

**EXPLORING THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
FORESTRY SCIENCE,
SUSTAINABLE FOREST
MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES
AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF
LOCAL FORESTRY AMONGST
AUSTRALIAN AUDIENCES**

2023



**Gottstein
Trust**

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Prepared for:
The Gottstein Fellowship
By Jason Ross
Queensland, Australia



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i) JOSEPH WILLIAM GOTTSTEIN MEMORIAL TRUST FUND

The Joseph William Gottstein Memorial Trust Fund was established in 1971 as a national educational Trust for the benefit of Australia's forest products industries. The purpose of the fund is "to create opportunities for selected persons to acquire knowledge which will promote the interests of Australian industries which use forest products for the production of sawn timber, plywood, composite wood, pulp and paper and similar derived products."

Bill Gottstein was an outstanding forest products research scientist working with the Division of Forest Products of the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) when tragically, he was killed in 1971 photographing a tree-felling operation in New Guinea. He was held in such high esteem by the industry that he had assisted for many years that substantial financial support to establish an Educational Trust Fund to perpetuate his name was promptly forthcoming.

The Trust's major forms of activity are:

1. Fellowships, Awards, Scholarships and Skills Development - each year, applications are invited from eligible candidates to submit a study programme in an area considered of benefit to the Australian forestry and forest industries.
2. Seminars - the information gained by Fellows may be disseminated through seminars, online as well as through written reports.
3. Wood Science Courses - at approximately two-yearly intervals, the Trust organises a week-long intensive course in wood science for executives and consultants in the Australian forest industries.
4. Study Tours - industry



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ii) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the many people who supported me through the project.

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I would also like to thank my former employer Responsible Wood (Australian Forestry Standard) for introducing me to the forest products industry and supporting my application and Jim Bowden (a former Secretary of Gottstein Trust) for his ongoing mentorship and friendship.

To the many people who agreed to interviews, thank you for your generosity – interviewing more than 100 stakeholders Australia-wide and stakeholders in New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Vietnam was a humbling experience. I am blown away by the passion the topic has evoked amongst stakeholders connected to our industry. In particular, I would like to thank sponsor Wearthertex and the Australian Furniture Association (AFA), who greatly assisted my research by inviting me to participate in, produce and host several events communicating the benefits of timber to new audiences.

To the Building Design Association of Australia (BDAA), who trusted me to MC and host the National Festival of Design – including the BDAA National Conference, bringing together 700 building design professionals across Australia; thank you. The National Festival of Design is Australia's largest building design conference and was foundational in developing the project report. The involvement with the BDAA has been instrumental in connecting with specifiers of timber-based products and representatives invited to present at the conference.

To the various additional media agencies unnamed, thank you for publishing contributions covering my fellowship. Moreover, to Helen Murray, Secretary of the Gottstein Trust, thank you for your ongoing guidance, persistence, and patience over the past 18 months.

Finally, thank you to my wife for her support – be it zig-zag travelling or sleepless Zoom and team calls, you have been by my side and rode every bump with a grin!



iii) ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Ross is an accomplished marketing, communication, and public relations professional passionate about the science of forestry, sustainable forest management and its perceptions amongst Australian audiences. As an 'outsider', someone drawn to forestry from the building and construction industry, his appreciation for forest management as a science and its potential for climate-positive outcomes has been fostered through his involvement with Responsible Wood, PEFC International and more recently as publisher of Wood Central – a comprehensive resource that provides news and information about timber, paper, and forest management.



iv) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian forestry industry faces a significant challenge with communication – a problem impacting the brand position of "forestry".

Public perceptions of forests significantly impact timber, engineered wood products, pulp, and paper - all of which are indisputably tied to the health of "forestry". These perceptions influence consumer demand for material selection and sourcing and the future availability of resources. The report confirms a disconnect between the industry and the public, with messaging failing to penetrate beyond the industry bubble, leading to a lack of understanding of the climate-positive outcomes of sustainable forest management.

The project provides the industry with principles and effective communication strategies to improve its positioning for long-term viability and growth. It draws upon previous research to understand the root causes of the disconnect between the industry and the public and explore the infrastructure in place. Additionally, it has analysed the successful strategies other countries use to promote their forest products locally and internationally.

It is split into two sections – the first, "the research process," summarises findings from more interviewing more than 100 stakeholders connected to (industry), reporting on (media), influencing (specifiers) and consuming (consumers) forest-based products. The second, "recommendations", provides tools and strategies looking at communication quality, infrastructure and distribution which can be used by "forestry" to take advantage of the push towards decarbonisation, the demand for mass timber and engineered wood products and long-term opportunities for green financial investment in carbon markets.

The three recommendations relate to the following areas:

1. Communication Quality
2. Communication Infrastructure
3. Communication Distribution

The project breaks the recommendations down into macro (or overarching policies) and micro (or applied tools or tactics which can be used to implement the policies).

The recommendations have been supported by a digital marketing specialist who has successfully consulting to the building and construction industry – and has in the past represented the steel industry. In addition, the author has implemented a number of recommendations into the Wood Central platform, providing worked examples of the recommendations in action.

1.0 RATIONALE

This project investigates the relationship between sustainable forest management, forestry science, and the public perception of the Australian forestry industry ("the industry"). The industry faces a significant challenge with its brand and communication, resulting in a disconnect between the industry and the public. The project aims to review previous research and successful approaches to promote timber and forest products, gain insights into the communication problem's root causes, and address the disconnect.

The primary focus is to develop effective communication strategies and principles to improve the industry's long-term viability and growth. It will explore the industry's contributions to the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework and the circular economy, which is vital for promoting sustainable forest management. It will analyse the techniques used by other countries to successfully promote their forest products, to identify opportunities for the industry to enhance its reputation and capitalise on its unique selling proposition (USP) in a carbon-led economy and capitalise on its unique selling proposition (USP) in a carbon-led economy.

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Review the "Positive Forestry Frame" report and assess industry performance against recommendations.
- Build on successful initiatives by FWPA, Forestry Australia, and the Make It Wood campaign to reaffirm the industry's leadership in renewable and sustainable practices.
- Improve industry communication, identify opportunities to enhance its reputation, and capitalise on its unique selling proposition in a carbon-led economy.

As a result, the project has provided a set of practical communication tools which the industry can use to create positive storytelling and relatable visuals – which form the basis for Part 2, "The Recommendations" in the report (found on page 36 onward).

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Australian forestry industry, "the industry," faces a significant challenge with communication – a problem impacting the brand position of "forestry". Public perceptions of forests significantly affect timber, engineered wood products, pulp, and paper - all of which are indisputably tied to the health of "forestry". These perceptions influence consumer demand for material selection and sourcing and the future availability of resources. Unfortunately, there is a considerable disconnect between the industry and the public, with messaging failing to penetrate beyond the industry bubble, leading to a lack of understanding of the climate-positive outcomes of sustainable forest management. This results in the following:

- Uncertainty and a lack of clear direction on the future of forest resources (specifically native forest resources) lead to disruption in future investments.
- A decline in the supply of low-carbon materials, with the conversion
- The of sustainably managed forests to national parks.
- Potential share of market loss to alternative materials due to the preference of specifiers and procurement professionals for non-forestry products.
- Negative perceptions are reinforced through society, accelerating the talent drain as the industry ages out.

However, the emergence of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework and the Circular Economy has given the industry a unique opportunity to establish timber as the material of choice ahead of steel in the building and construction sector and paper ahead of plastics in packaging. To take advantage of this opportunity, the industry needs to reimagine the concept of "forestry" and develop effective communication tools to connect with audiences.

The primary aim of this project is to provide the industry with a set of principles and effective communication strategies to improve its positioning for long-term viability and growth. It will draw upon previous research to understand the root causes of the disconnect between the industry and the public and explore the infrastructure in place. Additionally, it will analyse the successful strategies other countries use to promote their forest products locally and internationally.

By doing so, the research hopes to identify opportunities for the Australian industry to enhance its reputation and capitalise on its unique selling proposition (USP) – the material to supercharge the carbon economy (WEF, 2023). The ultimate goal of this project is to provide the industry with the knowledge and tools it needs to improve its value among consumers of wood-based products, positioning the industry to capitalise on the push to lower carbon emissions fully (Australian Government, n.d.).

This research will promote environmental sustainability and social responsibility and will therefore help position the industry to take advantage of the carbon economy.

3.0 PART 1 – THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research methodology for the project was guided by the Pollinate - Forestry Positive Frame research (Pollinate, 2018) and focused on the degree to which the recommendations have been integrated into marketing and communication activities. The study involved an exhaustive outreach - with more than 100 stakeholders identified and interviewed, in person or remotely, through structured 60-minute interviews.



These stakeholders have been categorised into the following key groups:

- **'The industry'** includes stakeholders who work for or directly represent the sector.
- **'Media and distribution'** including industry media, B2B specifier and B2C mainstream media.
- **'The influencers'** of purchase decisions, primarily stakeholders involved in ecolabeling.
- **'Consumers'** of forest-based products who execute purchase decisions.

For the project, the focus was primarily timber-based products rather than pulp and paper – however, the principles remain the same across all industries connected to forest products.

The research process lasted several months and involved travel to various locations within Australia and overseas. Interviews were conducted confidentially with stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Vietnam. A copy of the travel itinerary is attached as an appendix to the project (Appendix 1).

One notable highlight was the invitation to Host / MC the Building Design Association of Australia's National Festival of Design, where additional information was collected from a sample of 700 building designers, architects, and builders about their perceptions of forestry, timber, steel and how forest products fit within the greater push towards passive housing and a carbon economy.

The Positive Forestry Frame report was reviewed to begin the research, and structured interview questions were developed to gather information and insights from stakeholders in each category. The questions focused on the perception of the forestry industry, the key challenges facing the industry, and opportunities for improving the industry's image and reputation.

Once the interviews were completed, the findings were collated and analysed for the report. The analysis focused on identifying key themes and patterns across the interviews and highlighting the industry's most significant opportunities and challenges.

The research methodology for this project was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the industry's perception worldwide and to identify practical strategies for improving the industry's image and reputation in Australia. By gathering insights from a broad range of stakeholders and analysing these insights in detail, a set of principles and effective communication strategies have been developed to help the industry achieve long-term success.



3.1 THE POSITIVE FORESTRY FRAME REPORT

IDENTIFYING SOCIAL LICENCE, COMMUNICATING SOCIAL BENEFIT

One of the main findings of the project was the significance of communicating the "social benefit" that arises from "social licensing." "Social license" is a popular industry term that arose from the report and refers to the level of approval for industry activities amongst the community (Ethics Centre, 2020). 'Social benefit' refers to the actual positive impacts of those activities on society – the industry's very own Impact Statement (Economics Help, 2023). The project recommends that all communication should emphasize the social benefits of forestry activities – and this should be reflected in all communication activities across the industry.

The FWPA commissioned the Positive Forestry Frame report ('the report') in 2017 to identify strategies for improving the public's perception of the forestry industry in Australia – seeking to achieve public recognition that forestry was the ultimate renewable by 2023. Pollinate conducted the report, which drew on input from 1,000 stakeholders across the industry.

The report provided a blueprint and communications strategy highlighting the importance of the ultimate renewable to

1. replant and regrow,
2. produce revolutionary materials,
3. achieve healthier communities, and
4. wattract talent through hi-tech to transform negative frames in forestry-related communications.

The report emphasised positive storytelling, data and evidence, and relatable visuals to convey these themes (Pollinate, 2018) in order to create a 'social licence'. The report has been widely disseminated and influenced industry communication strategies.

A copy of the report has been provided as an attachment to the report (refer to attachment 1).

3.1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING AND RELATABLE VISUALS

Ultimately storytelling and relatable visuals come down to generating new 'content' and understanding the drivers of content - the 'keywords.' Content refers to any information or material that is created and presented to an audience, whether it is through text, images, audio, video, or any other form of media. Content can be informative, educational, entertaining, or promotional and is most effective when targeted with a specific audience in mind – either progressive (stimulating) or reactionary (responding to stimulation).

Keywords are the words or phrases used to identify the main topics or themes in content. Understanding 'keywords' provides important context to the content sources – and can help to understand the drivers of positive or negative communication. According to Google Trends, negative-slanted keywords have dominated and continue to dominate communication around forestry (up until February 2023) –

- "logging"
- "deforestation"
- "bushfires"
- "habitat loss"
- "clearfell"
- "forest destruction."

Moreover, globally, the keywords share several similarities:

- "deforestation"
- "illegal logging"
- "clearcutting"
- "bush fires," and
- "habitat destruction."

For more information about trending words visit - <https://trends.google.com/trends/>.

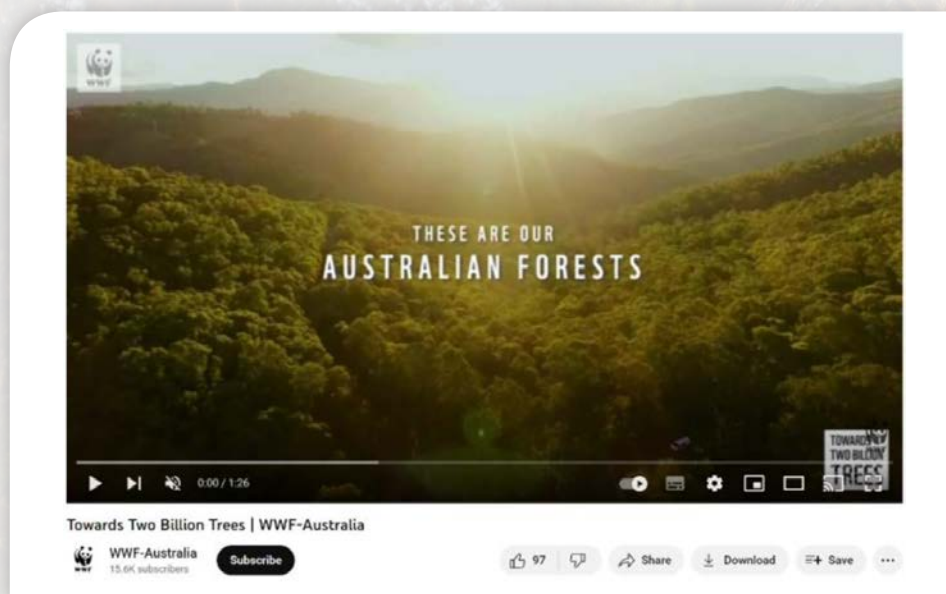
Most industry communication has responded to these triggering "keywords" – with forestry reacting too, defending its position, and subsequently losing control of the message narrative (reinforcing the negative frame). The report identified overwhelmingly that content generated around forestry topics was and arguably remains negative (refer to PESTILE framework (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) below), with perceptions of forestry heavily skewed by social media traffic.

THE PESTLE FRAMEWORK

Summary of media 'codes' by sector.

Theme	Mainstream Media	Regional Media	Environmental media	Policy	Industry
NET Political positive	0	0	0	2	1
NET Economic positive	4	9	4	3	13
NET Social positive	2	6	2	2	3
NET Technology positive	0	1	0	0	5
NET Legal positive	0	1	1	3	5
NET Environmental positive	1	2	1	3	3
NET Political negative	12	10	5	2	0
NET Economic negative	5	5	4	2	0
NET Social negative	12	19	8	2	0
NET Legal negative	8	5	6	1	0
NET Environmental negative	83	37	14	17	0

For too long, the industry has viewed social media with caution. Where the industry has been reluctant to engage with the 'brave new world' of communication, environmental and non-government organisations (ENGOS) increasingly have used social media to shape B2C mainstream media. For example, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a sophisticated 'bottom-up' media strategy underpinned by an extensive social media presence with groundswell messaging amplified by highly engaged supporters or followers of mainstream media (Davies, 2014). Effectively ENGOS swarm the platforms with content, creating an artificial level of interest in focus areas. Where the industry focuses on a 'top-down' distribution model, the WWF are masters at crafting and pushing progressive narratives into mainstream media; and using high 'brand equity' to secure collaborating celebrities and 'influencers' to raise awareness about causes that reach new audiences (WWF, 2021).



The WWF use emotive storytelling to drive messaging. Where forestry is reluctant to engage with social media, the WWF uses social media as an incubator to drive messaging through mainstream media.

(WWF-Australia, 2019).

AMPLIFIED MESSAGING – A DEFINITION

Amplified messaging refers to the use of various platforms and techniques to increase the reach and impact of a particular message. This can involve leveraging social media, email marketing, advertising, public relations, and other forms of communication to increase the visibility and resonance of a particular message.

Amplified messaging can be used by 'forestry' to create positive message frames around branding, products, or ideas, and can be particularly effective when it is targeted to a specific audience. By strategically amplifying a message, it is possible to generate greater awareness, engagement, and action among the intended audience, and to achieve specific business or communication objectives.

(Ferriolo, 2022)

BRAND EQUITY – A DEFINITION

Brand equity refers to the value and strength of a brand in the eyes of its customers and in the marketplace. It is a measure of the brand's ability to generate future revenue and to maintain a competitive advantage over other brands (*The Branding Journal, 2021*).

Brand equity is built over time through a combination of various factors such as brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. A strong brand with high brand equity is able to command premium pricing, attract new customers, and retain existing ones. It is also able to withstand negative events and crises more effectively than weaker brands.

Brand equity is therefore an important intangible asset for companies, as it can contribute significantly to their long-term success and profitability. Companies often invest heavily in building and maintaining their brand equity through marketing campaigns, product innovation, and customer experience initiatives.

(*Forbes, 2022*)

The Australian bushfires in 2019-2020 are a classic example of the power of social media at work. During the bushfires, people turned to social media to share information, photos, and videos about the situation on the ground (*Nguyen & Bogle, 2020*) – for an intensive period, the fires were trending global news with uncontrolled social media channels the primary source for mainstream media.



Coverage of the fires was widespread, with misinformation about the fires spreading throughout social media – according to this BBC News story (*BBC News, 2020*).

Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram became key sources of information for those affected by the fires and those wanting to stay informed and offer support.

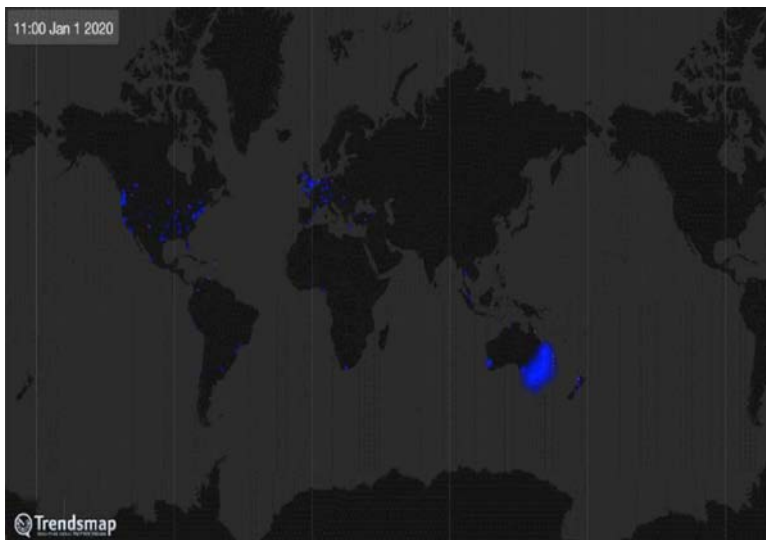
TRENDING – A DEFINITION

Trending topics are popular among a group and driven by current events, culture, or technology. Social media platforms show what is popular or being discussed, and trends can influence behaviour and generate attention but can be fleeting.

Trending topics on social media can impact mainstream media coverage of news and events, as journalists may cover them (*ThriveHive, n.d.*). This can amplify issues or perspectives and influence public discourse.

(American Institute of Physics, 2020)

Furthermore, whilst social media played an overwhelmingly positive role in mobilising support and donations for those in need, the media narrative towards forestry was overwhelmingly negative, creating what could be described as an existential threat to the future of native forestry in Australia (*Paper + Spark, 2020*).



This Trendsmap highlighted the global extent of the Australian Bushfire coverage.

Visit *Paper + Spark, 2020* for an interactive time lapse.

With the push towards low carbon economies, ESG frameworks and the circular economy, there is an opportunity to improve the perception of forestry – strengthening its credibility as the ultimate renewable. Moreover, recent research indicates that the level of social media required to shape public opinion can be relatively modest – the echo chamber ultimately drives content for mainstream media coverage.



ECHO CHAMBER – A DEFINITION

An echo chamber is a social environment or online space that reinforces individuals' existing views and perspectives while ignoring opposing viewpoints (*Paleo Foundation, 2019*).

Social media's algorithms and personalised content feeds can create a filter bubble that presents

users with like-minded content.

If harnessed correctly, 'forestry' can use its own echo chamber to balance negative and reactionary messaging with positive and progressive communication.

The project will review current content assets and provide a set of practical communication tools which the industry can use to create positive storytelling and relatable visuals (refer to recommendations). To gather insights into content, specific questions were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of current content and were reinforced with a desktop review of current marketing activities.

3.2 THE BRAND ASSETS – WOOD SOLUTIONS, THE ULTIMATE RENEWABLE AND MAKE IT WOOD

Supporting the report findings, the industry has several brand assets at its disposal; they include but are not limited to:

- Wood Solutions was launched by the FWPA in 2013 and has since become one of the most popular timber-related websites globally, receiving over 1 million visits annually from architects, builders, engineers, and other construction professionals (*WoodSolutions, n.d.*).
- The 'Ultimate Renewable' campaign was launched by the FWPA in 2019 and aims to promote the use of renewable timber and forest products in Australia. The campaign's core message is that timber is the ultimate renewable resource because it can be harvested sustainably and replanted, making it an infinitely renewable resource (*The Ultimate Renewable, n.d.*)
- And in 2012, the FWPA partnered with Planet Ark for the 'Make It Wood' campaign. Make It Wood promotes using responsibly sourced wood as a building material. The campaign also highlights the many advantages of building with wood, including the health and well-being benefits of biophilic design (*Make It Wood, n.d.*)

3.3 THE STAKEHOLDER REPORT

The project focused on the 'Ultimate Renewable', exploring the extent to which participants understood the campaign and how it has been integrated into marketing and communication activities. To gather insights on the effectiveness of this integration, specific questions were designed and used to evaluate the brand's presence across different branding and communication efforts. The project identified areas of success and opportunities for improvement better to integrate the brand into the industry's communication strategies (*refer to recommendations*).

3.3.1 THE INDUSTRY

In total more than 45 industry figures were interviewed for the project – from a cross-section of seniority and disciplines. In addition to Australian representatives, interviews were conducted in person or remotely with representatives from New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Vietnam, providing a global context to the challenges and opportunities faced by the industry. Key observations were identified below:

- The forestry 'challenge' is not unique to Australia, forestry occupies a negative forest frame in most corners of the globe with very similar trigger points (refer to "keywords").
- The forestry 'challenge' is not unique to Australia; forestry occupies a negative forest frame in most corners of the globe with similar trigger points (refer to "keywords").
- Global events significantly impact public perception of forestry, with events such as deforestation in the Amazon and Australian bushfires affecting audiences worldwide.
- The Australian Forest Products Sector is well-organised, with strong brand assets, capable associations, and regional forestry hubs providing infrastructure for improvement.
- The industry operates in a two-speed vacuum – the softwood/plantation sector continues to invest heavily in marketing. In contrast, the hardwood/native sector, with a few notable exceptions, has not sufficiently invested in marketing activities.
- Forest certification, which includes FSC and PEFC (Responsible Wood), are underutilised assets in communicating positive ESG benefits of forest products, partly due to consumer unawareness and industry confusion about how certification works. By comparison, the steel industry has successfully leveraged "Responsible Steel" to communicate the eco-credentials of its 'green' and recycled steel.

The hardwood/native sector has addressed the imbalance in marketing through the creation of a number of collective programmes (for example, Tasmanian Timber and, more recently, Victorian Wood) – these programmes are promising and have strong alignment with the Ultimate Renewable but require substantial ongoing investment and collaboration with industry to build on the foundations. In addition, the Timber Framing Collective (recently rebranded as Timber Framing – The Ultimate Renewable) is another campaign which has successfully leveraged the brand assets. Marketing and communication, it must be stressed, are not the same (a common misconception across the building materials sector), but effective marketing campaigns will greatly enhance communication.

One of the recurring themes throughout the interviews was the industry's inadequate understanding of new and emerging communication tools (specifically social media). The forestry industry has traditionally taken a cautious "wait and see" approach to social media, resulting in a long line of missed opportunities to capitalise on its infrastructure and engage followers to disseminate messages to the mainstream media.

An example of an industry that has successfully embraced communication tools is the Australian Beef Industry – through their "Beef Central" media platform. "Beef Central" consolidates all news and information related to the Australian beef industry – and is a major driver of positive messaging for the industry (*Beef Central, n.d.*).

INTRODUCING "BEEF CENTRAL" – THE UNIFORM VOICE OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY

Beef Central is an Australian news platform for the beef industry, effectively servicing as the industry's 'echo chamber'. It provides news, analysis, and commentary on developments affecting the industry, and offers insights for producers and stakeholders – it even uses trending keywords (i.e. "aussiebeef" and "eatmorebeef") to push positive and progressive messages through the media distribution network.

Beef Central is a leading source of information for the industry, capturing trending keywords and amplifying messaging through social media, influencing mainstream media.

3.3.2 MEDIA AND DISTRIBUTION

In total, 15 media figures were interviewed for the project – with interviewees split evenly across industry media, specifier media and mainstream media. Media categories were defined as:

- **Industry media:** refers to publications, websites, and other forms of media that focus on news and information related to the keywords "forestry," "timber", and "wood".
- **Specifier media:** refers to publications, websites, and other forms of media that provide information and resources for users of products, including building design and construction professionals.
- **Mainstream media:** refers to traditional news organisations, such as newspapers, television networks, and radio stations, with broad reach and influence.

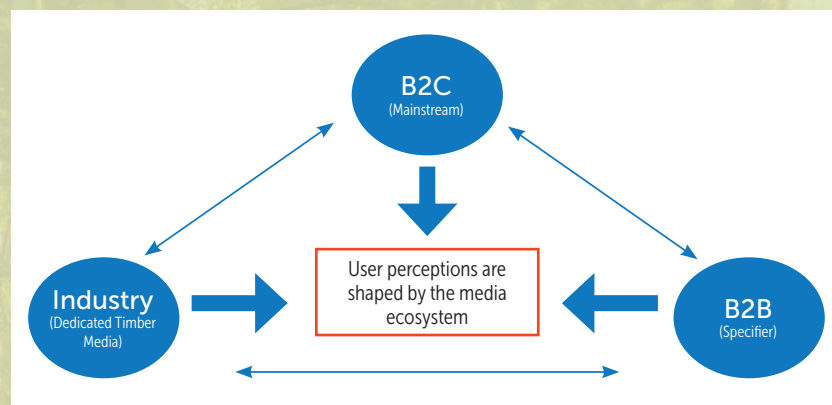
The project acknowledged the emergence of "advocacy" or "cause-related" media channels that merge the boundaries of specifier and mainstream media. "Green media" is a growing subset that is increasingly influencing specifier and mainstream narratives (*Hold, 2014*) and has a significant impact on ESG and the circular economy. It is crucial for "forestry" to maintain a healthy harmony across all three media categories (the "ecosystem") to generate positive communication and push for communication in industry media to be amplified through specifier and mainstream media.

THE GREEN MEDIA – A DEFINITION

Green media refers to forms of media that promote environmental awareness and sustainability through their content, production processes, and distribution methods. This can include news outlets that cover environmental issues, movies and documentaries that educate viewers about sustainability, and eco-friendly printing and distribution practices.

THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM – A DEFINITION

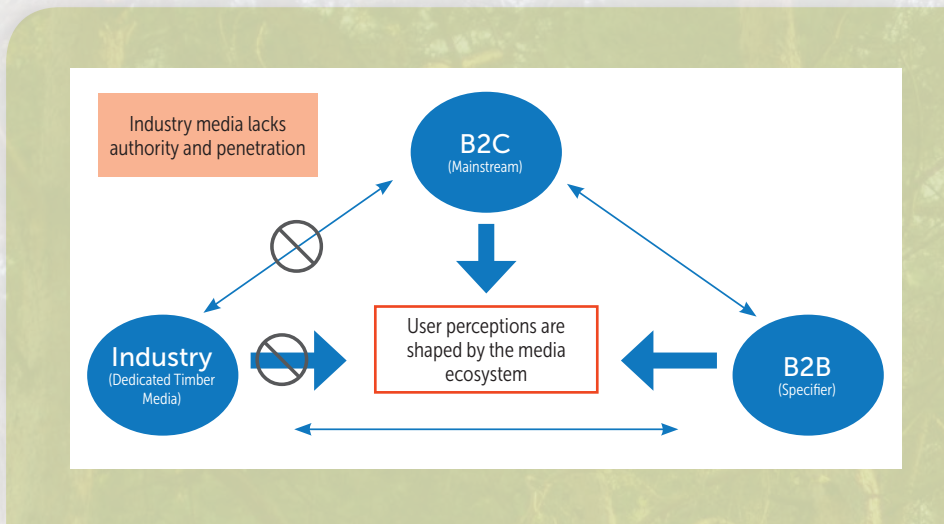
The media ecosystem is a network of platforms and content creators that produce and distribute media content, influencing public opinion (positive or negative) and being shaped by social, cultural, economic, and political factors (refer to PEST framework). Understanding the media ecosystem is crucial for making informed decisions on how to distribute communication.



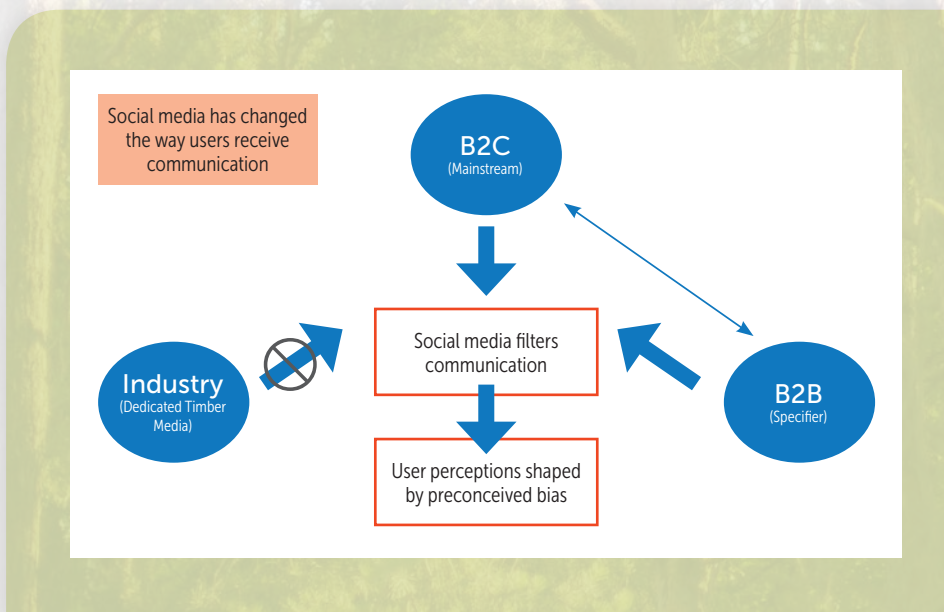
Key observations were identified below:

- Industry media has an increasingly narrow reach, with media undercutting each other to attract advertising, hindering the ability to reinvest in technology, journalism, and digital marketing to stay relevant in a rapidly changing media landscape.
- Specifier media has successfully pivoted to digital media, highly commercial, advertising is expensive with the large timber brands investing in the platforms to attract high value consumers.
- Traditional mainstream media has been slow to adopt to the new media landscape, print and subscription media is being superseded by streaming services (i.e., Flash, BuzzFeed).

Industry media is, without question, the weakest link in the media ecosystem. Perceived as 'tired,' its distribution model has been disrupted by the push towards digital media - resulting in missed opportunities to capture greater reach and influence in the supply chain. Where Beef Central amplifies the critical mass of industry voice, forestry media services a narrow (and shrinking) subset of the market – disconnected from the industry voice.

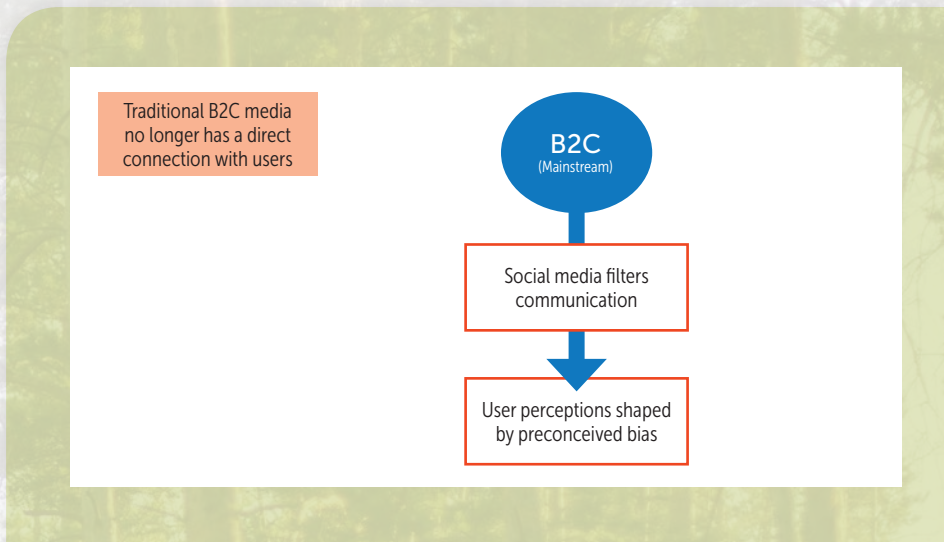


Without a presence on social media platforms and with poor mobile compatibility, industry media is invisible across the platforms where most users source news. Ultimately, the lack of penetration and lack of high-value consumers engaging with platforms (i.e., specifiers) means that timber brands have little value proposition to invest in industry media. In order to thrive, industry media must engage with high-value consumers of forest products – but to do so, it needs resources to transform its distribution model. It is chicken and egg. The answer is not to weaken industry media. Instead, it must be strengthened – with current players with adequate resources to thrive.

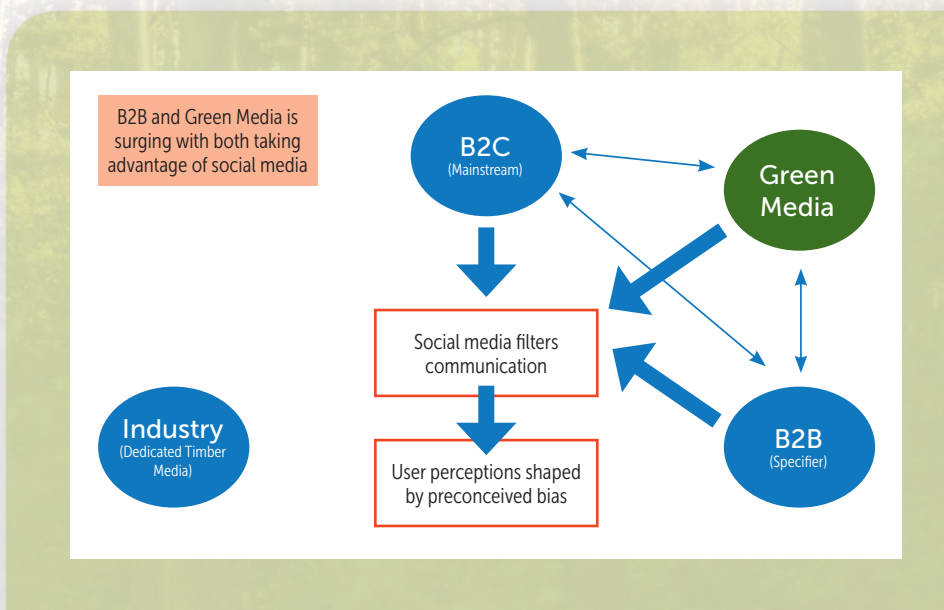


MOST USERS ACCESS INFORMATION ON SMARTPHONES USING PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

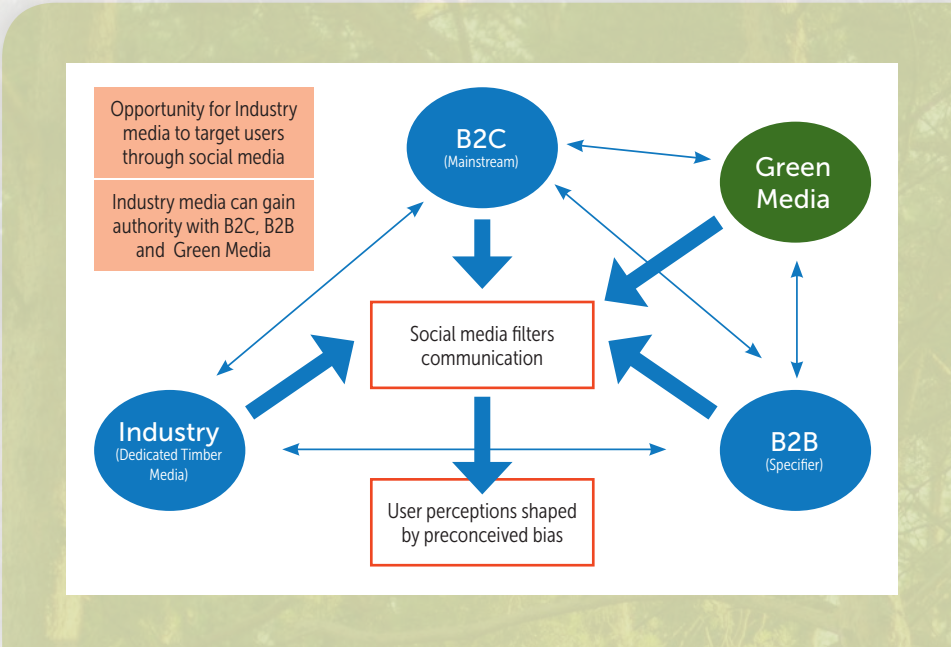
More than 60% of users now use mobile devices to receive news updates (*Pew Research, 2021*). According to a 2021 study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, about 30% of Australians reported using push notifications as a way to stay informed about news and current events. Push notifications are particularly prevalent among younger Australians, with over 40% of those aged 18-24 reporting using this method for news updates. In addition, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are also commonly used as sources of news in Australia, with around two-thirds of the population using these platforms to access news content (*Deloitte, 2022*).



Like Industry media, traditional mainstream media must embrace the new media landscape faster. According to recent research, more than 50% of users reported receiving their primary news from Facebook or Twitter (*Common et al., 2017*) – effectively shortcutting traditional media to instant news. In the past, Facebook has received criticism for using user preferences and biases to report news that supports preconceived biases (*The Guardian, 2021*). Effectively this model leans heavily on social media traffic to push favourable messages to users. This model provides significant opportunities for forestry (as it effectively shortcuts preconceived journalistic bias) but requires highly organised industry media to amplify messaging to the user.



Where industry and traditional mainstream have struggled, specifier media has thrived. The segment targets high-value specifiers of products with high-quality content, Where industry and traditional mainstream have struggled, specifier media has thrived. The segment targets high-value specifiers of products with high-quality content, providing a superior user experience that encourages users to spend longer on the platform. Large-timer brands have responded and allocated substantial advertising budgets to capture specifiers, often at the expense of industry media.



While specifier media remains an important source of information, it is not a controlled media source – forest products (timber, wood, paper) operate in an ecosystem along with steel, concrete, rubber, and plastics competing for the same market. This can be highly effective for certain products, but it does not shift the narrative around "forestry." In order to do this, "forestry" must strengthen its industry media – and to do so, it must find a way to attract high-value consumers (i.e., specifiers) to industry-generated content. By doing so, it can provide a more compelling commercial reason for large timber brands to support the industry media campaigns – and, with that, reinvest surplus funds to increase the quality and visibility of content (thus improving the reach of its messaging).

3.3.3 THE INFLUENCERS OF SPECIFICATION

The project targeted 'influencers' of the product specification. It may seem like a strange category to include, but the group underpin industry credibility and communication frame with high-value users. In addition, it is strongly connected with specifiers and mainstream media – the major driver of the push towards 'green media.' In recent years, eco-labelling has surged, with government and multi-national organisations investing heavily in corporate social responsibility (CSRs) to coincide with their commitment to ESGs (Bode et al., 2022). The Australian Government Commonwealth Procurement Rules (Commonwealth of Australia. Department of Finance. (n.d.)), Green Star Responsible Products Framework (Green Building Council of Australia, n.d.) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have both been game changers – with recognised ecolabeling and product certification schemes now having significant influence in shaping purchase decisions.

WHAT IS ECOLABELING – A DEFINITION

Ecolabeling is a certification system that informs consumers about a product's environmental impact. Ecolabels are awarded to products that meet specific environmental criteria and can cover a wide range of products. Ecolabels encourage companies to improve their products' environmental performance and help consumers make sustainable choices. However, too many ecolabels can create confusion. It is important for ecolabels to be transparent and credible, with clear standards that are easily understood by consumers.

The project interviewed 15 representatives from separate ecolabels and product certification schemes. Representatives from FSC, PEFC and Responsible Wood (the three forest-based ecolabels in the Australian marketplace) were included in the interview list.

Key observations were identified below:

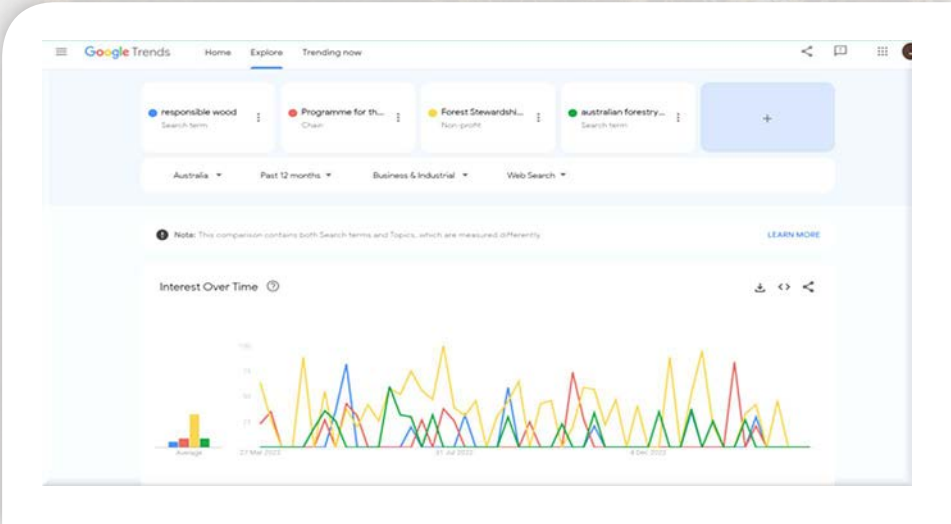
- Certified timber is recognised as a preferred material of choice by ecolabel providers; however, steel and concrete are improving their eco-credentials rapidly.
- The Brand Assets (specifically the Wood Solutions programme) are widely understood by ecolabel providers, providing an important authoritative resource for technical information.
- Increasingly, Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), Product Health Declarations. (PHD's) specifiers are using Material Passports produced by ecolabel providers.
- By and large, ecolabelling and product certification is underpinned by forest certification; FSC, PEFC and Responsible Wood are assets the industry must better utilise.

Forest certification is a strategic asset for "forestry" – where steel, concrete, glass, and other building materials have been late adopters, forest products have been at the forefront of the push towards eco-certification – with certification key inputs to calculate EPDs, PHDs and even Material Passports.

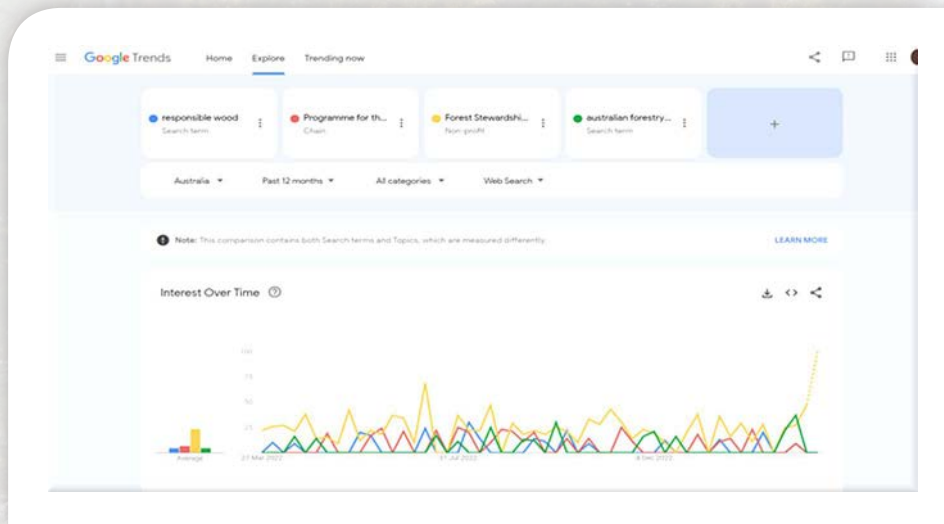
INTRODUCING SDG ALIGN – COMMUNICATING CREDENTIALS THROUGH COMMON LANGUAGE

SDG Align was interviewed as part of the project. It uses inputs from ecolabels to calculate performance against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (*SDG Align, n.d.*) – a language widely used for ESG reporting. Effectively SDG Align uses inputs from FSC, PEFC and/or Responsible Wood certification to rank performance against the UN Sustainable Development Goals – thus providing a value on certification for end-consumers of forest-based products.

FSC, in particular, has strong links with the environmental movement strengthening the brand of certified companies connected to the scheme. This connection propels forest products above all other building materials. With 90% of Australian forests certified, forest certification is underutilised as a "keyword" across industry communication and marketing campaigns. According to Google Trends, Australian search terms "FSC," "Responsible Wood," "PEFC", and "Australian Forestry Standard" have strong recognition specifically amongst' business and industrial subsets. This challenges the prevailing view that 'forest certification' has little marketability – it does, but the industry has not fully harnessed how it can be used correctly:



Amongst business and industry categories:



Google Trend data suggests that interest in forest certification is healthy, "FSC" is the strongest brand; however, "Responsible Wood", "PEFC", and the "Australian Forestry Standard" have a sizable presence. One of the challenges for Responsible Wood is that its traffic is effectively divided amongst the brands "Responsible Wood," "PEFC", and "Australian Forestry Standard", which significantly impacts the strength of its brand.

The project supports the industry by inserting forest certification "keywords" and backlinks in communication – in doing so; it will attract greater traffic to its communication and support the Brand Assets. For example:

***COMPANY is *FOREST CERTIFICATION and is *THE ULTIMATE RENEWABLE**

With the push towards ESGs and the circular economy, forest certification (specifically chain-of-custody certification) will play an important role in demonstrating the eco-credentials of forest products.

3.3.4 CONSUMERS

The final category are consumers of forest products. For the purpose of the project, interviews were limited to consumers of timber-based building materials only (consumers of paper and packaging products were exempt from interviews).

In total 30 consumers of forest products were interviewed and were split into the following categories:

- Building and Construction professionals – specifically developers and licenced builders who act as Principal / Head Contractors on building projects..
- Design professionals – specifically Architects (including interiors), Building Designers and Drafts people who provide specifications for building and construction professionals..
- Consultants – specifically engineers, building certifiers and quantity surveyors who can act as 'gatekeepers' for purchase decisions.

Supporting one on one interviews, the author was provided the opportunity to MC the BDAA National Conference (November 2022) and the Weathertex (August 2022) – 'Wood You Like to Know' Melbourne series. Both were instrumental in exposing the project to a critical mass of design professionals who specify timber-based products.

Ultimately Building and Construction professionals have substantial influence over material selection and purchase decisions – a design professional may provide a specification, but in most cases the builder will have the opportunity to substitute the specification for an alternative. This can create significant obstacles for forest products, specifically in commercial construction, where a strong bias towards steel and aluminium has a major impact on material selection and purchase decision.



The author was invited to present and MC a number of conference and events as part of the Gottstein outreach.

Key observations were identified below:

- In the residential sector, timber is king! The vast majority of residential builders, design professionals and consultants prefer timber-based products.
- In the commercial sector, steel and aluminium systems have strong penetration – the bias against timber has been attributed to the lack of timber syllabus in tertiary education and past versions of the National Construction Code (specifically around multi-storey construction)
- Mid-rise construction is an emerging market; interest is strong, with Wood Solutions providing a valuable resource for design professionals and consultants.

Whilst timber has market leadership in the residential sector (specifically framing along the eastern seaboard of Australia), it faces strong competition from the steel, concrete, and brick industries. These industries are strongly resourced, invest in substantial marketing campaigns, and are well-positioned to take advantage of the negative frames around forestry. For example, at the 2022 BDAA National Festival of Design (Australia's largest Building Design conference), steel, concrete and brick companies dominated sponsorship, but timber dominated the conference agenda!

For commercial and mid-rise construction, the need for timber construction expertise has long been recognised as a major obstacle to growth (FWPA, 2011). In recent years the FWPA's Mid-Rise Advisory (MRA) programme sort to readdress the gap in expertise – with a targeted campaign to embed timber expertise into the building and construction sector. In 2022 the programme was absorbed into the Wood Solutions programme with a number of third-party consultants (some former members of the MRA programme) servicing the knowledge gap – providing much-needed support to amplify the communication message to consumers of timber-based products.

Recent examples, including the CLT Toolbox, are transformational – using modern technology to make it easier for engineers to use mass timber in buildings. The challenge for the industry is to support technological advancements with communication to capitalise on marketing opportunities.

Like Think Brick (a technical resource for the Australian Brick Industry) Wood Solutions provides an important technical resource for builders, design professionals and consultants – it is without question a success story. It has been recognised as the number 1 global resource for technical information about timber-based products. However, to amplify the programme's reach, it relies on the industry supporting it through amplified marketing and communication activities. What happens in the forest and how that is marketed and communicated impacts the way that the end consumer perceives the product.

For better or worse, the future of all forest products is tied to the future health of forestry. "We are all friends here," one stakeholder eloquently said.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR – CHANGING DYNAMIC IN BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

Prior to joining the forest products industry, the author spent a substantial period of his career working for one of Australia's most prominent commercial construction companies – the nation's largest integrated manufacturing/furniture/construction/development group. Roles ranged from Compliance Manager to Business Development Manager to eventually a state director.

During that time the author observed a major bias towards steel and aluminium as well as an enormous shift in the contract terms for projects. Where once the majority of projects were secured on traditional Fixed Lump Sum (fixed price plus variations) or Construction Management (service fee on subtrade packages) terms, increasingly Principal/Head Contractors are now securing work on Design and Construct or Guaranteed Maximum Price terms. What this means is that Principal/Head Contractors have substantial influence over procurement and material selection – and in many instances Design Professionals and certain Consultants are now engaged by the Principal/Head Contractor who have a direct relationship with the client. This has a major impact on the way that the forest products industry engages with the building and construction industry – traditionally an architect or project superintendent would have major influence over material selection and purchase decision, today the builder (or licence holder) has growing influence.

To further complicate matters, Engineered/Mass Timber has created a unique environment where the fabricator could potentially engage a licensed builder to act as superintendent for the project. The push towards prefabrication is transformational and is probably worthy of a Gottstein Report in its own right!

4.0 PART 2 – THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Following Part 1, the project identified a number of recommendations which the industry can adopt. Recommendations have been identified and broken down into the following subcategories:

- 'Macro' or strategic recommendations (i.e., overarching policy)
- 'Micro' or tactical recommendations (i.e., specific, practical tools to improve performance)

The macro or strategic recommendations give the industry a high-level approach or perspective focusing on the longer-term goals and objectives. In this sense, strategic recommendations provide the framework for the industry to elevate the "forestry" brand. By focusing on the macro environment, the industry can make decisions about resourcing allocations and prioritise initiatives. Supporting macro recommendations, micro or tactical recommendations are the initiatives (i.e. practical tools) that the industry can use to achieve its overarching policy.

The recommendations have been supported by a digital marketing specialist who consults with the building and construction industry. In addition, the author has implemented a number of recommendations into the Wood Central platform, providing worked examples of the recommendations in action.

WHAT IS WOOD CENTRAL

Launched in mid-February 2023, Wood Central is a comprehensive digital platform that provides coverage of the timber and wood-based industries. It aims to connect, inform, and inspire individuals and organizations through media, events, education, and products – developing easy to digest and easy to share content which emphasizes storytelling and relatable visuals.

4.1 RECOMMENDATION 1 — IMPROVE COMMUNICATION QUALITY

Macro: Allocate resources for digital marketing and communication planning

The first strategic recommendation focuses on improving the quality of communication generated by the industry – pivoting communication efforts towards digital marketing platforms. Marketing and communication are often confused as the same; they are distinct concepts that can support each other when managed effectively. To boost the industry's brand image and extend its reach, the sector and its stakeholders must allocate more resources to improve communication quality using marketing platforms its consumers use. This includes web development, content generation, a robust social media presence, and crafting communication strategies that emphasise expanding their digital footprint.

4.1.1 MICRO 1: WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

An engaging website is crucial as it attracts visitors, keeps them interested, and encourages them to act, ultimately contributing to a brand's success – effectively, the website is a marketing platform to share communication. A well-designed site also helps establish credibility, showcasing the company's professionalism and commitment to its audience.

To develop a good website, follow these five steps:

- Define clear goals and objectives. (i.e., is it an information source, does it drive sales or both?)
- Plan a user-friendly site structure and navigation. (i.e., the site map)
- Design visually appealing and consistent layouts. (i.e., maximising screen time on the site)
- Create high-quality, relevant content. (i.e. high resolution images, H1, H2 and H5/H6 headers, audio and video which maximises screen time)
- Optimise for search engines and mobile devices. (i.e., is it viewable on mobile or tablet?)

4.1.2 MICRO 2: CONTENT GENERATION

The Pollinate research underscores the importance of engaging storytelling and visuals (i.e. content generation) to drive traffic to forestry topics. Regular content maintains user engagement, promotes repeat visits, and positively frames 'forestry' communication within the

1. industry,
2. the media,
3. influencers over purchase decisions, and
4. users of forest products.

Consistently creating high-quality content improves search engine rankings and increases organic traffic and online visibility. Although this project does not provide specific content quality guidelines, it identifies three key elements to assist the industry in developing standout content for search results.

To maximise the visibility of content (Search Engine Optimisation), follow these steps:

- **Regularly post new and unique content to the website:**
 - ◆ If taking information from an external source, insert a 'backlink' and ensure more than 50% of the words are rewritten (i.e., change words around to ensure the content has a unique listing on Google, Bing, and Yahoo).
 - ◆ Embed video and high-resolution images into text, breaking text up with video and images improves the 'post ranking' with search engines and social media platforms.
- **When posting new content:**
 - ◆ Use a high-resolution image in the title image (a 'featured image' on WordPress); insert a caption and provide a source for the image.
 - ◆ Make sure you use H1 type (for title – maximum 60 characters), H2 type (subtitle – maximum 160 characters) and use paragraph headers (H5 or H6) to break up text.
 - ◆ Summarise the article in the 'meta description' (no more than 160 characters) – keywords should be used, which allows the search engine to place the content.
 - ◆ Use backlinks in-text to support sources (and encourage third-party websites to 'backlink' your website) – this improves the website's authority over content.

WHAT IS A BACKLINK?

A backlink, also known as an inbound or incoming link, is a hyperlink from one website to another. It serves as a reference or citation, indicating that the linked website has valuable or relevant content. Backlinks play a crucial role in search engine optimization (SEO), as they can improve a site's credibility, authority, and search engine rankings.

- Use 'Google Trends to identify 'keywords' and use them strategically in content:
 - ◆ Insert 'trending' keywords into titles, subtitles, text, and meta descriptions.
 - ◆ Keyword selection must be strategic; choosing the right keywords influences audience targeting and traffic to the source (for example, the closer to the consumer, the greater the importance of sustainability and ecolabeling)
 - ◆ In the past, caps-lock has been used for SEO; however, with changes to the algorithm, search engines now prioritise content authority and readability over SEO keywords.

The project strongly recommends that industry and stakeholders set up Google Analytics and ensure that data collected from analytics feeds back into the marketing and communication strategies.

WHAT IS WEBSITE AUTHORITY AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Website or Domain authority (*Search Engine Journal, n.d.*) is a metric that indicates a site's credibility, trustworthiness, and influence within its niche. It plays a significant role in search engine rankings, as higher authority sites are more likely to rank well. Website authority is typically determined by the quality and quantity of backlinks, domain age, and overall user experience.

WHAT ARE POST RANKINGS AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Post ranking (*Influencer Marketing Hub, 2022*) refers to the position of a website's content on search engine results pages (SERPs) for specific keywords or phrases. It matters because higher-ranked posts attract more organic traffic and visibility, as users are more likely to click on top results. A better post ranking can lead to increased brand awareness, user engagement, and potential conversions.

WHAT IS READABILITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Website readability (*Hotjar, n.d.*) is the ease with which visitors can comprehend and navigate a site's content. It matters because good readability enhances user experience, keeps visitors engaged, and encourages them to explore further. Readability is crucial for retaining visitors, reducing bounce rates, and ultimately improving a website's search engine rankings.

WHAT IS SWARMING?

'Swarming' refers to a collaborative effort by industry stakeholders to distribute content across social media platforms, directing traffic to industry-specific websites and other media outlets (*Gorchels, 2018*). By creating compelling content and motivating industry stakeholders to share it on social media, positive and proactive messages are more likely to be picked up by mainstream media. This approach enables the industry to control its media messaging and reach a wider audience, thus improving its reputation and enhancing its communication framework.

4.1.3 MICRO 3 - SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can substantially boost traffic within the industry, both to and from various topics. Industry stakeholders must effectively utilise social media to drive traffic to their content, enhancing SEO authority. When executed correctly, social media can powerfully drive organic traffic, resulting in content shared by third-party sources and message amplification through backlinks. Industry participants must understand different social media platforms and use them optimally.

For example:

- **LinkedIn:** A professional platform, LinkedIn excels in sharing industry news, fostering B2B connections, engaging professionals, and promoting services.
- **Twitter:** A real-time platform, Twitter is perfect for sharing updates, news, and discussions, connecting with influencers, and engaging journalists and media contacts.
- **YouTube:** This video-sharing platform showcases content, demonstrations, and tutorials, offering powerful storytelling and visual engagement opportunities.
- **Podcasts (iTunes / Spotify):** Providing on-demand content engages listeners and establishes industry thought leadership through in-depth discussions and informative talks.
- **Facebook:** A versatile platform, Facebook fosters community engagement, event promotion, and targeted advertising by sharing various content types with a wide audience.
- **TikTok:** Popular among younger audiences, TikTok focuses on short-form video content, promoting creative challenges and brand personalities.
- **Instagram:** A visual platform, Instagram highlights brand aesthetics and experiences, with features like Stories and Reels enabling diverse engagement and behind-the-scenes content sharing.

Social media can be overwhelming, but selecting the right platform and using it correctly can be transformational. A successful strategy involves using data to make informed decisions and adapting communication based on audience response and engagement.

4.2 RECOMMENDATION 2 — INVEST IN COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Macro: Broaden forestry narratives across platforms

The industry must support and invest in platforms that broaden its communications reach. By better utilising brand assets and aligning media platforms within the industry to convey positive narratives, the industry can improve communication and harness the power of its ecosystem – using social media groups, chat groups and forums to mobilise active users. A critical aspect of this approach involves using industry media as a conduit to distribute communication content to specifiers and mainstream channels. The long-term goal is to connect directly with users through engaging, user-friendly industry media platforms, prioritising investment in controlled media sources.

4.2.1 MICRO 1: RE-ESTABLISH INDUSTRY MEDIA AS A BRIDGE FOR SPECIFIER AND MAINSTREAM CHANNELS

Industry media, currently the weakest link in the media ecosystem, can play a crucial role in amplifying communication, improving messaging effectiveness and influencing specifier, mainstream, and 'green media'. Industry media can provide 'authority' for forestry communication and support content through backlinks if correctly harnessed.

To optimise the use of industry media as a go-between for specifier and mainstream media channels, it is important for industry media platforms to:

- Establish collaborations with specifier and mainstream media outlets to distribute forestry-related news, stories, and educational content through industry media channels.
- Leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to amplify industry messaging and influence public opinion.
- Cultivate relationships with influencers, journalists, and thought leaders within specifier and mainstream media to build a supportive network for the forestry sector, ultimately driving traffic to industry media platforms.

Beef Central's success is a prime example of how an allied industry can effectively harness the power of its echo chamber and develop a platform that portrays its industry in a positive light. There is no reason why the success of Beef Central could not be replicated by forestry.

4.2.2 MICRO 2: TRANSITION TO DIRECT USER TARGETING THROUGH INDUSTRY MEDIA

The long-term aim is to circumvent specifier and mainstream media and use industry media to communicate directly with users – this effectively provides the industry with a platform to communicate directly with consumers of forest-based products. As identified in part 1, specifier has filled the void as industry and mainstream media have struggled to adapt to changing environments. A stronger industry media will connect users of timber products with positive and engaging communication through the supply chain – reinforcing the positive storytelling and relatable themes from the forest to the end user.

The industry media must make its platforms more engaging, with easy-to-digest and easy-to-share information that gives the industry a commercial reason to invest in industry media platforms.

This will require industry media to change the way it presents and distributes information fundamentally:

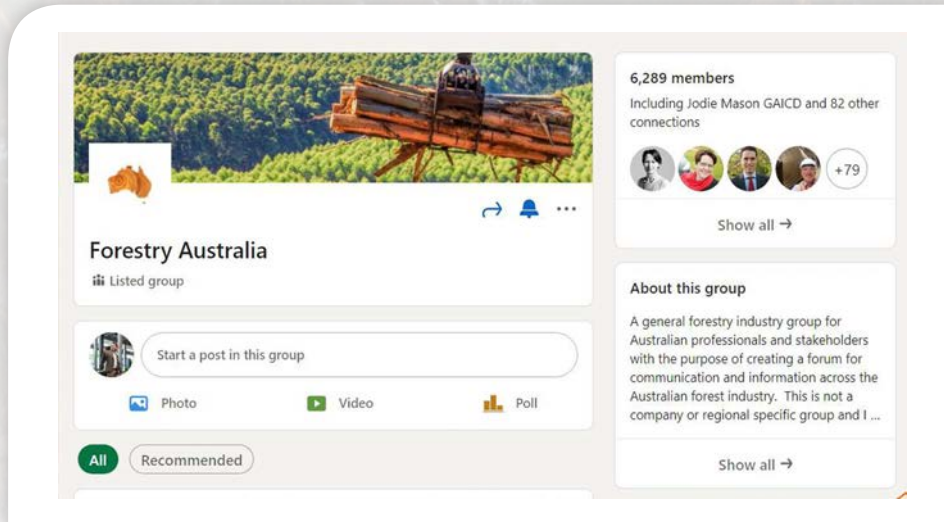
- **User-Friendly Interface:** Create a visually appealing, easy-to-navigate interface that lets users find relevant content, quickly enhancing their overall experience.
- **High-Quality Content:** Publish well-researched, accurate, and engaging articles, infographics, and multimedia that showcase industry experts and address user needs or interests.
- **Regular Updates:** Consistently update content to keep users informed and engaged, encouraging repeat visits and building a loyal readership.
- **Mobile Compatibility:** Ensure the website is optimised for mobile devices, providing seamless access to content across various screen sizes and platforms.
- **Interactive Features:** Incorporate features that promote user interaction, such as comment sections, social media sharing options, and personalised content recommendations, fostering a sense of community and increasing user engagement.

Using the Wood Central example, more than 50% of traffic and user acquisition has been acquired through organic social media, 20% has been acquired through organic search (thanks to SEO optimisation, high website authority and ranking), whilst the remaining 30% has been acquired through direct / email traffic – the email newsletter model is largely redundant.

Industry media is mostly invisible on platforms where most users get their news because of its lack of social media presence and poor mobile compatibility. The limited reach and lack of high-value consumers engaging with platforms (specifiers) result in a weak value proposition for timber brands to invest in industry media. For industry media to succeed, it must connect with valuable consumers of forest products – but it needs resources to change its distribution model.

4.2.3 MICRO 3: BETTER UTILISE SOCIAL MEDIA GROUPS, CHAT GROUPS AND FORUMS

Social Media is often bracketed together. However, social media channels and groups are different. Although social media channels are often the primary tool for broadcasting information, social media groups should not be overlooked. Social media groups serve as online communities where users with similar interests or backgrounds connect, share information, and engage in conversations. These are ideal platforms to fully harness the industry's echo chamber.



Examples of social media groups include Facebook Groups, LinkedIn Groups, and Reddit subreddits.

Forestry Australia's LinkedIn Group is a prime example of the potential for social media groups. With over 6000 members, this group presents a massive opportunity for the industry to target key stakeholders with messages. The more engaged the group, the more controlled positive messaging gets pushed to connections outside the industry echo chamber.

The Forestry Australia Group could be more effectively utilised as a platform to amplify messaging proactively. In addition to Forestry Australia, there are several allied groups – Wood Central dramatically increased its reach by strategically posting to more than 100 global groups.

HERE ARE SOME KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN GROUPS & CHANNELS

FACEBOOK GROUPS

Virtual space where people can connect around a shared interest, topic, or cause.

- Members can post updates, photos, and videos, and engage in conversations with other members.
- Can be public, private, or secret, and can have different settings for moderation and membership approval.
- Primarily focused on community building and communication among members.

LINKEDIN GROUPS

- Community of professionals who share a common interest or industry.
- Members can post updates, articles, and job openings, and participate in discussions with other members.
- Can be public or private, and members can be approved by the group owner or moderator.
- Primarily focused on networking and connecting with others in your field.

FACEBOOK CHANNELS

- Tool used for broadcasting content to a wider audience.
- Can be used to promote your business or personal brand.
- Can be set up as a dedicated page or as a tab within an existing Facebook page.
- Posts can include text, photos, videos, and live streams.
- Audience can like, comment, and share content.

LINKEDIN CHANNELS

- Tool used for publishing and sharing content with a wider audience.
- Can be used to establish thought leadership and build your personal brand.
- Can be set up as a dedicated page.
- Posts can include text, photos, videos, and articles.
- Audience can like, comment, and share content.

REDDIT 'SUBREDDITS' AND THE POTENTIAL FOR FORESTRY

Reddit is a social media platform where users can create communities called subreddits based on their interests, hobbies, and professions Tom's (Guide, n.d.). The industry can leverage Reddit subreddits to connect with potential users in several ways.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Engage in relevant subreddits:** Find subreddits related to forestry and actively participate in discussions. This can help establish industry stakeholders as an authority in the field.
- **Engage in relevant subreddits:** Find subreddits related to forestry, timber and paper-based topics and actively participate in discussions. This can help establish industry stakeholders as an authority in the field.
- **Create a subreddit:** Consider creating new subreddits related to positive forestry themes. This can be an excellent way to build a community of stakeholders that will push themes.
- **Host AMA (Ask Me Anything) sessions:** This is a popular feature on Reddit where people can ask questions to a person or a company. Hosting an AMA can be an effective way to connect with your target audience, answer questions, and promote the industry.
- **Use Reddit for market research:** By monitoring relevant subreddits, the industry can gather valuable insights into its target audience's preferences, pain points, and behaviours. This can help shape marketing and communication strategies and assist with policy and electoral strategy.

4.3 RECOMMENDATION 3 — RETHINKING PUBLIC RELATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION

Macro: Taking the initiative and rethinking media relations

The industry must support and invest in platforms that broaden its communications reach. By better utilising brand assets and aligning media platforms within the industry to convey positive narratives, the industry can improve communication and harness the power of its ecosystem – using social media groups, chat groups and forums to mobilise active users. A critical aspect of this approach involves using industry media as a conduit to distribute communication content to specifiers and mainstream channels. The long-term goal is to connect directly with users through engaging, user-friendly industry media platforms, prioritising investment in controlled media sources.

4.3.1 MICRO 1: EMBRACE THE 'SWARM' STRATEGY

The industry can effectively tap into social media's power to generate mainstream media traffic by adopting a 'swarm' strategy in media relations. The swarming approach entails a coordinated effort by multiple stakeholders to amplify messages, enhance visibility, and establish a robust presence across media and online platforms.

Here are the five key steps to implementing a successful swarming media strategy:

- **Craft a clear message and create engaging content:** Formulate a persuasive message that resonates with your target audience and develop various shareable content pieces, such as articles, infographics, videos, or social media posts.
- **Identify key stakeholders and synchronise distribution:** Compile a list of industry partners, influencers, employees, and other stakeholders who can help amplify your message. Schedule a specific time and date for the coordinated release of your content, creating a sense of urgency and significance.
- **Harness social media using uniform hashtags:** Encourage stakeholders to share your content on their social media profiles, utilising a consistent hashtag that incorporates trending keywords. This strategy increases the likelihood of your content being discovered by a larger audience and mainstream media.
- **Engage influencers, journalists, and media outlets:** Proactively reach out to your industry's influencers, journalists, and media outlets with customised pitches. Offer them exclusive content, quotes, or interviews to pique their interest in covering your message.
- **Monitor, respond, and analyse engagement:** Keep track of your content's engagement across social media and news platforms. Actively respond to comments, questions, and feedback to maintain a strong presence and foster conversation around your message. Gather data on swarming efforts' reach, engagement, and effectiveness to fine-tune future strategies.

4.3.2 MICRO 2: 'BITE-SIZE NEWS, CLICKBAIT AND THE 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE'

Taking lead from ENGO's the industry should take advantage of the continuous 24-hour news cycle to maintain a strong media presence. To achieve this, it must provide a continuous stream of 'bite-size' news that can be utilised by news agencies as 'clickbait.' As identified in the project, the majority of users receive news through social media and / or push notifications. Increasingly digital platforms like BuzzFeed and the Flash are replacing the traditional media as the primary source of information for consumers. In turn, this has created a huge demand for media agencies to develop content to fill the 24-hour news cycle – which provides huge opportunities for the industry to fill the gap!

Here are three key recommendations for making the most of the 24-hour news cycle:

- **Craft engaging headlines:** Develop eye-catching and intriguing headlines for your content that pique users' curiosity and encourage them to click on the link to read more.
- **Create shareable bite-size content:** Develop concise and easily digestible content of no more than 100 words, such as infographics, short videos, or listicles, that can be quickly consumed and shared by users on social media platforms.
- **Utilise trending topics and keywords:** Monitor trending topics and keywords and incorporate them into your content to increase its relevance and visibility on search engines and social media platforms.

CLICKBAIT, BITE-SIZE NEWS & THE 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE IN DETAIL

Clickbait, bite-size news, and the 24-hour news cycle are key elements of today's media landscape. Clickbait (*BBC News, 2015*) uses sensational headlines or images to entice users to click through to a full article, often with the intent of increasing ad revenue. Bite-size news consists of concise, easily digestible information designed for quick consumption. The 24-hour news cycle represents the continuous stream of news and information across media platforms, driven by the need for constant updates to stay relevant. These elements impact how people consume news and shape organizations' public relations and communication strategies.

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APPENDIX 1 – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to more than 110 one-on-one interviews, the author attended several events and conferences in person and remotely. These included:

- Society of Wood Science and Technology - International Convention (Kingscliff, NSW - 10 to July 15 2022)
- Building a Circular Economy (Sydney, NSW - 13th of July 2022)
- Getting to Know Your Timber (Melbourne, Victoria - August 24th and 25th, 2022)
- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations - Forests, plastics, and the circular economy (remotely)
- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Committee for Forestry (remotely - 3rd to 7th of October 2022 in Rome, Italy - remotely)
- The Building Design Association of Australia National Conference (Melbourne, Victoria - October 28th to November 2 2022)
- New Zealand Certified Builders - the 23rd Conference and Expo (Hamilton, NZ - 12th to 14th of November 2022)
- Australian Timber Design Awards (Sydney, December 9, 2022)
- Australian Circular Economy Conference (ACEC) and Circularity (Sydney et al. - 21st to 25th of November 2022)
- The New Zealand Green Building Council Ecolabels and their role in buildings (remotely)