



## **Media Release**

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### **WOOD INDUSTRY CREATES STRONG COMMUNITIES**

It seems like the Southern Man may be settling down to raise a family and work for the forestry industry.

This trend was revealed in a report commissioned by the Southern Wood Council in conjunction with Dunedin City and Clutha District Councils to look at the contribution of the forest and wood-processing sector to Otago and Southland.

Southern Wood Council chairman Matt Hitchings said an increasing number of families are settling in the Southern district as the forest and wood sector is becoming a stable and long-term employment option.

“More families mean more schools and community services, it means other businesses will be attracted to the area creating other job opportunities. It means improvements to our transport and roading systems. It means prosperity.”

The report shows that the forest and wood processing sector employed nearly 2,500 workers across the Southern region in 2003, accounting for over 2% of the regions employment. This represents an annual average growth rate of 3.6%, which is over three times the regional annual average growth rate in full time employment.

Mr Hitchings said that within the sector Southland showed a 4.7% growth in employment and Otago had experienced a 2.9 increase. By far the majority of workers are employed in sawmills and in the Southern region there are nearly 40 sawmilling operations, including portable mills.

Generally the trend was that younger people were moving to live and work in the region with 60% of those employed in the forestry sector aged 15 to 39 years, compared to 49% of the regional workforce in the same age bracket.

This growth in employment is not restricted to one or two areas but draws from the small rural centers of Waitati, Outram, Lawrence, Kaitangata, Clinton, Owaka, Tapanui Otautau and Tuatapere, in all four of the towns, as well as the regional centers and the cities of Dunedin and Invercargill.

“Forestry and wood processing is truly a core industry driving economic growth in our region,” Mr Hitchings said.

- Further information on the region’s forestry industry and the Southern Wood Council can be found on [www.southernwoodcouncil.co.nz](http://www.southernwoodcouncil.co.nz)

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