

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



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INNOVATION THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF OUR TIMBER INDUSTRY

Timber businesses with innovative ideas about using plantation timber and transforming operations away from native timber will be supported with grants from the Victorian Government.

Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today visited Wodonga manufacturing business XLam to launch the Timber Innovation Grants, which will offer up to \$100,000 to help timber mills and harvest and haulage businesses explore shifting to plantation fibre or other timber manufacturing opportunities.

XLam make a range of highly successful timber construction materials at their state-of-the-art facility, using a cross-laminating timber technique using plantation pine to produce building materials with similar properties to concrete but at a much lighter weight and with great aesthetics.

Available through the Victorian Timber Innovation Fund, the grants can help timber businesses take an early step towards new lines of business or a different operating model. It is a key part of the Government's \$120 million Victorian Forestry Plan to transition from harvesting native forests to a plantation-based sector.

To support forestry and manufacturing jobs over the coming decades, new approaches need to be embraced to take advantage of available timber in the future. The Victorian Timber Innovation Fund is also funding the creation of the Gippsland Centre of the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI).

Several timber mills and harvest and haulage businesses have already taken up transition vouchers to have a diagnostic assessment of their businesses to identify their strengths and opportunities for change. These new innovation grants will support interested businesses to take this further and look at new options for using plantation timber.

Currently five out of six trees harvested in Victoria are from plantations and new timber plantations are being created in Gippsland through record investment in the Gippsland Plantations Investment Program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"The success of Victoria's forestry transition will rely on forging new paths and doing things differently. These grants will help businesses look at opportunities like cross-laminating timber, a technique used successfully by XLam."

"We envisage a different looking, more sustainable forestry sector using different fibres and making different products in different ways – the window for change is now and these grants can help identify options for the future."