

MEDIA RELEASE

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Forestry industry wins with new investment in young people

Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) will be working in partnership with the Australian Government to deliver two new innovative education initiatives valued at \$200,000.

Announced today on International Day of Forests, the initiatives are focused on giving young people the education and resources to innovate and grow the Australian forestry industry into the future.

They include a virtual reality project to teach young people on the renewable forestry story and a university competition to encourage research into novel uses of wood fibres.

FWPA's Managing Director, Ric Sinclair, said the initiatives will help young people to positively contribute to the forestry industry.

"The future of forestry is in young people's hands. FWPA is incredibly pleased with Government's support of the ForestVR project and National University Challenge, and the government's investment in young people to make an active contribution to the industry.

"A strong forestry industry creates strong economic opportunities for Australia. With programs like these, we can attract the brightest up-and-coming minds to be part of it.

"These two new projects are a win-win for education and industry," Sinclair said.

The ForestVR project is an initiative of ForestLearning, FWPA's program aimed at teachers and students, and will see four virtual reality tours executed in forestry hubs in North/North West Tasmania, South West Western Australia, the Green Triangle and North East New South Wales. The project will also be supported by curriculum resources for the classroom.

FWPA's Program Manager for ForestLearning, Beth Welden, said virtual reality provides new and engaging opportunities to teach students how forests thrive and renew.

"Virtual reality is an exciting way to give students immersive learning experiences that previously has not been possible. Students will be able to experience the renewable forest and wood cycle up close and personal without ever leaving the classroom.

"We believe the ForestVR project is at the cutting-edge of education and has the potential to shape future education programs," said Welden.

The National University Challenge will encourage postgraduate students and young researchers to enter a competition for the most novel (but practical) concept for the application of wood fibre, with funds awarded to see the winning concept become a prototype.

FWPA's Research and Development Manager, Chris Lafferty, said the competition aims to overcome the challenge within R&D where "blue sky" ideas from up-and-coming scientists find it difficult to attract grants.

“We see many research scientists with big ideas but small funds. The National University Challenge will help winning ideas get closer to reality.

“The interest in using wood fibre for innovative uses is growing worldwide. We are seeing research showing that fibre could replace non-sustainable and non-renewable materials, potentially benefiting both the industry and the environment,” said Lafferty.

FWPA is committed to collaborating with government and industry stakeholders to grow the market for forest and wood products, increase productivity and profitability across the value chain and ensure positive environmental and social outcomes.

Read Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Senator Richard Colbeck’s media release: [Growing forestry education on International Day of Forests](#).

More information on the [UN International Day of Forests](#).

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