

Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) is the industry owned services company responsible for managing precompetitive collaborative programs aimed at ensuring that forest and wood products are the preferred, sustainable material that meets market needs. The company is responsible and accountable to its members, levy payers, and to the Commonwealth of Australia. The company has a statutory funding agreement (SFA) with the Commonwealth of Australia that provides access to compulsory levies collected from forest growers, wood processors, exporters and importers. The SFA also provides access to Commonwealth matching payments for eligible expenditure such as R&D, tech transfer and education. Further information on the company's operational programs activities can be accessed via www.fwpa.com.au

In consideration of the matters outlined in the strategic directions issues paper released by the Forest Industry Advisory Council in March 2015, FWPA offers the following information describing publically available information collected through a number of recent research projects and program assessments. FWPA has limited its responses to those specific issues and questions that relate to its operational programs.

Issue 4: Innovation, research and development

1. What are the future research and development needs for Australia's forest products sector, and which of these needs are specific to strengths and opportunities in the Australian context?

FWPA has developed and published a series of research and development investment plans to outline the research outcomes sought by industry from levy funded research and development projects. Each investment plan is guided from input from FWPA members, levy payers and industry research researchers. The investment plans, developed by external experts, are reviewed and endorsed by FWPA's industry advisory groups covering the various areas of activity.

FWPA provides administrative support to the Australian Forest and Wood Products Research Development and Extension Forum established under the Primary industries ministerial Council.

The RD&E Forum has also published a broader set of national forest and wood product industry R&D priorities available at <http://forestresearch.net.au/rde-strategy/>

2. What are the current inhibitors to private sector investment in research, development and extension and what role, if any, does the Australian Government potentially have in addressing these?

FWPA has sponsored a regular audit of industry R&D expenditure and capacity covering the period 1981 through to 2013. Copies of the reports are accessible via <http://forestresearch.net.au/publications/>. A 2010 comparative study of international forest and wood product industry R&D funding mechanisms is also available from the same web page.

3. How can the framework for coordinating Australian forestry research and development be strengthened?

FWPA has supported the establishment of the national forest and wood products research, development and extension strategy. The strategy, initiated under the Primary Industries Ministerial Council involves the participation of government, academic and industry representatives with the mission to ‘foster increased collaboration between research providers, governments and industry to ensure that RD&E in the sector is undertaken in a strategic and coordinated manner, and is scientifically rigorous, cost effective and focussed on delivering the desired outcomes.’ Further information on the RD&E strategy is available from <http://forestresearch.net.au/>

Issue 5: Consumer and community engagement

4. How can domestic and international consumers be better engaged on the environmental, economic and social credentials of Australian forest products?

The need for an industry wide forest and wood products marketing and promotion program was one of the key drivers for the establishment of FWPA. FWPA’s marketing program is structured to engage three specific target groups. The building specification and construction sector via www.woodsolutions.com.au, the domestic consumer market via www.naturallybetter.com.au as well as the Make it Wood campaign delivered by Planet Ark www.makeitwood.org. Engagement with the forest and wood products sector itself is through the Naturally Better partner program <http://naturallybetter.com.au/partners/join-the-partner-program.html>.

FWPA tracks the performance and impacts of its marketing and consumer campaigns through independent tracking research. A summary of the campaign’s performance since 2008 is available through a webinar presented by Mr. Howard Parry Husbands of Pollinate of <http://www.fwpa.com.au/rd-and-e/r-and-dworks-webinars/360-wood-naturally-better-media-advertising-consumer-research.html> .

5. How important are consumer awareness programs to the future prosperity of the sector?

The results of the Pollinate evaluation (<http://www.fwpa.com.au/rd-and-e/r-and-dworks-webinars/360-wood-naturally-better-media-advertising-consumer-research.html>) reveal that consumer awareness campaigns, particularly TV advertising, have a powerful impact on consumer and specifier preferences and attitudes towards wood products. The challenge for the forest and wood products sector is to transform the enhanced consumer preference into enhanced profitability measures.

Issue 8: Industry skills and training

24. What are the skills and training needs of the sector over the coming decades, and where are the current gaps?

FWPA has previously funded a number of research projects to characterise the future skills and training needs of the industry. Copies of these reports are available from

<http://www.fwpa.com.au/rd-and-e/market-access/193-the-role-of-graduates-and-their-education-for-the-australian-wood-processing-sector-results-from-a-forest-industry-survey.html>

<http://www.fwpa.com.au/about-us/corporate-documents/561-review-of-australian-forestry-and-wood-products-education-and-training-needs.html>.

FWPA further notes that [many of the technologies and systems developed within its R&D projects will require industry stakeholders to engage with new skills and capacities within their businesses in order to fully exploit the opportunities afforded by the research outputs. It should be recognised that the pursuit of innovation includes a need to continually re-evaluate the skills and capacity of the supply chain.](#)