

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers



Monday, 25 March 2024

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EAST GIPPSLAND TIMBER WORKERS

More jobs and support are available for the East Gippsland native timber industry and local communities thanks to continued investment from the Victorian Government.

Newmerella-based businesses Dahlsens Steel Truss and Frame and partners Built QA have received a \$500,000 Forestry Transition Fund grant to expand their operations and directly employ up to 16 local native timber workers.

The business has begun employing former sawmill workers, with the grant supporting new roles in steel truss and frame manufacturing, fabrication, labouring and administration.

Over the next 12 months the grant will help expand the business' operations on a former sawmill site located at Newmerella. The site has potential to become Newmerella's industrial hub, further boosting job opportunities.

Dahlsens Steel Truss and Frame Director Lachlan Heather is an Orbost local from a multi-generational family of native hardwood timber workers. He recently moved back to Orbost to establish the steel truss and frame business after seeing a market for steel products and access to a local workforce with a suitable skillset.

The Forestry Transition Fund provides grants up to \$1 million for businesses and industry groups to expand, diversify or start new businesses. Applicants that provide direct and ongoing employment to former native timber workers will receive a \$20,000 wage subsidy per worker in addition to their grant.

A new Forestry Information Coordinator, Cory Lindfield, is now located in Orbost, to provide support to East Gippsland communities impacted by the native timber harvesting transition.

Native timber workers, businesses and community members can contact Cory for advice and help to navigate the support services and programs available, including information about grant opportunities.

For more information visit vic.gov.au/forestry.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

"The expansion of Dahlsens Steel Truss and Frame is providing jobs for native timber workers to step in to as the industry transitions, ensuring communities stay together and work stays local."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

"Having a Forestry Information Coordinator on the ground in Orbost provides another key point of contact for advice about support and information available for businesses, timber workers and their families."

Quotes attributable to Director Dahlsens Steel Truss and Frame Lachlan Heather

"With the benefits of steel truss and frame becoming more prevalent, now is the time to take this opportunity to invest in Orbost and the district. The Forestry Transition Fund grant ensures our business will have the necessary equipment and facility to grow and is placed in a position to offer employment at a time it is most needed."

Quotes attributable to JC Dahlsen Pty Ltd Chairperson John Dahlsen

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“The Dahlsen family has been servicing Orbost and surrounding area for over 100 years, and we are optimistic that the venture will be very successful and great for Orbost by offering local employment to support the retention of families in the area.”