

AS4708 GN02–2013

**Sustainable Forest Management –  
Guidance for the certification of group  
forest management  
(Guidance Note 02 to AS4708–2013)**



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# Guidance for the certification of group forest management

## Section A

### *The Australian Standard<sup>®</sup> for Sustainable Forest Management*

#### FOREWORD

The certification of a group of forest owners is an approach to forest certification which allows forest owners to become voluntarily certified under one certificate and share the financial obligations arising from forest certification as well as the common responsibility for forest management. This approach aims at improving information dissemination and co-operation in forest management among individual forest owners and reduces the risk of non-compliance.

#### INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Australian Standard<sup>®</sup> (AS 4708-2013) for Sustainable Forest Management (AFS) is to provide forest managers and forest owners with economic, social, environmental and cultural criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests for wood production.

Independent, third-party Certification against the AFS provides a clear and unambiguous statement that wood production in a particular defined forest area was managed in accordance with a set of predetermined and clearly defined environmental, economic, social and cultural performance requirements that support sustainable management of forests.

Guidance for native forest and plantation ownerships to the AFS is provided by Guideline GN01.

In Australia there are significant numbers of small forest holdings. The limited financial income of small forest owners; periodicity of their management activities and revenues; limited access to information and knowledge; as well as limitations relating to their conformity with some of the criteria for sustainable forest management which cannot be achieved in small forest areas, represent significant barriers to forest certification.

This Guideline has been prepared to assist forest managers and forest owners of small scale native forest and plantations in developing and adopting an operational group management system that would aim at meeting the requirements of independent third party certification to AFS. It is informative only and provides information for forest owners and auditors. Alternative methods may be suitable for forest managers to demonstrate the control required to meet the AFS.

## CERTIFICATION OF GROUPS OF FOREST OWNERS

Certification of groups of forest owners offers the opportunity for owners/managers of small forest areas to join together and gain benefits of increased scale, while retaining management control of their forest.

AFS Group Certification provides an approach to forest certification whereby individual forest owners or managers come together under a group structure. The certification process involves evaluating and certifying forest owners or managers with individual properties under a single certificate for the group which covers the total area of the participating Group Members. Certification in a group allows individual forest owners or managers to benefit from efficiencies that can accrue as being part of a larger group, as well as gain access to services that can be cost effectively provided through a group structure.

Organisations eligible for Group Certification include landowner or forestry associations, private forestry development committees, government resource agencies, private companies offering group services, cooperatives or other legal entities that can demonstrate management responsibility and authority.

Groups differ from multi-site organisations in that Group Members individually undertake management activities on their forest. The control of the activities is directed by the Group Manager. The table below shows the different types of organisation that can be covered by the AFS.

| <b>Ownership Types</b>                                                            | <b>Number of Sites</b> | <b>Organisation Type</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Single forest owner and single forest manager                                     | One site               | Single Entity            |
| Single forest owner and single forest manager                                     | Multiple Sites         | Multi-site Entity        |
| Multiple forest owners and single forest manager                                  | Multiple Sites         | Multi-site Entity        |
| Multiple forest owners and multiple forest managers controlled by a Group Manager | Multiple Sites         | Group Entity             |

## GROUP FOREST MANAGEMENT AND THE CERTIFICATION MANUAL

Certification requires that a Group Entity be established to oversee and administer the process. A number of legal, administrative and oversight responsibilities must be met by the group management system. The Guideline is augmented by a series of documentation and templates (available separately to this Guideline) which pertain to the Certification process for groups and are available for adoption and use by Group Entities.

# Section B

## *Forest Management Certification of Groups*

### **1 Scope**

This Guideline provides information for the evaluation of a Group Entity and facilitates the management of a group of forest management units under a single Forest Management Certificate.

### **2 Terms and definitions**

For the purposes of this document the terms and definitions given in the AFS apply together with the following definitions.

#### **2.1 Certified Area**

The forest area covered by a forest management certificate representing the sum of forest areas of the Group Members.

#### **2.2 Document Confirming Participation**

A document issued to a Group Member that refers to the Forest Management Certificate and that confirms the Group Member as being covered by the scope of the Forest Management Certificate.

#### **2.3 Forest Management Certificate**

A document confirming that the Group Entity complies with the requirements of the AFS and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

#### **2.4 Group Entity**

An entity that represents the Group Members, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the AFS and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

#### **2.5 Group Forest Certification Scheme**

A scheme or arrangement managed by a Group Manager on behalf of a Group Entity allowing for the certification of Group Members under one Forest Management Certificate.

#### **2.6 Group Manager**

A person with delegated responsibility for administering the rules of the group, especially the admission and removal of Group Members in a manner that ensures the integrity of the scheme.