

Media Release

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Call for trans-Tasman collaboration on timber durability

It is time for Australia and New Zealand to jointly develop a longer term solution for timber design life and durability with a call for \$12.5 million over five years from industry and governments.

At last week's ForestWood conference in Auckland, Ric Sinclair, Managing Director of Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited (FWPA) outlined the Australian situation based on industry consultation and market research undertaken over the last two years.

From an industry perspective, many believe that there is poor market understanding of timber durability, unclear standards, inadequate monitoring and compliance, and a disconnect between the standards and the service life expectations.

According to FWPA's market research, consumers and building specifiers certainly place durability as one of the most important selection criteria. The research indicated that timber was the material of choice for many applications, however, there was greater awareness of in-service failure with timber compared to other materials, often attributed to poor specification, installation or maintenance.

The situation in Australia was exacerbated by a loss of nearly all institutional research capacity, lack of trust between key players, difficulty of getting consensus and the overarching implications of climatic change and evolution of biotic agents.

Mr Sinclair said that there was an urgent need to rebuild the evidence base for the design life and durability system. He suggested that research should be focused on aggregating existing proprietary data, maintaining and re-establishing field trials, development of a predictive process model, new systems of verification, and better understanding of building systems and material design life.

"Australia and New Zealand have a track record of success in trans-Tasman research collaboration with the Solid Wood Innovation (SWI) and the Structural Timber Innovation Company (STIC) being the most recent examples," Mr Sinclair explained. He suggested the establishment of two research nodes, identification of international calibre key researchers, and post-graduate researchers working in a cross-disciplinary manner to address some of the key issues facing the industry and its current and future markets.

About Forest and Wood Products Australia

FWPA aims to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the Australian forest and wood products industry through innovation by investing in effective and relevant R&D and promotion of the industry's products, services and values. FWPA undertakes industry-level activities where a collective approach delivers more effective and valuable commercial outcomes than individual action. We deliver services that support the industry's capacity as a major exporter and mainstay of regional communities in many parts of Australia.

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More information:

Ric Sinclair

Managing Director

Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited

Level 11, 10-16 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Ph: 03 9927 3205

Mob: 0407 329 372

Email: ric.sinclair@fwpa.com.au

Web: www.fwpa.com.au

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