

Media Release

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\$14 million sprouts from a new national research training centre for forestry and wood products

Tasmania's role as national centre for research around forestry and wood products has helped deliver a significant Federal Grant which will drive its standing further.

Announced by Minister for Education Christopher Pyne, the University has attracted funds from the Australian Research Council (ARC) for an Industrial Transformation Training Centre, which will be led by Professor Jim Reid.

ARC funding of \$3.6 million will be matched by industry and University contributions, bringing its total value to about \$14 million.

"This is recognition again that the University of Tasmania is regarded among the very best in the country, and especially where our research effort intersects with industry," University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said.

"We need to be very clear that the focus of our research effort and training will be upon new forest industries, approaches and products, not the industry which Tasmania understands historically.

"The capacity to create value around forestry and timber is one of the keys to unlocking economic renewal in Tasmania, but we understand the sector of the future will look very different to the industry of the past."

The training centre is a collaboration between the University of Tasmania and seven industry partners. It involves nine countries and will span a range of academic disciplines including Plant Science, Computing and Information Systems and Architecture.

Its thrust will be to enable the forestry and wood products industry to transform from a traditional, resource driven, low technology base to an innovative, market-driven industry.

The centre will produce industry-ready PhD students and postdoctoral research fellows with broad perspectives of the forest industry from the forest landscape to the supply chain.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Professor Paddy Nixon said the University of Tasmania is leading the country with four Industrial Transformation Training Centres and three Industrial Transformation Research Hubs, attracting funding totaling \$50 million.

Professor Mark Hunt will be Deputy Director of the Centre, with a particular focus on industry links, ensuring the activities of the centre bring about impacts for industry and national economic benefits.

“This is a very strong result that recognises the outstanding researchers we have here in Tasmania and the important collaborations we have with our industry partners,” Professor Hunt said.

“This latest announcement builds on an unbroken period of 25 years as a national leader in the field, through three co-operative research centres and most recently the National Centre for Future Forest Industries.”

Professor Reid said while the Centre would be based in Tasmania, it would have an outlook that was both national and global in scope.

“We are committed to developing innovative ideas and creating tangible change that benefits the Australian economy,” he said.

“The promise of this venture is that Tasmania is well placed to lead the world in this field.

Professor Nixon said: “The Industrial Transformation Training Centres are particularly worthy of celebration. This funding supports the young researchers of tomorrow - they are truly an investment in the future of Australia.”

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