

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister Opens Australia's Flooring Line in Kempsey

Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, today unveiled new facilities and opened a new flooring line at Australian Solar Timbers (AST) Kempsey mill. The ceremony was attended by a distinguished guest list including Rob Oakeshott, Member for Lyne, and Alan Hansard, CEO of the National Association of Forest Industries amongst others.

The flooring line was partly funded by grants competitively tendered through a program run by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to promote innovative investment. AST uniquely tendered three projects and was successful in each case resulting in a total infrastructure investment of \$3.5 million during the past year.

The line involves machinery from Denmark, Sweden and Canada and is significantly the most advanced operating in Australia. In what is truly an international project AST sent staff to Germany for research and then employees to Europe and North America for training. Installation involved visits from each supplier country plus New Zealand.

Douglas Head, AST Director, said "we are all very proud of this achievement as the equipment is so sophisticated it is more akin to a hospital CAT scanner than a traditional sawmill, our employees had to step up to new levels of training and management of a complex project and excelled in the process."

AST General Manager, Darren Dowling, commented "This line moves us into a new level of quality control and environmental responsibility whilst upgrading industrial safety. AST can now end match to a quality level unmatched in Australia in solid wood floors. Our grading is totally reliable as it is managed by computers and we improve our recovery by producing a unique short flooring product for the designer market, called 'Panache'. The line monitors board shape and moisture content individually, consequently making our floors the most reliable and easiest to lay. This is the quality benchmark of the future for flooring."

For further information

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