

Acknowledgements

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A newly planted seedling in a slash retention environment. Are their benefits in capturing nutrients contained within the slash and litter?

Stiff competition for Queensland from Balclutha

Vivienne Paterson

A Balclutha joinery business is deadlier serious about an unusual export order it has secured – sending up to 1200 coffins a month to Brisbane.

The owner of Mitchells Joinery, Mr Colin Mitchell hopes to take on eight more staff as a result.

The first batch of 1000 coffins would leave New Zealand on May 10, Mr Mitchell said.

He expected to supply a regular order to the Brisbane market of between 1000 and 1200 coffins a month.

Mr Mitchell has employed three extra people to help cope with the Australian demand. As the market grew, and he believed it would, he would look at setting up a second shift employing a further five people, he said.

The order has also resulted in a \$150,000 investment in new equipment for the company, including a computerised machining centre, which was programmed to cut the patterns for the coffins. It also extended the range of kitchen and other joinery components the firm could handle.

Mr Mitchell worked for a local undertaker before starting out on his own account about 10 years ago. He said that with his experience, coffin making was a natural extension to his joinery work.

He has been supplying caskets to Otago, Southland and Canterbury for the past 10 years.

He secured the Brisbane order after travelling to Australia recently, taking samples of his coffins. He was confident

of winning more work in the Australian market.

The value of the New Zealand dollar makes the purchase of coffins from this country attractive to the Australians, he said. But several other factors would protect his order if the dollar moved.

"We are using solid pine. The pine in Australia is not suitable. We have a ready resource here and can make up-market coffins for a reasonable price.

"We have also been helped by the green movement. The foil-board caskets made in Australia do not comply with cremation regulations under the Australian Clean Air Act which is being rigorously enforced.

"Our coffins do comply, so that works in our favour."