



## Case Study 3: Standards for Timber Building Systems

### Engineered Wood Products Innovation Working Group

#### Unpacking Complexity and Linking to the Supply Chain

The Engineered Wood Products Innovation Working Group was established and assisted by the ForestWorks Innovation Skills Program (ISP). Funding and a series of facilitated workshops were provided to teach innovative thinking techniques and to work collectively on an industry issue.

The group identified that the major challenge facing their sector, within their influence, was related to product standards. Their evidence strongly suggested that relevant Australian Standards are being regularly ignored by commercial buyers, in particular for structural plywood.

While standards should provide a competitive advantage, they have become a cost borne by domestic producers and scrupulous importers. They are being ignored by others, to the detriment of public safety and compliant producers.

The group commenced meeting under the auspices of Engineered Wood Products Association of Australasia (EWPAA) in September 2014 with all of Australia's major wood panel producers in attendance. It was quickly determined that product standards were well understood by manufacturers, but not by specifiers and buyers, including building industry professionals.

From this first meeting, the group allocated tasks among the members, gathering information on applicable standards and basic evidence of standards compliance.



## **The group worked to map the downstream supply chain**

Mapping the downstream supply chain, in a simple manner, with expert involvement from the ForestWorks ISP, resulted in some important sharing and understandings. Possibly overdue from a sector-wide viewpoint, the supply chain map allowed businesses to share generic information about how the building supply chain makes procurement decisions.

The group was able to determine the major points in the supply chain where decisions were being made leading to procurement of non-complying material. It became clear to the group that most non-compliance was based on lack of correct information and it determined to address that issue specifically.

The group undertook a process of consultation within the sector and realised that stakeholders of the supply chain could not be influenced until the sector was able to communicate a clear message regarding standards, compliance, and effects of non-compliance.

With the support of ForestWorks, the group developed and tested key information about the obligations for their products under the standards and how these can be met. . The work only progressed to the next stage of development, once the major points in the supply chain were adequately consulted with this information.

The next group activity involved decisions on how to best communicate the existence, importance and compulsory nature of product standards.

As a group, only limited attention has been paid to date on discussion with and feedback from the downstream sector, which includes architects, designers, commercial builders and a variety of contractors. Such consultations are considered a necessary element of communicating more widely to encourage improved compliance. This is the next logical step for this Innovation Working Group.

## **Where to from here?**

In order to develop and maintain shared ownership, the group is now actively considering the establishment of non-proprietary, web-based, delivery of the information materials it has been developing.

The group has also progressed to consider how they can encourage greater compliance monitoring by regulators and relevant authorities.

The group is operating with increasingly less formal support and meets largely by phone as and when required. ForestWorks believes that the group will continue to work on related issues of importance to the sector, thanks to the skills developed in collaboration, to address issues of mutual concern, in an open and inclusive manner.