Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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New project aims to find innovative uses for plantation wood

A group of forestry companies and University researchers is completing stage three of an innovative timber processing trial today (**Friday 30 May 2014**).

While Tasmania's hardwood plantations were originally established predominantly for a pulp market, there is a great deal of interest in finding alternative higher-value uses for the resource, particularly in the construction sector.

However, the characteristics of the wood produced in plantations are often very different to those from a regrowth native forest. This means there are significant challenges in understanding, technology and marketing that need to be overcome in order for the aim of higher value use to be realised.

Plantation hardwood logs provided by Forestry Tasmania will be processed at the Neville-Smith Forest Products mill today with the aim of recovering sawn appearance and structural products from the plantation *Eucalyptus nitens* (shining gum).

The University of Tasmania's National Centre for Future Forest Industries (NCFFI) is leading this third stage of the study.

Professor Mark Hunt, NCFFI Director, said it's unknown as yet what can be recovered from logs like this economically.

"During this trial, we aim to recover more than 50m^3 of sawn timber and then use it for a broad product development and testing program," he said.

Shining gum is Tasmania's most widely planted hardwood timber species with some 220,000 ha currently under cultivation.

"Only a small percentage of this estate has been managed for high quality pruned log production," Professor Hunt said.

“The logs we are sawing at Neville-Smith are likely to be representative of much of the remainder of Tasmania’s fibre-managed plantation hardwood estate into the future.”

In addition to trying to mill traditional appearance products, the University team hopes to use part of the recovered material to make mass-timber products for commercial and large-scale residential buildings.

This trial is one part of a five-stage co-operative project between a consortium of forestry and timber production companies and researchers nationally, including the University, Forestry Tasmania, Neville-Smith Forest Products, Ta Ann and Queensland Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry. It has been partly funded through a grant from the Commonwealth Department of Industry.

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