

Beam me up: jobs, sustainable housing branch out from DAF timber research

Vision for cypress to replace steel in modular house construction

RESEARCH by Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to develop a new sustainable timber product has delivered additional jobs and a boost to a Queensland construction company.

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner said the research by DAF's forest product innovation team had proven to be a 'win-win' good news story for Cooroy-based Eco Cottages.

"An innovative collaboration between DAF and Eco Cottages, which began in 2017, has resulted in high-quality cypress glue-laminated beams which have helped deliver



1/ Sustainable research... DAF forest product innovation team leader Bill Leggate, Eco Cottages director Greg Phipps and DAF project manager Dr Robbie McGavin at an Eco Cottage modular home under construction.

2/ Mark Furner... an innovative collaboration.



cheaper, more sustainable housing and jobs for Eco Cottages," Mr Furner said.

Eco Cottages is using

the cypress glue-laminated beams in the construction of its sustainable, pre-fabricated modular homes.

"The beams not only offer a cost effective and more environmentally sustainable alternative to traditional construction options such as steel, they have proven that jobs can grow on trees," Mr Furner said.

"Since the collaboration began, Eco Cottages has employed an extra eight full-time employees including five apprentices, all of whom are locals, with the manufacture of the cypress beams generating four full time positions, two of whom are apprentices.

"This totally Queensland-focused effort involves cypress timber harvested from the Barakula state forest, Hurford Hardwood which operates a cypress sawmill at Chinchilla, Eco Cottages and DAF"

Eco Cottages director Greg Phipps said the partnership with DAF had made possible the production of low-cost, environmentally friendly cypress glue-laminated beams.

"Eco Cottages has a strong sustainability ethos and working with DAF has allowed us to realise our vision to replace steel and other similar products used in modular house construction with a product made from a sustainable and renewable natural resource," Mr Phipps said.

"The result has been so good that we had no hesitation in using more than 200 of the beams in the construction of our new 2000 sq m factory at Cooroy.

"Eco Cottages is the only manufacturer of cypress glulam in Queensland and our new factory has allowed us to increase manufacturing capacity to support our modular building construction program."

Mr Furner said several characteristics made Queensland cypress Eco Cottage's building material of choice.

"Queensland cypress is renowned for its sustainability, natural durability and low environmental impact making it a perfect choice for the research," he said.

"DAF researchers established timber properties, identified suitable adhesive systems and manufacturing protocols and performance tested the final engineered-wood beams."

He said DAF had enthusiastically supported this worthwhile venture and continued to provide guidance and support to the initiative as well as extensive product and process testing.