

**MEMBERS'**  
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**Welcome**

This members' news bulletin is designed to keep you, as a member of the ATIF up-to-date with activities being directed by the ATIF Board. The bulletin summaries the major areas of effort since the last *Members' Bulletin* in December 2008.

**Next Board meeting and Annual General Meeting**

The next ATIF Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 23 April in Sydney. The meeting will be followed by a members' lunch and the 2009 Annual General Meeting. Further details will follow shortly.

**Illegal logging policy update**

The current state-of-play with the development of the Federal Government's illegal logging policy is unclear. Some members will have seen recent media reports pointing to 'tensions' between Government agencies as to the direction of the policy and mechanism for its implementation.

The ATIF has been continuing to work with Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) officials on the development of policy and related matters, including assisting with the planning of an official's visits to PNG in January and preparing a further submission on projects that should be undertaken to assist the Government's policy process.

In addition, ATIF has discussed the status of the policy with the chief executives of NAFI and A3P. Currently a further meeting between DAFF and the ATIF Illegal Logging Subcommittee is being arranged. The purpose of this meeting will be to allow ATIF to get an update on where the Government is at and to reinforce to officials issues important to timber importing companies.



## **Communications with members**

Some member companies not represented on the Board have expressed a desire to be kept better informed about ATIF activities. Subject to Board approval, it is proposed to commence more regular communications with members in an enews format. This will supplement, but not replace the *Members' Bulletin*.

## **Working relationship with Wood Council of Australia**

Recently Norm Long, Bob Frost and John Halkett attended a meeting with the recently established Wood Council of Australia (WCA). The WCA was represented by Chairman John Simon and Andrew Dunn. The meeting was held to discuss working liaison between the ATIF and WCA, notably the capacity for the WCA to support ATIF with technical and project funding.

The ATIF has been invited to attend a meeting of the WCA in Melbourne on 24 March. The meeting will include a presentation from Forest and Wood Products Australia on criteria for research and development proposals; funding of other industry services and timber standards development processes.

## **Concerns about marketing tactics**

ATIF has flagged concerns about some recent incidents where the legal and environmental credentials of imported timber products have been denigrated by others in the industry. Norm Long indicated that he believes comments were isolated. Nonetheless he expressed his dismay at the tone of some marketing-related remarks.

“Importers whole-heartedly support domestic producers, but the simple fact is that the majority of timber-based product lines imported are either not produced here or not available in the species, quantities and quality required by Australian consumers.”

“While I appreciate that market conditions are extremely challenging at the present time, making derisory and inaccurate comments about imported products, or any other segment of the industry for that matter, is potentially damaging to the standing of the overall industry in building materials markets.”

John Halkett said importers had also brought the matter to his attention and he has discussed the issue with the chief executives of NAFI and A3P. “While these industry associations by-and-large represent the interests of domestic forest growers and timber processors, both CEO’s assured me that expressing anti-importer sentiments was not condoned. They also indicated that forest-based industries had enough issues to deal with collectively and generating tensions between industry sectors or companies was not sensible in any shape or form.”

## **Other news**

A meeting was held with the Canadian High Commission to further discuss Western Red Cedar marketing initiatives. The Western Red Cedar Export Association will be the lead organisation for this project. ATIF will provide some assistance. Further details will follow.

A meeting with representatives of the American Hardwood Export Council took place to explore expanded marketing opportunities for American hardwood products in Australia.

Letters of invitation to join the ATIF have been posted to a range of companies suggested by Board members or identified from other sources. Follow-up correspondence with these companies is planned.

*This newsletter has been prepared by ATIF Technical Manager John Halkett*