

Long-lasting benefits from PTEC discussions on timber engineering

THE Pacific Timber Engineering Conference held in Brisbane three weeks ago is still enjoying the benefits of academia and industry collaboration.

PTEC 2019, organised by the University of Queensland's School of Civil Engineering, and the ARC Future Timber Hub, was designed to showcase the research and application that has gone into promoting engineered timber as a safe and sustainable alternative to steel and concrete.

The overall goal of the organisers was to increase the number of timber buildings in Australia – from tall and mid-rise to domestic structures. To do this, presentations were given by global experts from multiple fields and concerns regarding timber construction, from fire safety to logistics. They showcased the buildability benefits of engineered timber, fire safety of timber buildings, and sustainability benefits of using timber.

One obstacle to increased timber use as a construction



PTEC 2019 closing panel session... Katie Fowden, manager, strategic relations, Hyne Timber, Dave Gover, CEO, EWPA, Adam Jones, structural engineer, WoodSolutions, Dr Tim Smith, director, forestry and biosciences, DAF Queensland, Craig Kay, national product engineer, Tilling, and Professor Jose Torero, University College London

material in Australia its perceived fire risk – both in the eyes of the public and in some of standards set by regulatory authorities. Changing this perception is one of the key goals of the PTEC organisers.

Renowned researcher Professor Jose Torero, one of the top fire experts in the world and head of the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering at University College London, led discussions on fire safety.

His work at the University

of Edinburgh helped show that fires in compartments made of cross-laminated timber can self-extinguish without intervention – results that have been replicated in research at UQ and showcased by a team of fire engineers at the conference.

Industry keynote speakers included Toby Hodsdon from Arup and Anna Charalambous

and Ben Owen from Lendlease. Their talks focused on how timber can offer faster build times and much lighter structures compared to steel and concrete, and the lessons learned from their experiences.

The Lendlease team, who led the design and construction of the Melbourne Forte building and 25 King in Brisbane, Australia's tallest timber office building, talked about the practicalities of their building process and

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also the reasons behind the company's shift into tall timber construction.

The central reason is the buildability benefits, the ease and efficiency by which a building can be built, maximising the safety and quality while minimising costs.

Other key speakers included Professor Frank Lam from the University of British Columbia, Canada, who talked about opportunities and challenges in timber engineering research and Professor Minjuan He from Tongji University, China, who discussed the recent development on timber engineering in China, inclusive of research, codes and construction projects.

China and Canada have both seen their timber industries take up new construction methods and advanced materials in recent years. Certain technologies vary in their availability from country to country, for example, the regulatory requirements, the traditional construction techniques, and material availability.



Conferring at PTEC 19... Associate Professor Dilum Fernando, University of Queensland, architect Dr Kim Baber, lecturer at UQ, and Dr Rob McGavin, DAF Salisbury Research Facility.

"The PTEC organisers see the future of timber engineering as all parties (academia, government and industry) getting together at the same table and having a

cross-disciplinary approach to every aspect in producing technologies that tackle the performance requirements of design, construction and maintenance," ARC Future

Timber Hub manager Kelly Rischmiller said. .

"The importance of this was shown in the closing panel discussion with the theme 'Using Timber in Construction: Benefits, Perception, Constraints'. Representatives from all parties gave their thoughts on what needs to be done and answered some challenging questions from the audience.

"This is where the Future Timber Hub, supported by the Australian Research Council along with interdisciplinary partnership's between the University of Queensland, the state government, Arup, Hyne Timber, Lendlease, the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Scion New Zealand, Griffith University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Canterbury, is leading the way in this research."

Ms Rischmiller said the hub team was made up of product and construction managers, fire safety engineers, architects, and structural engineers. This ensured pursuing research-based strategies and innovative technologies was conducted with a collaboration committed to challenging the barrier of timber construction to boost the timber industry.



1/ On the Engineered Wood Products Association of Australasia stand at PTEC 2019 are Dave Gover, CEO, and Harrison Brooke, manufacturing engineer.

2/ Pat Thornton, principal, Loggo Engineered Wood Systems, Wollongong, NSW, discussed round timber construction with Jussi Bjorman, structural engineer at Metsä Wood, headquartered in Espoo, Finland.



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