

MEDIA RELEASE

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Trial of problematic timber species proves promising

The future looks promising for the marketability of a native timber species generally regarded as unsuitable for the sawlog and residual log market.

VicForests commenced trials in East Gippsland in December 2005 to research and develop the attributes and commercial viability of Red Bloodwood (*Corymbria gummifera*), a naturally durable hardwood species commonly found east of Cann River. The trial intent is to better understand the timber attributes of the species and with this knowledge attempt to attract potential buyers.

"The results of this trial are such that we now have hope that Bloodwood can be marketed and enjoyed by consumers in the near future," Mr Theobald said.

"There is uniqueness about this species; the variety of the grain and diversity of colours in the timber lends itself to high end value adding such as furniture manufacture.

"It's likely that the boards showing more natural features will win a place in the decking market due to their strength and natural durability," he said.

Twenty logs with a spread of large (100cm) and small (30cm) diameters were locally tested to help understand whether size makes a difference in final recovery of the timber product.

VicForests contracted Mekkens Sawmill, Newmerreilla to saw the logs into boards in December 2005. Recovery of green boards from logs sawn was approximately 42%.

Once cut, the boards were left to air dry for eight months. Sample boards were measured frequently for moisture content and shrinkage. After 8 months the boards had an air-dried moisture content of between 18% and 24%, showed very acceptable shrinkage and no significant cell collapse.

The wide boards (110mm X 30mm) were then kiln dried to a moisture content suitable for furniture making (10% to 12%).

Staff at Mekkens Mill visually graded the kiln dried boards into three categories; select (furniture quality), decking/flooring quality, and unmerchantable.

The 350 linear metres of select or highest quality boards were recently delivered to Mr Andrew Capes, a furniture maker based at Forestech, Kallimna, who will spend the coming months making a range of fine furniture that will enable VicForests to showcase the uniqueness of the timber.

The 1,500 linear meters of decking quality boards are being dressed and pencil edged and will be sold over the coming months.

The future of the unmerchantable boards (1,280 linear metres) is yet to be established though it is likely they will be resawn to recover short lengths (<1m) of high quality material.

Mr Theobald said: "We have found that that regrowth logs (45mm to 60mm diameter) present the greatest opportunity for further development."

"We are extremely happy with achieving > 25% final recovery of decking or better boards.

"Further research and development of the kiln dried boards will seek to understand how the timber behaves with a variety of glues and finishes (oils, lacquers, paint, and varnishes) as well as its ability to be nailed and hold nails," he said. The trial concludes in November 2006.

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