

Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast

RDA BOARD VISITS LOCAL MILL VALUE ADDING FOR ASIA MARKETS

Members of the Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast (RDALC) Board toured the N.F. McDonnell & Sons innovative Suttontown Road timber mill last week to learn how a local company can succeed on a very competitive world market for timber products.

Managing Director, Ian McDonnell and General Manager, Craig Nisbett outlined the origins of the company 72 years ago when it started as a timber harvesting and hauling business.

Since then, the current directors have concentrated on timber milling at the Suttontown site with a state of the art "Hew Saw R250" being installed a couple of years ago, together with a bank of Stenner Bandsaws for resawing. Much of the process is computer controlled, allowing high throughput and strict quality control.

The \$12 million mill expansion was partly financed by \$4.2m from the State Government's "South East Forestry Partnerships Program", following the sale of the local forest rotations to One Forty One Plantations.

This new technology allows the company to make best use of small diameter logs, which are generally not favoured by the larger players in the industry.

It also allows them to be very flexible in their output, meeting the size and quality needs of various niche markets both in Australia and overseas. In fact a large portion of their output now goes direct to eight Asian countries, with China being their biggest customer.

In fact the company now employs over 100 local people, and helps sustain many more jobs in the timber harvesting and transport industries.

Further expansion of the business is planned with another major project on the drawing board. According to Ian McDonnell "We're living proof that Australian manufacturers can compete on world markets, provided we're innovative and customer focused."

The RDALC Board aims to visit a key industry site prior to each bi-monthly RDALC Board meeting.

Other industry visits this year have included Mini Jumbuk at Naracoorte, Naracoorte Seeds, Holla-Fresh at Tantanoola and Robarra near Robe, all of which are leaders in their fields.

Ends



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List of RDALC Board Members

Mr Richard Vickery, Chair

Mr Alan Richardson, Deputy Chair

Mr Rob Foggo – Community representative

Ms Ann Aldersey – Community representative

Mr Lew Parsons – Community representative

Mayor Erika Vickery – SELGA representative

Cr Harvey Nolan – SELGA representative

Mayor Richard Sage – SELGA representative



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