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Bedford's \$7m upgrade to Mount Gambier timber mill means 'more jobs'

A \$7m upgrade to an SA timber-processing plant means "more jobs and new jobs", a CEO says.



Jessica Dempster

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New state-of-the-art machinery has been unveiled at Bedford Mount Gambier's timber manufacturing mill as part of the organisation's \$7m investment. Picture: Jessica Dempster

Bedford has officially unveiled new state-of-the-art equipment at its timber manufacturing facility in Mount Gambier, as part of the organisation's \$7m investment in the region.

The upgrade, revealed on Thursday, is set to double the plant's production capacity, drive greater efficiencies and broaden the site's timber-processing services.

Bedford CEO Myron Mann addressed the large crowd of employees and community members at Thursday's launch.

"We are thrilled to officially launch major infrastructure upgrades and new facilities at our Mount Gambier site," Mr Mann said.

“Our investment in advanced manufacturing demonstrates our long-term commitment to being a sustainable supply-chain partner in the local community, taking waste timber and adding value and finishing services across a range of products.

“This new equipment means new jobs, more jobs and a wider variety of jobs for people in the community who aren’t always able to thrive in a standard workplace.”



Bedford CEO, Myron Mann, addressed the crowd at the official launch event, joined by Bedford employees. Picture: Jessica Dempster

The investment also facilitated the creation and opening of a new Learning and Experiences Hub, co-located on Bedford’s timber mill site.

The purpose-built Hub offers skill-based learning and experiences for the local community, with its core purpose to build learning and capacity across the region to support people with disability to live the life they choose.

The Hub opened September 2023.

“The hub gives people who might not be ready to join the workforce, a safe and nurturing environment where they can learn and master skills that they need in order to be a good worker,” Mr Mann said.

The Learning and Experiences Hub provide programs and activities to support people with disability, teaching them how to connect to the

community, improve confidence by learning techniques in art and music, and to join in on communal outdoor activities that promote health and wellbeing.

The Hub offers real-life skills that can be applied both at home and in the workforce, such as cooking skills and IT skills.

It has a custom-built teaching kitchen, an art space, IT suite, music room and sensory room, and programs are run both in-house and out in the community to suit individual client needs and interests.

Gordo Lee was one of the Bedford employees who addressed the crowd at the unveiling, sharing his experience with attending the learning hub.

“Every time I come here, I can be myself,” Mr Lee said.

Fellow Bedford employee Coby Dennert, works in the timber manufacturing facility where he operates machinery, packs kindling and is one to the staff’s safety representatives.

“I am happy with the people I work with, they treat me with respect and they give me a pat on the back when I do something good,” Mr Dennert said in his address to the crowd.

“I think all workplaces should be like this.”



Bedford CEO Myron Mann with Bedford employees ‘Gordo’ Lee and Coby Dennert.
Picture: Jessica Dempster

Mr Mann said the investment in Mount Gambier strengthens Bedford's commitment to building capabilities, partnerships and opportunities in the region.

Currently, the Mount Gambier Bedford facility partners with members of the local industry to manufacture timber products such as picket fencing and decking.

The introduction of the new infrastructure, which includes a new filtration system, is set to enhance this partnership while simultaneously adding environmentally sustainable practices into Bedford's manufacturing process.

Mr Mann said the introduction of the new filtration system demonstrates Bedford's commitment to an environmentally sustainable model of manufacturing, "where nothing goes to waste".

Mr Mann said the south east investment came at a good time for the organisation.

"Bedford has been around for almost 80 years, so most of the facilities are a little aged," Mr Mann said

"This investment means key pieces of equipment have been updated and automated so they're easier to operate.

"This means we can hire more people and people already working here are able to do a higher variety of jobs."

Mr Mann said the main goal of Bedford is to offer "unprecedented choice and support for people with disabilities".

"It's always a success when someone moves on (from working with Bedford into a position with another company/organisation)" said Mr Mann.

"It varies but we usually have 3 or so people move on a month.

"But as much as we like to see them moving on, it's great to see so many people happy to stay too."