

Adding value is the timber game

Neville Smith Forest Products operates a green sawmill in the Huon, a finishing plant at Mowbray, and a woodchip export plant at Bell Bay through subsidiary company SmartFibre, and is taking the bull by the horns in the value-adding game.

Executive chairman James Neville Smith says the State Government's plan for sustainable forestry offers significant opportunity for private sector investment in the transition to a new higher-value industry of the future.

"We need to move forward and the Government is opening the way. It will be up to industry to take up the opportunities and run with them," said Mr Smith.

SmartFibre is investing \$3 million in expansion at Bell Bay as it gears up for its latest value-adding venture – a ground-breaking partnership with SFM to deliver Tasmania's first native forest exports carrying full FSC certification.

The SmartFibre PureForest project is aiming for initial market volume of 250,000 tonnes – 12,500 tonnes of sawlog, 37,500 tonnes of peelers and 200,000 tonnes of woodchips – all from private land and all carrying full FSC Forest Management certification through SFM's group certification scheme.

The SmartFibre PureForest project is on top of a \$1.3 million investment by Neville Smith Forest Products in a new pellet plant at Mowbray, as well as a garden stake line at Southwood, to extract higher values from native forest residues.

The value-adding and expansion program is expected to create more than 30 additional jobs across the company and in associated forest management and harvesting operations.

Meanwhile, Minister for Resources, Guy Barnett, says the Hodgman Government's forestry reform plan is about delivering resource security,

financial sustainability and job security for thousands of Tasmanian workers.

This includes resource security for the iconic Special Timbers sector which was one of the biggest casualties of the Labor-Green forestry deal.

"We welcome the strong support of the Tasmanian Special Timbers Alliance for our reform plan, which will ensure the future for our hand-crafted timber products prized by tourists visiting Salamanca and other iconic destinations," said Mr Barnett.

"It will also ensure access for raw material supply for our fine furniture makers and provide certainty of access for Tasmanian timber boat builders whose workmanship is recognised as world class.

"Our plan will enable access to the Future Potential Production Forest land for selective harvesting of specialty timbers from October 2017, subject to a new Special Species Timbers Management Plan which is currently under development."

HUON VALLEY GRANT

Thirteen successful applicants of grants under the Government's \$1.25 million Wood and Fibre Processing Innovation Program were announced in October, with Huon Valley Timbers being one of the recipients.

The program aims to support the development of new opportunities for the industry, and Huon Valley Timbers has been awarded \$100,000 to change a timber drying kiln from an LPG gas-fired system to biomass fuel technology using mill residue.

Focusing on creating value-added products from wood and also plant residues, the program received great interest, with 41 applications.

Many of the successful projects involve biomass, including bioenergy and biofuel.