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Willmott invests \$1.7 million

WILLMOTT Forests has this week announced imminent completion of a \$1.7 million capital investment package at one of its Bombala sawmills.

Central to this package is a new \$700,000 state-of-the-art timber drying kiln commissioned at the Sandy Lane mill site this month.

The new and the existing kiln will be supplemented by an advanced \$500,000 automated timber handling system that is to be finished and commissioned soon.

The investment was welcomed by Bombala mayor Cr Bob Stewart, who described Willmott Forest's commitment as helping future economic growth in the shire.

Willmott Forests said that, beyond this latest announcement, planning was well underway for continuing investment in plant and infrastructure at Bombala during the 2006-07 financial year.

Senior Executive, Timber Processing,

John Rutledge, says the major project this year was the installation of the mill's second timber drying kiln "which will increase current capacity by about 50 per cent."

"The kiln project will produce a higher-value end product. It cost about \$700,000 and was commissioned this month," he says.

Mr Rutledge says current and planned capital expenditure demonstrated Willmott Forests' commitment to grow the Bombala mill's capacity.

"As far as possible, local and regional companies and labour are being used for project works - including machinery fabrication, electrical, plumbing and earth works," he says.

"We are a leading employer of local labour both on a contract and employee basis and we want to stay that way."

Another project for completion at Willmott Forests Bombala mill includes an automated timber stacking system to

improve through-put for the two kilns and the steamers.

"Long length timbers are currently individually manually stacked and placed on 'fillets' which separate the wood to assist even drying," he says.

"The new automated process - which is costing about \$500,000 - will automatically arrange boards into layers separated by the fillets. The machine will then de-fillet the packs on their return from the kiln.

"Machinery for this process will be housed in a steel-framed and clad building on a reinforced concrete foundation and we expect to commission this by the end of July."

Mr Rutledge says other completed projects at Bombala included yard improvements, machinery upgrades and installation of a ring water main to boost on-site fire fighting capacity.



•Local Willmott Forest boiler operator, Bert Peck with the new \$700,000 state-of-the-art timber drying kiln that has been commissioned at the Sandy Lane mill site this month. The new and the existing kiln will be supplemented by an advanced \$500,000 automated timber handling system.

New \$700,000 kiln

WHEN Willmott Forests' new \$700,000 state-of-the-art timber drying kiln is declared operational this month, Bert Peck is one of the men who will run it.

Boiler operator, Bert Peck, operating the existing kiln right next to the newcomer at Willmott Forests' Sandy Lane plant, is looking forward to a brave new world of productivity.

After 25 years in the hardwood industry, he's also enjoying working with pine at Willmott Forests' local mill.

"The present kiln can process 80 cubic metres of timber in 24 hours," Bert says.

"We do mixed bags: 200x75s, 200x100s, 150x75s, 200x50s and so on. The new kiln will increase our output by about 50%."

The shiny new aluminium-framed and clad kiln, built on a reinforced concrete base, has been commissioned and is currently being trialled before the all-clear is given for production to begin.

Willmott Forests says the new kiln will produce a higher-value end product.