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For immediate release

A Centre to revolutionise wood processing

The Minister for State and Regional Development, John Brumby, today opened the Australian Centre for Advanced Wood Processing at Creswick.

“This Centre has the potential to revolutionise wood processing in this country” said Mr Brumby. “It brings together innovation and regional development, and will make a strong contribution to new technologies with widespread application for developing exciting new wood and forest-related products.”

The Centre is set up to research and develop new wood processing technologies. The Centre is operated by the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Wood Innovations, a partnership of Australian research institutions and companies. It was built with financial assistance from the Victorian Government under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, and equipped with the assistance of the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC) and The University of Melbourne,

“Microwave modification has the potential to radically cut down the drying time of the timber, improve timber preservation efficiency, and provide furniture manufacturers with quality bent wood components,” said Mr Brumby.

CRC scientists use microwaves to rapidly heat wood and increase its permeability so that it can be processed more efficiently and cost-effectively. A number of industry-driven research projects will be pursued at the Centre, with the collaboration of CRC industry partners.

The Centre houses three 100 kilowatt microwave generators, one 60 kW microwave generator, two 30 kW microwave generators, and research laboratories for timber preservation techniques and generation of bio-fuels and resins derived from wood and agricultural wastes.

The equipment and laboratories are presently being commissioned, and the Centre is expected to be operational early in 2006. The Centre facilities will be available to the timber industry for contract research projects.

Mr Thorry Gunnersen, Chairman of the CRC Board and Chair of the FWPRDC, said he welcomed the availability of the Centre facilities to the timber industry as an opportunity for timber processors to have “ground floor” access to some exciting new technologies.

“The CRC technologies make more of our available timber resource available for high value applications,” he said. “I encourage local timber processors to investigate how these technologies might be used in their businesses.”
“This project will also enable the use of local blue gum resource from plantations for solid wood processing rather than wood chips, facilitating new value-added industries while at the same time helping to conserve supplies of native timber,” said Mr Brumby.

“Support for the Centre for Advanced Wood Processing builds on the Government’s commitment to supporting projects aimed at stimulating growth in Victoria’s timber communities,” he said.

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