

AS4708 GN01–2013

**Sustainable Forest Management –
Guidance for the certification of forest
management
(Guidance Note 01 to AS4708–2013)**



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Section A

Certification of Forest to AS4708

1 Introduction

The objective of the Australian Forestry Standard (AS4708-2013) is to provide forest managers with environmental, economic, social, and cultural criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests.

Buyers of timber, in common with buyers of other goods such as food and clothing, are interested in where the product they buy comes from, and how it has been produced. In order to satisfy this interest, many timber producers have introduced the use of systems of independent certification of forest management and various forms of labelling.

All those approaches for the provision of useful and reassuring information to consumers pre-suppose that there is a set of criteria that the producers and/or the forest products are required to meet in order to qualify for a certificate or a label.

In the case of timber, these criteria relate to the forest management practices employed in the growing and harvesting of the trees from which the wood products are sourced. Sometimes the processes that the timber has subsequently undergone will also be examined.

The principal reassurance that the supply chain and final consumers are seeking is that the forests supplying particular wood products are being well-managed. The quality of forest management is sometimes summarised by saying that a forest is (or is not) being sustainably managed.

The Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (the Standard) seeks to distil from community values and the science of forest management those environmental, economic, social and cultural criteria that are considered to be most important for ensuring that a forest is well-managed. It is intended that the Standard be used by accredited and independent third party certification bodies and that it embodies forest management performance criteria which support continual improvement toward sustainable wood production in Australia. The Standard is based on internationally agreed criteria and reflects broad multi-stakeholder support. It is intended for voluntary application and will assist to promote access to both domestic and international markets for timber from certified forests. It is applicable to all forests managed for forest products and services, regardless of type and scale of ownership, or forest type, whether natural or planted forest.

1.1 What is a Standard

Standards are accepted specifications that define materials, methods, processes and practices that, when effectively implemented, ensure that consistent and acceptable levels of quality, performance, safety and reliability are achieved. Certification of forest management provides an assurance that the quality of the forest management practiced conforms to a specified standard. Standards are voluntary compliance documents that only become mandatory if called up through legislation or contractual obligation.