

# MOVING WOMEN INTO FORESTRY

FINAL PROJECT REPORT  
May 2009



**forestworks**  
LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT  
FOREST, WOOD, PAPER & TIMBER PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

*Improving industry's capacity to develop and maintain a skilled workforce*

# CONTENTS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
RECOMMENDATIONS	4
Recruitment	4
Career pathways and skill development	4
Strengthening women's participation	5
Role of workplace supervisors	6
Reasons for leaving the industry	6
WHAT WERE WE AIMING TO FIND OUT?	7
HOW DID WE GO ABOUT GETTING INFORMATION?	9
The approach	9
Strategies in collecting information and promoting the meetings	9
THE PARTICIPANTS	12
Workplace profile	12
Education information	15
What works for women in the workplace in this industry?	17
Would you recommend the industry to other women?	19
What doesn't work for women in the workplace in this industry?	20
Career paths at worksites	22
The relationship between the workplace and the community	23
Knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and its effect on workers/workplaces	24
Additional information exchanged during the meetings	25
Flexibility in role decides career path	26
ATTACHMENT A: MEETING FRAMEWORK	27
ATTACHMENT B: PARTICIPANT SURVEY	28
ATTACHMENT C: WIMDOI SUMMARY	29
ATTACHMENT D: TIMBER COMMUNITIES AUSTRALIA	30

Published by ForestWorks Ltd. © 2009.

ForestWorks Ltd.

559A Queensberry Street

NORTH MELBOURNE, VIC 3051

ph: (03) 9321 3500

fax: (03) 9326 7800

email: [forestworks@forestworks.com.au](mailto:forestworks@forestworks.com.au)

web: [www.forestworks.com.au](http://www.forestworks.com.au)

This report has been produced as a Project under the National Skills Shortages Strategy on behalf of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.



Australian Government  
Department of Education, Employment  
and Workplace Relations

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Our sincere thanks to the 145 women who contributed towards this unique initiative.



Without their honest and proactive participation, particularly in peer support meetings, the project would not have been possible nor could it have produced such a successful outcome.

Further, thanks are extended to the participating companies for their interest and validation of the project and facilitating workplace peer support meetings. All companies provided paid time for the women to attend peer support meetings on site and in most instances, provided appropriate venues for the meetings.

Participating Companies are:

- Ausply Timber NSW
- Carter Holt Harvey NSW, SA, VIC
- Forestry Tasmania TAS
- Gunns Timber Products TAS
- Highland Pine Products NSW
- Hyne Timber Products NSW
- Jeld Wen NSW



The guidance and support of the Steering Committee members was ongoing throughout the project and very much appreciated, as was the work undertaken by the project officer Michelle Ingley-Smith.

Steering Committee members included:

- Jane Calvert (Chair) -CFMEU FFPD
- Kersten Gentle Frame and Truss Manufacturers Association (FTMA) Australia
- Eva Down Timber Communities Australia (TCA )
- Patricia Hughes - Victoria Forest and Furnishing Industry Training Advisory Committee
- DEEWR representatives including - Ray Dingli, Geoffrey Potter, Rachel Collins



The Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union (CFMEU), Forestry & Furnishing Products Division (FFPD) was instrumental in ensuring project access to women on site. The preparatory work undertaken by the union ensured that the project was able to access a number of worksites and participants.

Timber Communities Australia (TCA) was helpful in the various regional areas, providing women's networks for the project team to access. With TCA's assistance, we participated in the annual Women in Timber Dinner in Tasmania in December 2008.

ForestWorks wishes to extend our sympathy to the family of Rebecca Rutland who passed away during this project and whose case study (by request of her relatives) is still included in this report. Her assistance and the understanding of her family is greatly appreciated.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The project, 'Moving women into forestry' provided an valuable opportunity to meet with women in two of the seven sectors (sawmilling and processing and wood panel/board production and manufacturing) representing the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry. The other sectors are: forest growing and management, harvesting and haulage, timber product manufacturing, pulp and paper manufacturing, and timber merchandising.

The women communicated what opportunities exist to encourage more women into the industry – 'why it's a good place to be' as well as what barriers result in a low level of participation by women in the industry. The approach was to actively speak to women in the workplace with their employers support during work-time.



All of the meetings were conducted in regional areas where the forestry industry is a significant employer. The interviews with the women were predominantly in production environments. One hundred and forty five women participated in the project and 124 surveys were completed. Meetings were conducted for each shift at some sites and across the project 28 meetings were held.

The project priority was to meet with women working in the industry rather than complete a desk top analysis or a review of quantitative information.



Sawmilling and processing and wood panel/board production and manufacturing sites were the main focus of the study and it would be interesting to explore how the issues researched would change if the process was applied to the forest growing and management, harvesting and haulage, timber product manufacturing, pulp and paper manufacturing, and timber merchandising sectors.

The report is a commentary based on the information and observations made by those persons with the most knowledge on these issues in the industry – women already employed in the industry.

The women were predominantly over 40 years of age (54 per cent) and long term employees (76 per cent working has been in the sector for more than seven years). Sixty five per cent did not matriculate and 78 per cent were in level 3 and 4 of the classification system (with level 1 being the lowest classification and level 6 the highest). Eighty six per cent of the women interviewed had participated in workplace training.

Significantly, 65 per cent did not see that they had a career path, yet 76.5 per cent said that there were other jobs they wanted to do. Sixty three per cent of the women identified said they needed more training to move into these jobs. In this current economic environment, having people interested in their work and skill development will be highly valuable to workplace success.

Overwhelmingly, the women are proud of the work they do and the industry in which they work. The link between the industry and the community is very strong and a number of the women expressed this connection.

There was no separation of community from the workplace but rather a strong view that the workplace is the community and the community is the workplace.

The women were surprised but delighted to have 'been asked' for this information, particularly as there are limited other forums to express their issues.

In summary, of the women who participated in meetings or who were interviewed, they commonly expressed their:

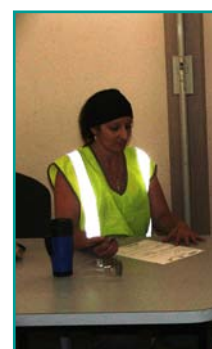
- respect for their work and the job they did
- recognition of the skills they now held and the importance of these skills to job satisfaction
- importance to the community in what they do
- pride in being associated with the industry
- thanks for being asked to be involved in this project.

If there is a goal to retain and support more women in the industry, the industry will need a range of strategies to manage workforce development, recruitment, job opportunities, known pathways and skill development for women. These strategies are necessary when workplaces exist within the current community stereotypes and wherever there is a minority group, in this case women. Their concerns and issues, choices and decisions are often secondary to the more dominant male employee and workplace milieu.

The small percentage of women in the industry does not alleviate the predominance of the male culture which can continue to be a barrier to more women entering the industry and at worst can lead to an environment of bullying or harassment in the workplace. One company had recently conducted harassment seminars in each of their sites and for each of the shifts.

Opportunities for women's views to be expressed appear to be limited. The women in general believe that decisions are frequently made on their behalf – from peers or supervisors who appear to have traditional views of women, their interests, their role and their position in the workplace. Many women described scenarios which prevented them from choosing workplace training, or obtaining or moving into other jobs.

Best practices included workplaces where women are supported in the workplace and many have participated in and accessed the skills and jobs that they wish to pursue. More commonly this was due to the women developing their own strategies and with resilience and determination, pursuing the jobs and skills in which to develop satisfaction within their workplace.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECRUITMENT

Participants identified the changing nature of employment, from family contacts and members, walk-ins and internal company resources to the now common practice of outsourcing to local employment agencies. This method of recruitment may result in an inadequate understanding of the job roles in the industry by the recruitment agency, with unsupported assumptions of who can do the job and who should be recommended for the job.

An example of this is the common recruitment of 'labourers', a description which does not necessarily reflect the type of work to be carried out and a perception that heavy manual work is involved. This can discourage women from applying. This more formal recruitment method may also be a barrier to women being employed in the industry as they may not have registered against this job area.

Advertisements for positions could be more descriptive. Across the states and sectors, women commonly believed that potential women workers could make informed decisions on whether to apply for positions in the industry if the advertisement was more descriptive and specific in terms of the position and what was required for potential applicants, not just the job title.

**Recommendation One:** The changes from a local, informal process to a formal recruitment process require further understanding and clarification to identify the impact on women's employment in the industry with the aim of developing recruiting processes that provide greater guidance to all applicants about what the role involves.

## CAREER PATHWAYS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Participants identified limited opportunities for training, particularly if entering the industry through the 'shop floor'. This appeared to be a significant barrier where women had not been encouraged or had actively been prevented from further skill development. One woman reported that she had regularly sought to undertake an apprenticeship in a workplace and was not given the opportunity, even though the company had on a number of occasions previously been unable to recruit for the position.

Other examples include instances of not being advised of available training, and being overlooked for job development or access to working on other equipment with this work being given to other workers, usually male employees.

**Recommendation Two:** Ongoing promotion of the designated competency or skill pathway is required. The pathway does not necessarily have to be to a completely new job or qualification. The women strongly expressed the desire and need to access incremental skill development, particularly in regard to the operation of new or alternate equipment.

At one site there was a strong relationship between the workplace and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The women at that site were very confident with the knowledge they had around opportunities and pathways and how to access them. They understood recognition of their skills against the national standards, they were confident learners and they participated in the workplace based training that occurred at that site in partnership with their local RTO.



**Recommendation Three:** Workplaces recognise national competencies as applying to all aspects of the sites' work roles, especially for the operation of equipment, timber grading and associated production process and support activities. Those sites must link to an RTO and use traineeship models including training plans which are by default, pathways into higher skilled work.

### STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The project interviewed 145 participants and approximately 76 per cent had worked in the industry in excess of seven years. This length of service could suggest that the women were being well supported as employees. However the peer support feedback did not indicate that this was the case. The participants commonly expressed their frustration with the lack of forums or opportunities for women to discuss the implications of being such a small group within a larger male dominated workplace.

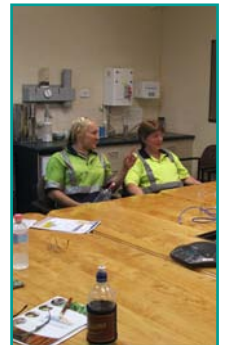
The women regularly spoke of the importance for women to be seen in all levels of the company structure, as role models and support for other women workers. They believe that having more women workers in the industry is in itself an avenue for attracting women to the industry.

**Recommendation Four:** Practical strategies to support women in the industry to be considered by industry stakeholders. This support could be in the form of:

- strengthening peer to peer workplace support for women through CFMEU networks
- via Timber Communities Australia (TCA) by developing women's committees at a site or regional level
- investigation of strategies from other 'like' industries
- use of the Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) National Conference, with the next biennial WIMDOI Conference scheduled in March 2010.

**Recommendation Five:** Implement appropriate strategies to effect cultural change in the largely male dominated workplaces in order to create work environments more appealing to women workers.

**Recommendation Six:** Propose to industry associations and leaders that suitable prevention, intervention and support strategies such as workplace training for workers and managers and developing or revisiting policy and procedures to ensure effective prevention of bullying and harassment. This may include developing up-to-date training programs, taking account of the regional, community based and male dominated character of this industry (and this may include initially piloting programs at a select few workplaces).



## ROLE OF WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS

Successful pathways will require additional knowledge and understanding by workplace supervisors, including information on which employees are participating in training, undertaking upskilling opportunities, rotating into new jobs and accessing new skills. Commitment to this strategy will require supervisors changing the universal 'first in first served' approach, or response such as 'everyone is offered the chance but only the men take it' that were described by the study participants.

**Recommendation Seven:** Access workplace supervisors for their views. Workplace supervisors were not interviewed in this project and their approaches on skill development and job opportunities were not canvassed. Investigating this aspect of skill development should be carried out to inform any future strategy. This process would also inform supervisors about current skill development approaches and may assist in creating positive change.

## REASONS FOR LEAVING THE INDUSTRY

While participants did not know exactly why women left the industry, there was a perception that limited training opportunities did impact on the reasons for women leaving the industry. One participant expressed the lack of training opportunities and advancement as the reason she had recently given notice and was leaving the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry after seven years. There was no accessible exit data available nor did any participants identify they had heard of any person being interviewed regarding their reasons for departure.

**Recommendation Eight:** Improved understanding of why women leave the industry, gained through collecting data through exit interviews can be used to inform training practices, a greater understanding of workforce issues and the reasons for leaving the company site and potentially the industry.

# WHAT WERE WE AIMING TO FIND OUT?

ForestWorks, as the learning and skill development organisation for the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry, draws from the industry skill development plan the priorities that industry is seeking to address in workforce development areas.

In 2008, careers and pathways into the industry were a focus that had resources and work undertaken – such as the development of a careers area of the ForestWorks website, the National Careers Conference in Mt Gambier and ongoing promotion of the industry “Reach for the Skies” DVD.

In continuing to analyse the importance of attracting people to the industry and in-line with the low participation of women in the industry, ForestWorks successfully sought resources from the Commonwealth Government to ask the question ‘why are so few women working in this industry?’ – around 13 per cent when the national average for all industries is 46 per cent.

By conducting peer support meetings – meetings with women at their workplaces as part of communities we aimed to:

- obtain information on employment and career opportunities that exist within the industry that can assist and encourage an increased participation of women
- investigate and collect information from existing and potential women workers in the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry regarding their training and skill development opportunities
- provide resources for the purpose of educating women in the industry on climate change and its effect on the industry and the workforce.

## MENTORING HELPED AMY GROW INTO HER ROLE

A range of inspiring mentors - both female and male, have helped Amy grow into her role as a Planning Co-ordinator in the Huon District, in Tasmania.

Amy's first experience with forestry was summer fire fighting - a difficult role for a young woman without family and friends living close by. With the help of some friendly locals, she persevered, until her skills were recognised and she was employed as a Forester.

As a woman working in a predominately male industry, Amy faced a number of challenges with some of her male colleagues, but a Women's Mentoring Program (a pilot project run by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in Victoria) she undertook was a significant inspiration for her in dealing with some of issues she faced in the workplace.

"My mentor gave me much advice, perspective and support. But I guess something that has helped me succeed was her suggestion to seek to influence people, rather than to buy into traditional power/control systems.

I think women tend to be good at communicating and that by educating, informing and persuading people we create influence that helps us achieve our goals. Often this helps us avoid conflict too, which I certainly don't enjoy," Amy said.

The process helped her learn. The increased responsibility needed to work in a small team with limited backup meant she had a lot of opportunity to tackle new skills and soon she was specialising in planning - where her skills with computers and attention to detail were useful.

After three years, Amy was seconded to a backfill position in a less remote office - this new role meant she now lived closer to her friends and family. Although she found it difficult to get recognition for her skill set, this job meant she was moving up the ladder.

After moving to Tasmania and into her role as a Planning Co-ordinator, Amy found herself once again working in a predominately male-oriented workplace but with more confidence and experience behind her, she easily gained their respect and trust.

"After settling into the role, I have found that being female means I'm not really treated any differently to my colleagues. And I've found some good mentors - mostly male, because of the lack of senior operational females round here," she says.

"It's important when considering a forestry career as a woman to have a support network - not just family, but seek out the friends and colleagues in your community and beyond who can educate, reassure, encourage and celebrate with you as you develop your skills. The challenges you face will only make you stronger and it's such a rewarding and real profession that you will enjoy it," Amy said.

# HOW DID WE GO ABOUT GETTING INFORMATION?

## THE APPROACH

The project was singular in its focus - to speak with as many women workers within the industry as possible. In New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia meetings were held in two of the seven industry sectors (sawmilling and processing sector and wood panel/board production sector).

INDUSTRY SECTORS	NUMBER OF WOMEN
Forest growing and management	3
Harvesting and haulage	3
Sawmilling and processing	88
Wood panel/board production	40
Administration/management	7
Other	4
Total	145

Women for the study were contacted with the assistance of the CFMEU FFPD and their close connections to the companies, worksites and workers. Peer support meetings were held on work sites and this enabled the women to participate in the meetings during their regular shift hours.

The discussions were robust and had a framework of questions (see Attachment A) which encouraged discussion around opportunities, barriers and strategies in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

A critical element to the project was that women participated in meetings as a group rather than meeting on a 'one on one' arrangement. This supported both the collection of information from individuals (see Attachment B) as well as a means to gain an understanding of common views.

There was a strong positive response from the women involved that they had this opportunity to share their views and learn from one another. 'Thank you for asking me what I thought' was expressed by a number of women at the conclusion of the meetings.

## STRATEGIES IN COLLECTING INFORMATION AND PROMOTING THE MEETINGS

The project officer conducted meetings in Dartmoor, Victoria, at a Women in Timber (WIT) annual meeting in Scottsdale; a Regional Women Foresters meeting in Tasmania; Oberon, Tumut, Tumberumba in New South Wales and Mt Gambier and Nangwarry in South Australia.

The meetings were held both on and off worksites and a survey was provided at each of the meetings (except Dartmoor), which was completed by the women participants. It was necessary to ensure the survey was voluntary and confidential and this was explained to the women to ensure comfort levels regarding privacy and they could comment with complete honesty.



## HARD WORK AND INITIATIVE HELPED REBECCA ACHIEVE HER GOALS

With drive, determination and the encouragement and support from her peers and management, Rebecca Rutland was promoted to Dispatch Supervisor at Ausply – a plywood and veneer manufacturing mill located in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

When Rebecca started at Ausply, she was one of only three women working in the mill and she learnt the basics of her job on the glue-line. Over time and once her supervisor saw her care and attention to detail – he promoted her in charge of her workstation. This role required her to ensure that the right products were being made and with appropriate materials as well as teaching newcomers the basics of the trade.

After two years working on the glue-line, Rebecca was keen to go further in her career path and convinced her supervisor to allow her to work in other areas of the mill. At first she undertook relief work on the patcher, sander, hot press and the Giben saw, but her consistent hard work showed management that she could be an asset in other more key areas in the mill.

Rebecca was promoted to main operator of the sander and later was given the opportunity to get her forklift licence. After another 12 months or so, the operator for the main Jenkins trim saw left the mill and Rebecca was asked if she would like to take on that role.

“I’ve never been one to shy away from a challenge, so I took that role on with both hands. I couldn’t help but think that maybe it was a small victory for me and for other keen, hard working women around the factory,” Rebecca said.

As well as running the saw, she also became a fill-in leading hand for the afternoon shift. For the next 18 months, Rebecca was responsible for the full shift - from fabrication right through to the finished product.

Rebecca was then approached for a day shift dispatch role. The role involved making sure the production part of the mill made and finished the right products to fill orders in time for deadlines, she organised transport companies for deliveries and was also involved in sales. Her passion and organisational skills led to her promotion to Dispatch Supervisor.

“In my experience, no matter if you are male or female - if you work hard and show some initiative and actually care about your job, you can move forward and achieve your goals,” said Rebecca.

***Our thanks go to Rebecca’s family for allowing us to use her story in our report.***

When coordinating these site meetings, site managers indicated their support for improving women's entry into the industry and were eager to hear what strategies and views women workers suggested for this to occur. Their support ensured access to both full-time employees, as well as at some sites, casual employees.

Presentations were made at the Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) National Conference in July 2008, which linked the project into the WIMDOI network (refer Attachment C).

Updates were provided for state Industry Training Advisory Committee meetings in various states and at the national ForestWorks Skills and Employment Council meetings in August 2008 and March 2009. The Forestworks website had a webpage for the project which also provided a contact email address for those who wanted further information or wished to further participate in the project further. ForestWorks 'Skills Update' newsletter promoted the project in December 2008.

The CFMEU also promoted the project through a union radio show and their printed national newsletter.

'Trunk lines' the regular print paper for TCA also featured the project.

Strong network links were developed with Women in Timber (TAS), who widely promoted the project in Tasmania.

An initial aim of the project was to identify the possibility of establishing women's committees onsite or across sectors. The project did learn of varying degrees of women's social club/networks on some worksites.

For example, at one site the women on shift pay into an informal club they established and each year they go away on holiday together for a weekend. This informal arrangement is supported through the company by ensuring the women can all access paid leave at the same time and their adventures are reported in a company newsletter.

# THE PARTICIPANTS

## WORKPLACE PROFILE

The women were full-time employees, between 30-61 years old and in general had been in the industry more than seven years.

THEIR AGES WERE	PERCENTAGE
30 years old & under	17.5%
31 – 40 years old	26%
41 – 50 years old	38%
51 – 60 years old	18%
61 and higher	1%

Fifty seven per cent of women respondents working in the industry were over the age of 40. Many of the women started when they were much younger and this is reflected in the length of service with 76 per cent of women working in the sector for more than seven years.

The industry does not generally offer part-time work for workers on the 'factory floor'. Employees start as a casual which is a common occurrence due to the use of external employment agencies. Initially, work is offered on full time hours that may or may not be regular or consistent each week. Over time (between 3-6 months or longer) a worker may be offered a permanent position or the employer may advertise a permanent position which the women can apply for.

There was one shift on a site that was the only 'flexible' or 'family friendly' shift identified in the course of the project. The site offered a permanent part-time situation for approximately 11 women. It was limited to a particular section and was referred to by the women and other site employees as the 'mummy shift'. The hours of work were from 8.30am to 3.00pm, Monday to Friday.

The company had recognised issues with employee turnover and looked at possible solutions. Creating a specific shift to accommodate and attract workers with caring responsibilities and operating within school hours was one idea that was proposed. There was also the element of attracting women for the shift, as there is a general consensus that women are hard workers with an excellent attention to detail - a skill which is valuable when grading timber or putting up defects. The shift was initially started as a trial; and due to its success it continues to operate.

Maintaining permanent work and positions is a definite advantage for the industry. Unlike the factory floor, part-time work is common in administrative positions. The women participating in the study were predominantly in level 3 and 4 of the classification system.



CLASSIFICATION LEVEL (TIMBER AND ALLIED INDUSTRY AWARD) AND INCREASES AS OF OCTOBER 2008		WEEKLY HOURLY RATE
Level 3	36.5%	\$15.34
Level 4	40.5%	\$15.89
Level 5	11%	\$16.78
Level 6	5%	\$17.33
Administration/salaried	7% (contract or clerks award)	

Generally, the industry practice is that new workers start on Level 3 which predominately refers to a timber stacker/mill hand. The classification level may also be determined by the machine they are allocated to at the start of their employment. From their responses, the majority of women work in lower level positions. Women at Level 5 or higher have not necessarily been there a long time nor did they start at Level 3.

The industry has historically recruited workers through family links, walk-ins and internal recruitment processes. Consistent with this the women reported that they had predominantly been employed through word of mouth, other family or friends letting them know of shifts available or through informal community networks.

This local or informal recruitment method was common across the board. However participants have noticed in recent years this practice of recruitment is being phased out and replaced with external recruitment through labour hire firms. This was commonly identified as a practice that the women believed has created a barrier to improving women's participation in the industry.

On one site, the women said it had been about seven years since they last recalled a woman being employed. While they didn't know for sure, they believe there was a connection to the recruitment process through the external labour hire process.

There were many women who had worked for years on one site and were still unfamiliar with some positions and machines on other related sites. Exchange of information became a feature of some site meetings as women met from across either shift or sites and were newly informed of skill or job options in the workplace.

If this informal practice is the 'norm' for other workers in the industry, then how can potential workers understand the expectations of the job, especially if it is stated inadequately at recruitment, such as the job title 'labourer'?

## LEE RECOGNISES THAT FORESTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Lee Tunstall's role as a Forest Planning Officer for Forestry Tasmania at Scottsdale within the Bass District, enables her to combine her interest in the natural and cultural values of the forest with sustainably managing an asset for future generations.

Professional Foresters manage native and planted forests for conservation, environmental services and sustainable production. They are key to addressing issues central to the future of our environment and regional economies.

Her primary role is to support Forestry Tasmania's Planning Unit by administering the Bass District Land Management Program, which primarily involves forest leases and licenses.

Lee completed her Bachelor of Applied Science Degree with a major in Forestry at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales. Her decision to study forestry was based on her strong interest in the environment and protecting it for future generations.

"Trees are a renewable resource. If we sustainably manage the forests and ecosystems they belong to, present and future generations can appreciate their important values. These values include wood production, carbon storage, wildlife habitats and aesthetics," Lee said.

The Bass District manages 400,000 hectares of State forest covering the area of north-east Tasmania. The Bass District oversees establishment, protection and harvesting of native forests and plantation and manages the Forest EcoCentre in Scottsdale.

Other key responsibilities and duties she has include preparing Operational Plans and Non Forest Practices Plan/Reserve Activity evaluations of environmental values.

She has been in her current position for 18 months. During that time, she has had the opportunity to undertake a number of training courses such as First Aid, Gravel Road Driving, Crash Free Driving, 4-Wheel Driving, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Giant Freshwater Crayfish protection.

"I love my job because it is interesting, challenging and rewarding. I believe that there are many opportunities here for me at Forestry Tasmania and I look forward to progressing into managerial roles in the future," said Lee.



## EDUCATION INFORMATION

Sixty five per cent of women respondents had not matriculated from secondary school but most women had completed Year 10. The women commonly described that because they did not enjoy school, they left early and got a job in the 'timber industry' because you 'didn't need high educational levels to get' or 'do the job'.

### PARTICIPANTS HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOLING

Year 8	4%
Year 9	6.5%
Year 10	36%
Year 11	18.5%
Year 12	35%

Despite low levels of completed secondary schooling, the women did participate in workplace-based training:

- 21 women with Occupational Health Safety & Welfare training
- 14 trainers
- 10 assessors
- 20 women had completed one or more relevant industry certificates (levels 2,3,4).

Fourteen women had obtained BAs at university (Art, Business, Education, Engineering, IT, Nursing, Psychology or Science).

An opinion commonly expressed in the meetings was that the industry itself has evolved. The women acknowledge that the machinery that is operated these days is far more advanced and sophisticated than when they first started. The women who operate machines and are paid as operators, say their ability to undertake this work stems from their knowledge and understanding of the worksite and the opportunity to learn the equipment through a 'hands on' approach.

As indicated above with the profile of completed workplace-based training, there was a high level of workplace training participation:

Yes 86%

No 14%

Of those who answered YES, did they complete a Certificate/Statement of Attainment?

Yes 92%

No 8%

Of those who answered YES, recognition was obtained through:

Work 32%

RTO 26%

Both 42%

This profile demonstrates that there is a high level of participation in available training and also a high level of completion. While this has not been compared to overall industry enrolments and completions, the completion rate in government funded accredited qualifications is at a much lower level. It could be said that when women get access to training, not only do they participate but they also complete it successfully.



## SAFE WORKERS KEEP CORRIE FOCUSED

Corrie Shipton works as an Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator at Gunns Timber Products in Scottsdale, a role which has a lot of scope for growth and advancement in one of Tasmania's key industries.

Corrie first started working in the timber industry in January 2005 – she was 19 years old and after working a number of administrative jobs in Launceston she decided to return to her hometown of Scottsdale to be closer to her family.

“I began working as a receptionist at Frenchpine but within a few months obtained a position in accounts. Later that year the company was sold to Auspine, which opened more doors for advancement within the company. I successfully got the job of Health and Wellbeing Officer for both Auspine Scottsdale business units. This position involved human resources, but also introduced me to occupational health and safety,” Corrie said.

Her role entailed rehabilitating injured workers as well as implementing wellness programs to the workforce (such as how to balance life while working shift work). She was also responsible for health screening of Auspine's saw doctors, overseeing the treatment of plant employees and has co-ordinated the annual hearing tests for the workforce.

“As part of this position, the company funded my training in Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety. The course took place over 12 months through TAFE Tasmania and I successfully graduated at the end of 2007,” said Corrie.

She enjoyed the occupational health and safety aspect of her job and approached the company regarding more training. As she had already completed Certificate IV, she had the pre-requisites to enter the Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety course, again through TAFE Tasmania and started this course in 2008.

With another change of ownership and the closure of one of the Scottsdale mills, Corrie was able to take on occupational health and safety compliance. On top of risk assessing, rehabilitation, advice and support to the site on occupational health and safety legislation, she looks after due diligence, monthly inspections, site compliance auditing and works proactively with state regulatory authorities.

“I am aiming to finish the Diploma this year and continue to advance my skills and knowledge in occupational health and safety and the timber industry. Now working for Gunns Timber Products gives me even more opportunity for growth and advancement for my career,” said Corrie.

On one site, a few women had been provided an opportunity to train in operator positions. This was a result of their repeated requests over a period of time and the company's acknowledgement of the need to have identified 'back-up' operators on the site. While this was considered by the participants as a great opportunity to add to their skill development none of the women had actually completed the training either formally or informally.

They agreed that there was inadequate support for the time to train and production pressure was always constant during their training. If they made a mistake or required further explanation, the machine trainer or supervisor would display impatience with the trainee which resulted in insufficient information or inadequate training. The women said that their training was put off or stopped. They are still waiting for their training to restart, so they can be confident and competent operators of their particular machines and recognised formally as such.

## WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE IN THIS INDUSTRY?

The following section describes many of the opportunities and barriers the women either identified as impacting on them in the workplace or their views on what factors will impact on improving the level of participation of women in the workforce. The following factors were not provided to the women as a checklist but were collated from an open question on the survey, 'please describe what works best for you in this workplace?' Note that the statistics are based on gross figures - there were multiple responses.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT WORK?	
Money	39%
Friendships	18%
Shift work/conditions	13.5%
Job satisfaction	13%
Teamwork	6%
Training	4.5%
Job security	2%
Equality	2%
Other	2%

The regional meetings in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were held in locations where the industry was the main employer in the township and surrounding area. The wages in the industry are better than that of other industries such as hospitality or retailing positions in the town, so money was an important reason for wanting to work in the industry. This was significant in discussion as to why participants came to the industry and why they have stayed. It is important to note that many of the women are paid above award wages as a result of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements active at their worksites.

## EDUCATION PROVIDES ANGELA WITH CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

After leaving the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry in late 2006 to take up a role working in occupational health and safety area with the Queensland Government, it was Angela Pappin's interest in working for the industry that saw her return to a role as an Optimisation Engineer at Hyne's Tuan saw mill.



Angela started with Hyne in 1998 as a management cadet in their retail outlet (timber and hardware) in Townsville. The cadet program involved gaining experience in various roles at the Townsville branch and also exposure to the other working environments within the Hyne corporation.

In late 1999, Angela moved to Maryborough to take up an opportunity to work at Hyne's Tuan saw mill, a softwood milling operation. Initially her role was with the sales and despatch team, focusing on production planning for improved customer service.

Her job's scope changed in mid 2000 with the commencement of the Tuan Mill Log Merchandiser upgrade project. This role focused on integrating key scanning and optimising technology with the operational aspects of the new merchandiser line. This also meant a move into the sawmill itself, focusing on mill cutting pattern development and fibre recovery.

During this time, she completed a Business Management Diploma as part of her cadetship and was the recipient of the regional, state and national award for Trainee of the Year for 2000. Angela was also nominated for the Australian National Training Awards.

"With my cadetship now complete and with the full support of Hyne, I started my Engineering degree. After a couple of years as the Assistant Greenmill Manager at Tuan, I took on the very rewarding role of Kilns Manager."

After finishing her Engineering degree, Angela was asked to provide assistance at the Tumarumba operation which had been purchased by Hyne a few years prior and which was undergoing significant upgrading, including the construction and commissioning of a new sawmill.

"I worked at the Tumarumba operation in various roles over a two year period, including Sawmill Manager and Kilns Manager during the commissioning. The post commissioning period provided unique opportunities for professional development in many areas, including management and engineering. This was a very challenging, but an equally exciting and rewarding time," said Angela.

"I did leave the industry for a few years to work in occupational health and safety but was asked to return to the Hyne Huan Mill as their Optimisation Engineer. In this role, I provide technical support and development for value optimisation of the sawmill operation.

My experience in the industry, particularly with Hyne has been an exciting and rewarding one, with many challenges and opportunities. I have found the people I have worked with (both in Hyne, with contractors and the wider timber community) to be genuine, hardworking, passionate about their industry and generous with their experience, knowledge and their time" says Angela.

Due to the isolation of the regional areas it was common for women to nominate friendships as a reason for why this employment 'works for them'. It was obvious in each of the meetings that there are very close relationships on each site. This is due to a number of reasons, such as their minority status, their position and location on site and family relationships amongst the employees.

These relationships were important for support of one another at the workplace as often there were no other women in a support role for them to access. The friendships and support this brings were a key element for the women employed – strong bonds are formed quite quickly and rated very highly across all the meetings.

While shift work was identified as a benefit of the industry, it is equally reflected as a negative for women in the industry. The positive elements related to the shifts being permanent and in some cases non-rotating. This meant the women could organise family and other commitments to support routine shifts.

The shift hours were 10 to 12 hours which in many cases enabled long weekends every weekend. With every Friday off, it gave the women the opportunity to complete various non-paid work commitments such as bill payments, carer roles, the undertaking of housework and the contribution to other family commitments.

At one site the women agreed that the dry mill is more labour intensive than the green mill which offers a better rotation of jobs. Women at another site agreed that offering permanent part-time positions or an ability to job share would significantly increase women's participation and retention, especially when returning to work after having a baby.

#### WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE INDUSTRY TO OTHER WOMEN?

The participants strongly supported women being attracted to the industry, as the industry was evolving, was valuable and important to their community.

The survey collation shows that 65 per cent of women would recommend the industry to other women, 25 per cent would not and 10 per cent said there were both reasons for and against recommending other women to come in to the industry. One woman thought she would recommend women work in areas such as the nursery or tree planting areas, as you would not 'be so alone'.

The participants self identified the positives to working in the industry as:

#### POSITIVES ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY

Money	30%
Friendships	20.5%
Equality	12%
Shift work/conditions	11%
Job satisfaction	11%
Learning new skills	7%
Certain positions	3%
No stress	3%
Job security	2%
Other	1%

#### WHAT DOESN'T WORK FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE IN THIS INDUSTRY?

Industry stakeholders had summarised the barriers they had perceived for women as:

- their isolation (usually only a couple of women are at any one section/site/shift)
- the bullying experienced that prevents them considering other jobs within the same site
- often limited formal education
- lack of confidence in pursuing training opportunities (even when offered by the company).

The participants confirmed these barriers as well as identifying shift work, repetitive job functions and weather exposure as other impediments. The factors they identified as why they wouldn't recommend the industry to another woman included:

#### REASONS FOR NOT RECOMMENDING INDUSTRY

Male dominated 'club'	31%
Manual labour intensive	22%
Shift work	18%
Limited opportunities	10%
Repetitive job function	7%
Weather exposure	5%
Low classifications	3.5%
Low morale	3.5%

As identified earlier, many women see the shift work as a positive, however women who did not recommend the shift work and see it as a negative were women with carer responsibilities. The long hours were not conducive to their home life and their hours of work did not coincide with the operational hours of childcare or before and after school care. Many women required the support of their partners and or family or friends in order to meet all their responsibilities of home and work life.

This was highlighted at one site that experienced the closure of the local childcare facility. The effect of this closure was significant to the effected workers as their nearest childcare centre was between 19 kms and 32 kms away. The support of family and friends to assist in this situation is significant and ongoing in order to meet their work and family responsibilities. In two sites there was a request for the company to consider on site crèche facilities.

The influence of the 'male dominated club' plays itself out in many ways – women across all the meetings could identify situations where they had not been encouraged to take on another job or training. One meeting agreed that there was little to be done, 'that's the way it is'.

In some site meetings there were difficult conversations about workplace practices and safety that the women were not confident in raising in other forums. At every meeting confidentiality and non identifying reporting of the issues raised had to be stressed, and in some instances women said they would not stay in the meeting unless this was confirmed.

Women, significantly a minority in the workplaces, described the male dominated workplaces as often impacting on their ability to access other jobs, skill development and training. They often reported being overlooked for possible training, particularly getting access to operating machinery and the licenses required for this.

Sometimes it was their supervisor's view that certain jobs 'weren't for women', or peer pressure from their male co-workers that they should have first option, not women, to further skills.

When this was combined with a limited opportunity in the workplace to access training, some of the women expressed exasperation with the traditional views of why women work and what a woman could do. They stated that they wanted the right to choose, rather than having assumptions made about their interest and their desire to learn more.

## CAREER PATHS AT WORKSITES

The majority of women (64.5 per cent) did not believe they had a career path at their site, 22.5 per cent saw that they did and 13 per cent were unsure. However there was recognition that it was common practice that they learnt many skills in the work site. This was extensively discussed at the meetings.

In one example, the women may have started (and many still remain) as a timber stacker on the out-feed of a moulder and rotate to the in-feed of the moulder. In the out-feed of a moulder, the worker stacks, packs and straps the mouldings ready to be tallied, labelled and taken to dispatch. In this job, the worker is also required to grade the timber to the required level of quality before it goes into the moulder (in-feed) and when it comes out of the moulder (out-feed) to be strapped and packed.

These skills are essential and common within the industry and can be applied on many different machines such as the finger jointers, re-rip, and paint line. While they did not see the industry as having a career path, they acknowledged the many different skills they learn and need to fulfill their position each day.

While the majority of participants did not identify as having a career path, 75.5 per cent identified that there were other jobs they wanted to do at the workplace. Significantly they identified that training was what they needed to move into another job (63 per cent) with opportunity being the next highest factor (17 per cent) and 9 per cent identified they would have to leave the industry.

The importance of this information to the industry is that women want to stay, they want to do other work and they see that this can be fulfilled within the workplace. One company encourages all staff once they are offered and accept a permanent position, to undertake the Certificate III Sawmilling and Processing, which formalises training as standard practice.

The reasons provided by the participants if they did not want to move into another job included:

### REASONS FOR NOT MOVING INTO ANOTHER JOB

Traditional views from men of what women can do	23%
Limited opportunities	22%
Happy with existing position	17.5%
Not enough experience/training	11.5%
Family influence	6%
Age	6%
Will leave industry	4%
Lack of education	4%
Other	4%

From the written responses and meeting discussions, women were committed to and eager for more training either formally or informally. They recognised training as the number one issue to be addressed in order to move to another job. They did realise however that the opportunity to train has to be available to women in order for them to learn the new work.

This means that while there are many positions within a particular site, the opportunities to learn new positions are limited because management only provides the opportunity to learn if there is a vacancy and often actual vacancies do not exist (as opposed to short term shift rotation for example).

Rotation of jobs is often limited to a particular machine, for example rotation on the moulder is between the in-feed table and out-feed table only, so rotation does not extend to other machines, even though this could be the case as the skills required to operate other machines are similar.

Opportunities to learn other positions or experience other machines usually come from a necessity to fill a short term vacancy rather than the recognition of training needs. If workers are absent then the opportunity may be offered to a worker to move to another machine to fill in for the shift, but it is an informal arrangement and only the minimum skills are taught in most instances. At one site, the women believe the company was committed to safety and that equal employment opportunities were supported by the top levels of the company but not supported at the factory floor supervisors level.

In a number of cases, both long term and short term employed women did not understand what another section did nor did they know the machines that operated in those sections.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORKPLACE AND THE COMMUNITY

Women workers strongly perceived that their company had a 'social responsibility' within their community. Women strongly believed that a company that is a major employer in the area has a responsibility beyond the employment of people within the community. The commitment of the workers to a particular company was discussed in terms of how much time they spend at work and the blurred lines between friends and family at work and in the community.

The women viewed the employer as having an obligation to the community, to support its strength and to give back to the community wherever possible e.g. sporting clubs, charities etc. Living and working in isolated areas often means that the community is close-knit and most people know and interact on various levels at work and socially. Their children and grandchildren may go to the same school or play together in the same sports team so there is often an overlapping of activities that involve the town and its people.

When the project officer was invited to join the Women in Timber (TAS) dinner, where many of the women were managers or employers in their own right, this view was forwarded. These women concurred with the social responsibility role that a company should have and gave examples of what various employers contribute to the community through sponsorship, endorsements, sporting clubs etc.

One of the Women in Timber (TAS) participants, who is also an employer, believes it is important for women in the industry to have support mechanisms and this was why she co-ordinated and facilitated the Women in Timber meetings and activities in an unpaid capacity. It operates as open to all women, regardless of position in the industry and all are welcome to participate.

Speaking to community women, they reciprocated the views of women workers in the industry and of the importance of the industry to the town. 'We are here to service the timber industry' was a quote from the manager of a local hotel who was adamant the industry was fundamental to her business. Some of the community women did not know as much about 'what's involved' in working in the industry but they did discuss how there seemed to be misinformation about the industry in the media.

The industry is held in high regard within regional communities, particularly because of the economic benefits derived, therefore ensuring wide promotion of the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry to other local industries (not just within the industry) is a necessary avenue to ensure a proper sense of understanding about the industry and the critical role it plays in the local area.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND ITS EFFECT ON WORKERS/WORKPLACES

For each meeting, the climate change learning resources developed by ForestWorks with Commonwealth Government funding was provided to participants. There was discussion about the changing issues impacting on the industry and the main topics relating to this subject were waste and water. Women workers are fully aware of waste and applying a minimum approach in their everyday work. For example, a trim saw operator will be mindful of waste when cutting defects from timber or a grader on the out-feed of a machine will be aware of the allowable specifications for a particular order and grade appropriately.

There was an obvious concern about water in New South Wales, particularly in Oberon. The Oberon Dam is at its lowest and the township is on level five (of seven levels) water restrictions. The workers understood the importance of water in order for the mill operations to function effectively and were worried that there may be a severe impact on the industry if the dam levels did not increase soon.

The WIT community meeting in Scottsdale reiterated the importance of the industry on their local region. It was obvious that the sense of community is extremely important in their everyday life. They are very proud of their association and connection with the industry and what the industry does for Scottsdale and the surrounding areas. A united industry front which addresses environmental issues was identified as essential and is ongoing.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGED DURING THE MEETINGS

A number of factors are having a major impact on the industry. The global economic crisis is a major contributor to the mill closures and redundancies across all states. While the project was conducting meetings in Mount Gambier and surrounding areas (February 2009), Carter Holt Harvey made an announcement to reduce the workforce on each of the shifts.

The 'Black Saturday' bushfires in Victoria destroyed or partially damaged sawmills in Marysville, Narbethong, Toolangi, Murrindindi, Yarram and Drouin with considerable resource loss across the state. Hence this study began operating in an environment of even more limited opportunities and the above issues were often part of the discussion process.

The meetings captured information from women working and participating in the industry and also acted as an avenue to promote and ensure the participants had access to information on national qualifications, pathways, skill development and current issues facing the industry.

ForestWorks provided written materials and promotional information so the women were comfortable in accessing the website for the latest information. Discussions ranged around the advantages of training that was formally recognised and which provided a formal means by which the women could have existing competencies assessed and recorded. This discussion identified both the value of workplace learning but also its limitations if the learning was unable to be formally assessed.

Dartmoor Operations closed in September 2008 with 130 workers being affected - 12 per cent of these were women.

## **FLEXIBILITY IN ROLE DECIDES CAREER PATH**

This research participant started working in a sawmill in Tasmania in 1995, in the Drymill. Her first job was stacking timber, tallying boards and wrapping and strapping packs of timber. After she completed her three month probation, she was trained on the trim saws.

After six months this participant was promoted to full time and trained to be a grader. When she first started it was clear that being a woman was not an issue and she became a part of her work group very quickly. At the time, her team leader, the trainer/assessor and seven other co-workers in the dry mill were female. After two years working in the role, she became deputy team leader of the team she was working with.

Due to the conflicts of parenting and inflexibility of hours working in a large production centre which had set start and finish times – she changed roles to site cleaner. This role afforded her the ability to change her hours around her family's needs.

In 2001, out of curiosity and during her breaks, she helped out the production clerk. When the relief production clerk position became available she successfully applied for the role. In this position she was given workplace training to use the inventory computer system as well as training to be the relief receptionist.

In 2004, she became the full time production clerk and was responsible for entering of pack and rack data onto the system, reporting production statistics to managers, ensured the KPIs matched against the running budget and was also the stocktake co-ordinator. Management were very supportive and allowed her flexible working hours and times to suit her family's needs.

In 2008, she was offered the relief Production Planner position as part of her career path and began training. The role of Production Planner is an important one as it is the link between Sales and the Production site. The Production Planner schedules all of the production through the entire mill and is responsible for ensuring that the demands of customers are met.

She had always been supported in all her roles with training and flexibility. While she had a number of roles in the sawmill, her choices for a career path were determined more by her family's needs rather than the lack of opportunities within the workplace.

Although she no longer works in the saw mill, she still works in a challenging and exciting role within the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry.

# ATTACHMENT A: MEETING FRAMEWORK

## MEETING PLAN/RUNNING NOTES

1. Why is the project happening?
  - It is an information collection project.
  - We need to find out from women in the industry what barriers there are and what is positive about being in the industry
  - How can we improve on the 13% participation figure (the national average is 46%)
  - From this information we will then seek further support to work out ways of encouraging women into this industry
  - Our role (ForestWorks, union and TCA) is to support women in the industry to stay in the industry AND be able to access different jobs AND support women to participate in and get access to training and/or, having skills recognised
  
2. What benefit from the project will you get – what will this session offer to you?
  - Time to find out from each other information
  - Time to find out about possible training
  - Time to find out about the range of jobs that your skills can travel across the industry being from -
    - Forest growing and management
    - Harvesting and haulage
    - Sawmilling and processing
    - Timber product manufacturing (predominately building and packaging products)
    - Wood panel / board production
    - Pulp and paper manufacturing
    - Timber merchandising
  
3. What advice can you give to us:
  - Barriers
  - Strategies
  - Suggestions
  
4. What happens next, for example with:
  - Timber Communities Australia
  - RTO
  - Union
  - Other women
  - What do the women participants want to see happen?

# ATTACHMENT B: PARTICIPANT SURVEY

## WOMEN IN FORESTRY PROJECT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Note: Your contact details will be separated from the information you provide. Your contact details will only be available to the project officer IF you agree that they can contact you for additional information from that you have supplied.

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<b>Name</b>		
<b>Workplace</b>		
<b>Contact details (if you are happy to be recontacted by the project officer)</b>		
<b>Current position in the industry</b>		
<b>Previous positions in the industry/in this workplace</b>	<b>In the Industry</b>	<b>In this workplace</b>
<b>Do you have a qualification (post school)</b>		
<b>Have you participated in workplace training in the last 2 years?</b>	<b>If Yes - please list</b>	<b>Did you receive a certificate/statement of attainment?</b>
<b>Do you have a career pathway in your workplace – are there other jobs you want to do and can you go for them?</b>	<b>If yes, list what you need to do to move to another job</b>	<b>If no, list why you will not be able to go for the job you want to?</b>

Please describe what works best for you in this workplace?

Would you recommend to another woman to get a job here and if so, what are the things you would be positive about? Or, if not, list why not.

# ATTACHMENT C: WIMDOI SUMMARY

The Women In Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) Conference was established in 1993 coordinated through the ACTU Women's Committee to bring together and raise awareness of women working in male dominated industries and provide an avenue for these women to share experiences and knowledge and address particular issues that affect them.

National WIMDOI Conferences have been conducted on a biennial basis since that time (2007 Conference delayed due to Divisional restructuring) and is widely recognised as an important and unique affirmative action initiative for woman workers in male dominated occupations and industries in Australia.

The CFMEU Forestry & Furnishing Products Division (FFPD) in conjunction with the WIMDOI Organising Committee seized the initiative to facilitate and promote WIMDOI in 2001, which was a huge success. Since that time the CFMEU FFPD has continued to recognise the importance of WIMDOI.

Women have been an important part of the trade union movement since inception in Australia with 40 per cent of unionised workers being women. It is imperative to ensure that women continue to be members and activists in their union.

The benefits derived from WIMDOI are numerous however the following represents a snapshot of such benefits:

- Unions utilise the forum to educate and inform women members on various issues such as OHS, Industrial matters and Superannuation etc
- Unions utilise the forum to be informed and active on issues and barriers faced by women members
- Unions can tap into a national union women's network
- Renewed emphasis on the need for workers and particularly women workers to be members and active participants in their unions
- Recruitment, retention and mapping in the workplace initiatives can be developed
- Empowered and enlightened activists evolve.

# ATTACHMENT D: TIMBER COMMUNITIES AUSTRALIA

Timber Communities Australia (TCA) is an Australian grassroots organisation representing communities that depend upon our sustainable timber industry and the long term management of natural resources for social, economic and environmental benefits.

First established in 1986 as the Forest Protection Society (FPS) and renamed TCA in 1999. TCA has for more than 20 years worked in Australia's timber communities to truly understand how forest policy and management issues impact upon them and to assist them to advocate concerns about those impacts with Governments at the local State and Federal level and with forest and timber industry participants.

TCA is not an industry association. TCA is a Not for Profit, Non Government Association. The promotion, protection and the advocacy of rural and regional communities that our members live and work in are our major focus.

TCA's advocacy and involvement in rural and regional communities at a grassroots level often leads to it advocating on behalf of the community with all levels of Government and various industry bodies.

In the pro-active sense in these formats TCA is ensuring that the needs of communities and the social and economic considerations of policy and planning initiatives are being considered in the formative stages in the development of such policy and plans both in the industry and Government sectors.

TCA also conducts a "Women in Timber" project which seeks to involve and empower women from timber communities to become confident and active in their support of the timber industry that is involved in their communities.

Meeting to share experiences, exchanging views, develop knowledge of new technologies, legislation and general issues reduces isolation and increases awareness of their own contribution and self worth within what is a male dominated industry.