

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Southern Wood Council**

#### **Southern Wood Council Forest Products Scholarship**

**A major new Southern Wood Council initiative is set to encourage more young people into a growing industry.**

The Council has set up a Southern Wood Council Forest Products Scholarship at the University of Canterbury School of Forestry this year, specifically for students from Otago and Southland.

The lower South Island forest products industry grant will help a student from the region through their study for a Bachelor of Forest Science or Engineering degree at the School of Forestry, or for a Wood Processing related degree such as Mechanical, Process or Electrical Engineering.

The on-going scholarship, the largest of its type in New Zealand, will support an outstanding student to the tune of \$1500 each year for their final three professional years of study (years 2 to 4), a total value of \$4,500.

The entire forestry industry in Otago and Southland has come together on this, working closely with the School of Forestry.

Southern Wood Council Chairman Grant Dodson said the scholarship is an investment in youth development, and in the future of forestry in Otago and Southland.

“It’s a substantial investment for our industry members, a forward looking move and one we see as a very positive way of fostering training and education in forestry while encouraging young people back to the region. Forestry is one of Otago and Southland’s economic powerhouses, so not only will they have a great opportunity to develop their careers in this environment, they will also be contributing to the local economy.”

“We think this will provide a major incentive for people who have the desire to work in the forest and / or wood processing industry in the region after they graduate. And we also expect it will be a good incentive for school leavers thinking about forestry as a career.”

This innovation has been enthusiastically welcomed by the School; Rien Visser, University of Canterbury Associate Professor at the School of Forestry saying the Southern Wood Council initiative is commendable.

“Obviously it’s a real boost to a young person facing the costs of studying, but it’s not just financially important. It also provides recognition and helps to open doors for career opportunities, and its performance driven so encourages students to put the effort into their studies.

Professor Visser said there are students currently from Otago and Southland who would gain a great deal from the scholarship. He's hoping in the longer term more people from areas rich in forestry, such as Southland, will be encouraged into the School by this incentive.

The scholarship will be ideal for a student to fund research work, and there is also the possibility for the student to work alongside forestry industry businesses and their leaders in Otago and Southland on a research project as they complete their qualification.

The scholarship will be launched to the 2011 year two students as they begin their school year in February, with applications closing in April. The recipient will be notified in May this year. To qualify, scholarship recipients with a strong current family connection to Otago/Southland and an interest in forestry or forestry engineering will have to demonstrate their desire to work in the forest and/or wood processing industry in the region after graduating.

This sponsorship is in addition to the Southern Wood Council sponsoring an annual award for the region's outstanding Modern Apprentice as part of the FITEC Regional Training Awards Programme.

The Southern Wood Council was set up in 2001 to promote, encourage and coordinate the sustainable economic development of the forest products industry in the Otago and Southland regions of New Zealand. It includes all the major forest owners within the region, the larger wood processing and manufacturing companies, the port authorities and each of the three economic development agencies from local councils. SWC member companies own or manage the majority of the larger plantation forests within the region. The Council is one of few truly independent groups of its type that have been set up and currently is one of only two active regional forestry groupings operating in New Zealand.