

Stewardship framework for the management of end-of-life CCA-treated timber posts

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Background

Treated timber has been used in Australia for approximately 50 years, with the dominant preservative used being a formulation of copper, chromium and arsenic known as CCA.

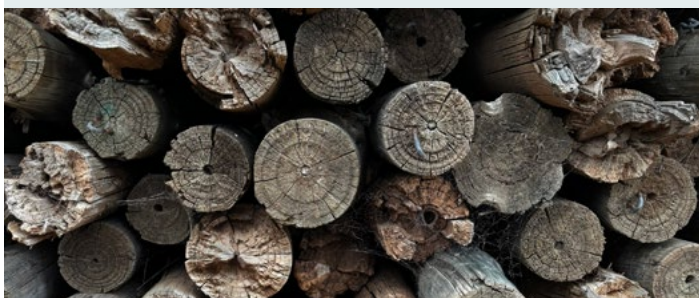
CCA-treated timber is used in the horticulture and agricultural industries, in utilities infrastructure, building and construction timbers, and landscaping. Marine and aquaculture industries also use CCA-treated timber. The timber is typically in-situ for three to four decades depending on its application.

While a small amount of CCA-treated timber is being re-used, licensed landfill is the only legal or official disposal pathway at this time.

Disposing of the timber in this way is costly, a fact which contributes to it being stockpiled; or illegally burnt, resulting in the release of arsenic into the atmosphere and/or leaching of copper, chromium and arsenic into soil and waterways. This presents a significant risk to the environment and human health.

Product Stewardship provides an opportunity to better manage end-of-life CCA-treated timber nationally, supporting industries that make use of the material, while contributing to Australia's efforts towards a circular economy.

An example of a national product stewardship scheme is the [DrumMuster program](#). More information on the role of product stewardship is available from the [Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence](#).



Immediate priorities

In the short term, a modular and expandable stewardship scheme has potential:

- To support vineyard owners and users of CCA-treated timber-treated timber posts with environmentally sound disposal solutions.
- To improve environmental and human health impacts from illegal disposal.
- To optimise feedstock supply and provide confidence for investors in end-of-life technology infrastructure.

RESEARCH SHOWS¹

~32.5 million vineyard posts stockpiled nationally.

AND

~85.6 million posts currently in the ground.

CURRENTLY

80% of that material has been treated with CCA.

WITH

~10,300 – ~26,100 tonnes

of CCA-treated timber posts removed from vineyards annually.

An immediate solution is required to address CCA-treated timber already in use and stockpiled, as well as similar products being brought to market now and in the future.

Additional challenges

- The downturn in the Australian wine industry is resulting in the removal of vineyards.
- While potential end-of-life technology solutions exist, the lack of a structure to guarantee supply of treated timber at a known cost is discouraging investment.
- Tracking and disposal requirements for treated timbers differs between jurisdictions.

The South Australian Government through the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) has provided funding to the South Australian Wine Industry Association (SAWIA) to develop a national stewardship framework for the management of end-of-life CCA-treated timber posts.

In April 2026, SAWIA partnered with the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence to assist in developing a scheme design, which will be delivered in late 2027.

The Project

The project is overseen by a Steering Committee with representation from key sectors, including the wine industry, timber preservers, forestry, waste management and resource recovery.

Central to scheme development is engagement with relevant stakeholders across the supply chain from manufacture and use through to end-of-life. Opportunities to contribute to national scheme design exist through the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and through 'town hall' meetings and forums that will be promoted throughout the project.



Additional resources

Important work is being conducted by the [Timber Circularity Project](#) led by the University of the Sunshine Coast, and investigations on solutions for end-of-life vineyard posts can be found on the [Wine Australia](#) website. Fact sheets on waste management and disposal options can also be found on the [SAWIA website](#).



In collaboration with stakeholders from industry and government, and in partnership with SAWIA, the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence will:

- 1 Consider the scale of the problem.
- 2 Identify potential end-of-life solutions.
- 3 Consider alternative materials.
- 4 Analyse the economic impacts and benefits of potential stewardship scenarios.
- 5 Create a financial model to fund a scheme.
- 6 Assess regulatory and governance models to enable equitable and successful implementation.
- 7 Propose a stewardship scheme design.

More information

Contact Kobie Keenan if you have any queries or would like to be added to the stakeholder mailing list:

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