University to house new forest innovation hub

With a track record of research and innovation in timber stretching back decades, the University of Tasmania is the ideal place for the National Institute of Forest Products Innovation, launched today, to base its Launceston hub.

The institute is made up of two regional hubs, in Launceston and Mt Gambier, with the Australian Government contributing $4 million over four years and the South Australian and Tasmanian governments each contributing $2 million.

The hub will have an industry-driven research program that includes innovation in areas such as forest management, timber processing, wood fibre recovery, advanced manufacturing and the bio-economy.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Brigid Heywood said the work funded by the independent body aligns closely with the University's research strengths.

“Universities are the ideal environment in which to consider new futures for existing industries or entirely new industries upon which our State’s future will be based,” Professor Heywood said.

“We have a strong track record and capacity for working with both industry and government, and we believe this underpins the decision to house this new institute with the University of Tasmania.”

The new hub is being established as part of the Launceston City Deal, the centrepiece of which is the University’s Northern Transformation Program.

Professor Heywood said this once-in-a-generation project would bring opportunities such as the Institute for Applied Science and Design, which will have increased capacity to conduct and showcase research and teaching across centres of excellence relevant to the region including wood science and timber-rich building.

“Our staff have actively contributed to forest product innovation with local, national and international industry for more than three decades,” Professor Heywood said.

“They deploy expertise and innovative approaches across the forest products supply chain: from building design and advanced component manufacture, to forest operation and plant genetics, and chemistry, information systems and spatial science.”
As it did with the student accommodation development at Inveresk, the University is looking to innovate with sustainable uses of timber during the Northern Transformation design and construction phases in Burnie and Launceston.

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