

Downstream Processing & Value-Adding

Adding Value to a Valuable Resource

When logs are harvested from a forest coupe, they are graded according to their potential end-use, based on their size and quality.

Best-Quality Logs

The best-quality eucalypt logs from Tasmania's forests go either to sliced veneer mills or sawmills. Sliced veneer mills produce very thin (less than 1mm), high-value veneers used in furniture and wall panelling. Sawmills produce a range of timber grades, ranging from 'appearance grade', such as skirting boards, window and door frames, stair treads and flooring) to 'construction grade' for house framing, fencing and pallets. Skilled sawmillers maximise the yield and minimise waste.

Lower-Grade Logs

Smaller-diameter or lower-grade logs may be processed in a peeler mill, where a sharp blade peels logs into thin (1.5–3mm) sheets of veneer that can be used to make structural plywood. Special species timbers like Huon pine, myrtle, blackwood and sassafras can also be sliced, sawn or peeled to provide very valuable timber and veneers for furniture, wall panels, cabinetry and craft. These timbers are cherished for their uniqueness and special appearance.

Pulp Wood

Lower-grade logs from native forests or smaller logs from plantations are the raw material for paper-making. After pulpwood logs are chipped, mechanical and chemical processes turn them into paper pulp.



Photo: Richard Bennett



Downstream Processing

The base value of the logs that come from harvesting operations can be multiplied many times over, through the various stages of downstream processing. For example, a log that may be worth as little as \$20 per tonne in the forest can produce products worth more than ten times this amount. This value-adding can happen anywhere in the world – but it's obviously of most benefit to the people who own the forests if downstream processing and employment occurs close to home, in their own community.