



## **Directive to certification bodies notified to provide forest management certification under the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme – certification of group forest management**

**May 2014 (Updated October 2017)**

### **Directive**

Responsible Wood advises that it will only recognise and register certificates issued against AS4708–2013 which rely on a group certification model, if the certification body (CB) issuing the certificate provides specific written assurance to Responsible Wood, based on evidence, that:

- the provisions of AS4708 GN02-2013 (*Sustainable Forest management – Guidance for the certification of group forest management*) have been met as though they were mandatory requirements. That is, where “should” appears in the Guidance Note it has been applied as “shall”; and
- the Group Entity for the Group Forest Certification Scheme concerned has established an annual internal monitoring programme that provides sufficient confidence in the conformity of the whole group organisation with the sustainable forest management standard. The internal monitoring programme shall be based on a random, stratified sample of group members to provide an accuracy for conformance of 95% ± 5% where the size of the Group allows for such statistical rigour. Alternatively the sampling shall be based on the square root of the number of units at each sampling level.

If and when any such certificate is issued by a certification body and submitted to Responsible Wood for registration, Responsible Wood will consider the information presented, request additional information if required, and will determine whether or not to recognise and register the certificate. The Board of Responsible Wood will be the ultimate decision-making body for the appeal of any such decision.

### **Background**

Responsible Wood is responsible for the overall management of the Responsible Wood Forest Certification Scheme (RWCS) which is endorsed by the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC). Responsible Wood is the PEFC National Governing Body (NGB) for Australia and is authorised to administer the PEFC Scheme in Australia.

Responsible Wood registers certificates issued to AS4708 by appropriately notified and accredited certification bodies on both the RWCS and PEFC registers. This provides recognition of the certified forest management and allows wood from those forests to be accepted as certified in RWCS and PEFC chain of custody certified supply chains.

The Australian Forestry Standard Ltd (AFSL) is a Standards Development Organisation (SDO) accredited by the Standards Development Accreditation Committee (SDAC) to develop Australian Standards® within its scope. AFSL has developed and published AS4708–2013 (*Sustainable Forest Management – Economic, social, environmental and cultural criteria and requirements*) which forms the core of the RWCS. The Standards listed above underpin the RWCS.

The Standards Reference Committee responsible for the development of the content of AS4708–2013 was of the view that the requirements which make up the Standard can be applied to any defined forest area irrespective of scale or type of ownership. It was not considered necessary to set different or additional requirements for certain scales or types of ownership. However, AS4708 GN02-2013 (*Sustainable Forest management – Guidance for the certification of group forest management*) was prepared and published to encourage and facilitate the uptake of RWCS certification by groups of smaller forest owners. As this document was published as Guidance and not as a normative Australian Standard®, its provisions are specifically worded as “should” rather “shall” statements.

This directive has been issued to ensure that the RWCS meets the specific provisions of *PEFC ST 1002:2010 – Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*.

At the date of issue of this Directive there are no certificates issued against AS4708, and recognised by AFS Ltd, which rely on a group certification model and AFS Ltd is not aware that any groups of forest managers are actively in the process of being certified against AS4708.

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