



Media release

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Tasmania becomes first state to adopt wood-first building policy

The Minister for Resources, Building and Construction, the Honorable Guy Barnett, has announced today that Tasmania will be the first state in Australia to introduce a state-wide Wood Encouragement Policy (WEP). The WEP aims to ensure that sustainably sourced timber is fully considered as a key design component, where feasible, in the construction and refurbishment of all public building projects.

The policy will apply to state government projects where the use of timber represents value for money; provides appropriate quality and functionality; complies with the Government's Buy Local Policy; where there are no technical or performance reasons for not considering wood; and where the use of timber complies with relevant Australian Standards.

Today's announcement brings Tasmania in line with two local government authorities and 12 councils across Australia that have adopted WEPs since December 2014, including Latrobe City and East Gippsland Shire in Victoria, and Fraser Coast Regional and Gympie Regional in Queensland, which announced their adoption of WEPs earlier this year.

David Rowlinson, Planet Ark's Make It Wood Campaign Manager, has welcomed today's announcement from Tasmania.

"We are delighted to see the Tasmanian Government demonstrate such strong leadership with this important decision. The adoption of a WEP is a positive move for the environment and it is very encouraging to see a government support this at a state-wide level. We hope other state governments will closely consider the example set by the Tasmanian Government."

Moving towards the use of wood as a primary material in the construction and furnishing of buildings has many benefits for the environment. More than 20% of Australia's carbon emissions come from constructing and maintaining the built environment, so making the switch to wood is a key strategy for addressing climate change.

"Responsibly sourced, certified timber is the only major building material that helps tackle climate change. Timber is renewable, it absorbs carbon from the atmosphere and stores it in the wood, and there are fewer carbon emissions associated with its production when compared to more energy-intensive building materials such as concrete and steel. Wood is also cost-effective and quick to construct," Mr Rowlinson said.

Planet Ark has worked closely with Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) to raise national awareness of WEPs through its Make It Wood campaign. National Marketing and Communications Manager at FWPA, Eileen Newbury, has also welcomed today's announcement.

"This is a momentous day for the Australian forest and wood products industry. It recognises that sustainably sourced timber has the potential to play a significant role in helping Australia to achieve our carbon emission targets, while also contributing to the economies of local and regional communities," Ms Newbury said.



Planet Ark's latest research report, *Wood – Nature Inspired Design*ⁱ which is an update of the *Wood – Housing, Health, Humanity Report*ⁱⁱ, has also shown exposure to buildings made from timber and wooden furnishings and fittings has proven benefits to physiological and psychological health and wellbeing, similar to those experienced by spending time in nature.

“We know that workers are less stressed and more productive, students learn better, patients heal faster, and people are generally happier and calmer in indoor areas that contain wooden elements,” Mr Rowlinson said.

“Researchers have also reported that people experience higher levels of self-esteem, improved cognitive function and decreased blood pressure, when exposed to wood in their built environment.”

About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, we are one of Australia's leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. We promote and create simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

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ⁱ *Wood – Nature Inspired Design*, Planet Ark, March 2017 <http://bit.ly/2mNVI8H>

ⁱⁱ *Wood – Housing, Health, Humanity*, Planet Ark, September 2014 <http://bit.ly/1LgoRcR>