



## Forest management certification: achievements, challenges and future prospects

Richard Stanton<sup>1</sup>

Australian Forestry Standard Ltd  
<http://www.forestrystandard.org.au/home>

The concept of forest management certification emerged in the 1990s and has been a reality in Australia for more than ten years. The Australian Forestry Certification System provides an objective, transparent and consistent system for assessing forest management and tracing wood-based products from certified forests along the supply chain. What have been the costs and benefits of this development? Has certification achieved the original objectives set for it, and will it have an ongoing role in forest management and the marketing of wood and other forest products and services?

The Australian forestry profession and its supporters make frequent and extravagant assertions about the quality of forest management in Australia. Does certification provide a mechanism for substantiating these claims and will these claims continue to be justified in the context of continued declining investment in forest management capacity, education and training, and forest-related research?

The following is a selection from the slides used in the discussion:

<p><b>1. Certification and labelling</b></p> <p>More than 20 years of history and experience</p> <p>Simple concept—a mechanism that allows consumers to reward responsible practices</p> <p>Voluntary—a market-driven incentive as an alternative to a regulatory approach</p> <p>Many different views, often confused by the complexity of the detail</p> <p>Future implications for forest management and professional foresters?</p>	<p><b>2. Certification drivers</b></p> <p>Interest in and take up of AFS/PEFC chain of custody certification is continuing because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Building Council (GBCA) acceptance</li> <li>Illegal logging legislation</li> <li>Planet Ark (FWPA) promotion</li> <li>Corporate procurement policies</li> <li>Certified company promotion (e.g. Reflex) and availability of AFS/PEFC certified wood/products</li> <li>FSC promotion and dual certification</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Australian Forest Certification Scheme</b></p> <p>Operated by AFS Ltd—a not-for-profit public company, since 2003</p> <p>ABSDO-accredited Standards Development Organisation, manages two Australian Standards.</p> <p>AS4708—Forest Management</p> <p>AS4707—Chain of Custody (traceability)</p> <p>25 current forest management certificates (10 million hectares, major wood producers)</p> <p>200+ current chain of custody certificates (diverse range of wood and paper product businesses)</p> <p>AFCs is one of 32 national schemes assessed and endorsed by PEFC</p>	<p><b>Challenges and opportunities include:</b></p> <p>Declining or lack of investment in education and training, monitoring and research, fire management, conservation reserve management ...</p> <p>Complex ownership and management structures—public and private</p> <p>The Australian Standard should provide a benchmark to support discussions with shareholders, government and the community</p>

<sup>1</sup> The selection from the slides was made by the editors