

Timber processing shifts up a gear



• New computer controls have been installed at the Bright Street Mill to enable log scanning, better positioning and the selection of the most effective cutting patterns.



• The high volume of structural timber being produced at Bright Street is being distributed through a number of networks.



• Willmott Forests is working to install a new treatment facility on the existing drip-pad at Sandy Lane which will increase capacity of production by about 300%.

WITH the Bombala district communities being abuzz with news of land being purchased for the new Timberrams Group softwood development, now is the perfect time to consider the lightning progress of some of our current mill operations.

A little over a year ago Willmott Forests ventured into timber processing with its purchase of both the Sandy Lane and Bright Street facilities. After what has been both a challenging and rewarding twelve months, the company is pleased with the progress made at both of the sites in the processing of locally grown sawlogs.

Throughout the year Willmott Forests has sought to develop better operational efficiencies across the two sites with significant upgrades undertaken to increase their processing capability.

Improvements to the Bright Street Sawmill

WILLMOTT Forests has embarked on a comprehensive program of investment that will ensure that the Bright Street mill is capable of adding significant value to the timber that it processes. The key areas of spending have been in:

• Set works - New computer controls have been installed at the log in-feed stage to enable log scanning, better positioning and the

selection of the most effective cutting patterns. The new controls have been operational since May and have improved both yield and productivity.

• Stress grader - Willmott Forests has installed a stress-grade machine that determines the strength of the sawn timber being processed. Commissioned in July, the machine enables the company to produce MGP10, a similar grade to F5 and MGP12, a similar grade to F7 framing timber, used for a variety of construction purposes.

• Kiln - A great deal of work has been done to improve the insulation of the kiln at Bright Street. This upgrade has resulted in a reduction in noise levels and emissions. Within the next month the company is scheduled for further testing, in conjunction with the equipment supplier to further refine the kiln's operation. Conversion of the kiln from LPG to natural gas is also

expected to take place soon.

These upgrades to the Bright Street facility are designed to improve efficiency and produce a greater proportion of higher value products. From mid August Bright Street will be operating at full capacity, with 25 employees.

Operational Efficiency at Sandy Lane

THE former Prime Pine business has continued to produce quality timber into the New South Wales and ACT markets.

Willmott Forests is currently the leading supplier of CCA-treated timber for landscaping and fencing products into both of these markets and plans to further expand its distribution into Victoria.

A number of major developments are planned for Sandy Lane in the year ahead that target the current operational limitations:

• New CCA treatment facility - The existing treatment cylinder at

Sandy Lane is operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to ensure that it keeps up with demand.

Willmott Forests is working with Osmore, Australia's leading chemical supplier, to install a new treatment facility on the existing drip-pad. The new cylinder will increase capacity of production by about 300% and it is hoped that the new treatment facility will be operational by the second half of 2005.

• Additional kiln - In 2002 a new wood-fired boiler and kiln were installed at Sandy Lane. The company plans to construct a second kiln at the site designed to enhance the current drying capacity.

• Residue - Since acquiring both the processing facilities Willmott Forests has succeeded in reducing the residue stockpile at both sites. It is hoped that the entire stockpile near the back of Sandy Lane will be removed by 2005. The majority of the residue is

currently being sold as boiler fuel, for which there is a great demand.

One of the highest-value residue products to come out of the mills is mulch. Willmott Forests sells this directly to landscape supply outlets. Throughout the course of the year the company will look to expand its range of high-value residue products.

Looking to the Future

IN 2004-05 Willmott Forests expects log input to increase by up to 40%. This will result in over 140,000 tonnes of timber being processed across the two sites.

By mid 2005, Willmott Forests will begin harvesting some of its own plantations. These logs will be directed through both of the Bombala facilities adding to the current log supply from Forests NSW, formally State Forests of NSW.

• Employment - Willmott Forests' Timber Processing Division has grown by 32 employees

over the past year. With the reopening of the Bright Street facility and smooth transition in ownership of the Sandy Lane site, the division currently employs 97 people locally. This number expected to increase as the region's timber industry continues to expand.

• Sales growth - The high volume of structural timber being produced at Bright Street is being distributed through a number of networks. An exciting new development is the recently agreed supply relationship with Pine Solutions, the largest timber distributor in Australia. All finished goods will be sold to Pine Solutions or to the existing landscape and fencing customers.

Specialised Management Team

THE Timber Processing Division boasts a highly qualified and experienced management team.

James Hochroth, Senior Executive and Martin Priest, General Manager,

head up the team and have over 25 years combined experience in forest products. Sam Baker will continue his association with the local timber processing facilities as a consultant.

Shannon Gulliford and Glen Hampshire are responsible for site management of the Sandy Lane and Bright Street mills respectively, whilst Tracey Hampshire has been appointed Logistics Manager for the division.

The company will continue to look for a replacement for the long-serving Bernie Hurley, who recently retired from his position as the manager of engineering and capital projects.

Having done the hard yards, Willmott Forests is moving ahead with confidence as it continues to build and grow its timber processing capability in Bombala.



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