

## WPMA Members' Update – December 2020

Dear WPMA Members,

As the year draws to a close, I would like to give you an update on priority issues for WPMA over December 2020:

- 1. COVID-19 Public Health Response Act (2020).** Under pandemic lockdown conditions most of NZ's wood processing and manufacturing sector was deemed non-essential and completely shut down. WPMA (working with the NZ Forest and Wood Sector Forum) has written and submitted revision clauses to The Act that allow for automatic recognition of the WorkSafe-approved safety protocols that the industry now has in place. If government adopts the new clauses (which allow for a risk-based approach to safety in industrial operations under elevated pandemic response levels) this means that the wood industry will be able to avoid wholesale shutdown in future. The revision text has been delivered to Hon. Stuart Nash as Minister of Forestry and of Regional Economic Development with the request that he champion this at the next point when the Act is scheduled for review and revision. This will be in March 2021.
- 2. Building for Climate Change.** MBIE has started the work programme to deliver major changes to the NZ Building Code ensuring carbon emissions from the NZ construction industry are considerably reduced. Much greater use of wood is an obvious way to lower NZ's carbon emissions in the construction sector and WPMA is in the frontline, working with MBIE, to shape early thinking on this. At present, we are alongside the regulator analysing international best-practices in life-cycle analysis of construction materials and ensuring that NZ is aligned with major trading partners on approaches to this. WPMA has already put members in an advantageous position here with the production of the WPMA Timber Design Guides, Environmental Product Declarations, and provision of international sustainability certification systems. Increased environmental and social scrutiny by government procurers means that it is not just construction products that can gain the "climate-change advantage", but all wood-based products such as paper, packaging and bioenergy.
- 3. NZ / Australian Standards.** AS/NZS 1720.1 is nearing publication. The properties of glulam and K2 factor are still in contention. WPMA has received a discussion paper from the Chair of the Standards Development Committee and Jane has set up two zoom meetings for members to discuss and respond. H5 treatment for glulam in AS/NZS 1604 and NZS 3640: WPMA has rescinded its "No" vote with respect to H5 glulam. We are advised the way to get this changed in both Standards is an application to approve a specific H5 formulation for glulam backed by research and expert opinion rather than via submission to the committee during public comment stage. BRANZ has indicated Building Levy research funding may be available. From a sustainability perspective, WPMA representatives have also been hard at work on the revision of AS/NZS 4708 (Sustainable Forest Management) which sets expectations on forest managers to deliver measurable social and environmental benefits to NZ Inc.
- 4. WorkSafe.** Despite strong submissions from the wood sector WorkSafe has drastically reduced the Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) for copper, chromium IV and arsenic, and the BEI for arsenic. WorkSafe has also reduced the WES for formaldehyde and is proposing a

further reduction in one year. WPMA is working with its legal advisors to see what options we have available to challenge WorkSafe standard-setting processes.

5. **Policy Options to Increase the Competitiveness of NZ Wood Processing and Manufacturing.** WPMA will complete a report this month looking at how other countries are supporting growth of their wood manufacturing sectors. The aim is to present this review of intervention options to ministers at the first opportunity in the new year. In this way, WPMA can give impetus and policy direction to the work that is being carried out by the government to assist recovery and growth in the value-add part of the supply chain.

Please note that over the Christmas and New Year period the WPMA Executive Office will close on 23rd December 2020 and reopen on 11th January 2021.

On behalf of the WPMA Chair, Board and the Executive Office I would like to wish all members a safe and happy summer holiday and we look forward to working with you all again in 2021.

Merry Christmas,

Jon

