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Female forest workers pave the way for future generations

International Day of Women and Girls in Science – Thursday 11 February 2021

Forico's Fibre Technology Laboratory workers are leading the way for the next generation of females to pursue a career in environmental and forest sciences, promoting the opportunities and pathways available within the forest industry.

Of the five skilled workers in the Forico Laboratory, three are women – Laboratory Manager, Lorraine Enniss, entry-level Laboratory Technician, Naomi Cleaves, and Pulp and Paper Technician, Tamika Hardy.

Laboratory Technician, Naomi Cleaves, said she enjoyed the different opportunities the lab provided and the variety of work in which she can further her knowledge and learn new skills.

"No two days are the same. Depending on the priorities, the lab may be conducting analysis of chip samples from a shipment or undertaking routine scheduled instrument calibrations," Ms Cleaves said.

"We also recently invested in a Resistograph tool, which is used to measure the density of trees while they are still standing."

"We are very fortunate to have access to such high-tech equipment, allowing us to assist the company's Tree Improvement Team to analyse and short cut the process of breeding for increased basic density in our plantation trees."

"The work conducted in the Fibre Technology Laboratory is unique among forestry companies, providing testing and quality assurance data which ensures customers receive the highest quality product."

All work undertaken at the laboratory, which is National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited, requires rigorous attention to detail, ensuring all testing is correct and verified according to international standards.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science is an opportunity to promote full and equal access to, and participation in, science for women and girls – a topic which Forico recognised as a crucial part in its commitment to growing a culture of knowledge and innovation.

"I am proud of the environment in which I work and the different skills I have gained, but there are still many things in the lab that I will get to experience as time goes on," Ms Cleaves said.

Laboratory Manager, Ms Enniss said “we first saw Naomi working in the Nursery and thought she had great potential to work in the Lab, and fast-forward to now, Naomi is a thriving entry level Laboratory Technician and is currently studying at TAFE to further her qualifications.”

“I would encourage girls in school to study STEM subjects as they not only provide the knowledge in that specific subject, but also skills in scientific approaches that can be transferred across a variety of areas,” Ms Enniss said.

Tasmanian Forests and Forest Products Network Convener, Therese Taylor, said International Day of Women and Girls in Science was a terrific opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the critical role female scientists played in the management of Tasmania’s forests.

“Female forest scientists both here and interstate are using their scientific expertise to provide innovative and creative solutions in the forest and forest products industry,” Ms Taylor said.

“Studies show the most successful industries have good gender balance and a diverse skilled workforce in place and the Network is deeply committed to strengthening the participation of women in the forest industry.”

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