carbon sinks. Her idea will help prepare the forestry industry for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, which starts in July 2011.

Lyndall says, "There's been lots of research to identify the areas of land suitable for reforestation to mitigate Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. However, we don't know very much about how Australian landowners feel about using their land for planting of forest carbon offset sinks or how well-informed they are about the rules and regulations of carbon trading."

Lyndall's award winning proposal is to run a series of interviews and surveys to get a deeper understanding of what landowners know about reforestation opportunities, and their intentions (if any) for planting forests. "My findings will help improve the accuracy of current modelling of reforestation potential in Australia and our ability to meet carbon reduction targets" said Lyndall. "I hope to provide policy makers with insight into the reforestation plans of landowners, which they can then use to develop appropriate policies to get the best benefits from reforestation activities.

"These awards are a great opportunity for young scientists and innovators to boost our rural industries by helping them convert their ideas into reality" said Karen Schneider, the Executive Director of the Bureau of Rural Sciences. Last year's winner, Lynette Taylor used her award to develop molecular markers for wood fibre quality. "If successful, commercial tree breeding programs could be introduced to match specific wood characteristics with the end product- from paper to timber", said Ms Schneider.

This year's winner certainly has a similar opportunity to make an important and positive impact on the industry. Lyndall says, " This award will allow me to assess the understanding of the role of carbon sequestration in the Australian rural landscape to ensure reforestation opportunities are optimised."

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About Forest and Wood Products Australia

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