



**TIMBER NSW**

15 March 2016

*An economically, socially and environmentally sustainable timber industry.*

## **Media Release**

### **CONSTRUCTION CODE CHANGE HERALDS MOVE TO MASS TIMBER CONSTRUCTION IN AUSTRALIA**

**SYDNEY:** Changes to Australia's National Construction Code will bring timber buildings up to 25 metres high within 'deemed-to-satisfy' planning provisions coming into force on 1 May 2016.

The move brings Australia into line with regulations in other advanced economies and is expected to underpin strong demand for local softwoods in the fabrication of cross-laminated timber (CLT). It also has the potential to reduce significantly the cost of new housing stock in Australia, in particular the cost of public housing.

CLT panels are created by bonding solid-sawn softwood timber with structural adhesives in transverse and longitudinal layers. The result is a material similar in strength and stiffness to reinforced concrete. In addition to reducing construction time and costs significantly, CLT has a much lower embodied energy consumption than many other construction materials, such as steel and concrete.

"This Code change heralds the advent of Mass Timber Construction (MTC) in Australia," said Andrew Hurford. "The NSW timber industry welcomes this new, streamlined planning approval process for timber buildings. We see huge potential for the industry to supply both hardwoods and softwoods as this sector develops."

The MTC movement has been gathering pace in overseas markets for some time. While the first CLT building in Australia, the Forte Apartments in Melbourne's Docklands, was completed in 2012, previously lengthy planning processes were compounded by a lack of data on CLT performance. The upcoming regulatory change, along with two recent reports (see below), help to remove two of the existing barriers to the use of timber in multi-storey construction in Australia.



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“Timber is the key to sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” said Timber NSW Chairman Andrew Hurford. “The challenge now is for the timber, design and construction industries to collaborate to create market incentives for the development of CLT plant in New South Wales. Until then, imported CLT and the knowhow associated with it will support the development of a tall timber building industry in Australia.”

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### Notes for Editors

- Last year a Monash University PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal) evaluation on the potential of mass timber construction identified financial benefits to using CLT, primarily from reduced on-site labour costs but also by accessing government incentives for carbon reduction.

P. D. Kremer & M. A. Symmons (2015) *Mass timber construction as an alternative to concrete and steel in the Australian building industry: a PESTEL evaluation of the potential*  
International Wood Products Journal, 6:3, 138-147  
([www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1179/2042645315Y.0000000010](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1179/2042645315Y.0000000010))

- Final Report for Commercial Building Costing Cases Studies – Traditional Design versus Timber Project  
In 2015 Forest & Wood Products Australia released a research report comparing the cost of constructing four commercial buildings in both timber and traditional materials in Australia. While current Australian estimates of savings are modest and conservative, European studies suggest MTC has the potential for reducing construction time by up to one third, driving between 10-30 per cent savings.  
([www.fwpa.com.au/images/marketaccess/PNA308-1213-Final\\_Report\\_Commercial\\_Building\\_Cost\\_Plan\\_Final.pdf](http://www.fwpa.com.au/images/marketaccess/PNA308-1213-Final_Report_Commercial_Building_Cost_Plan_Final.pdf))