

Responsible Wood Statement on the Management of Australia's Native Forests

Responsible Wood stands for the principle that Wood is Good...it is the Ultimate Renewable for the challenges of our future world.

As such, we are concerned that future options for sustainable wood production are being carelessly closed off. This concern arises as certified, sustainable forest management is being wrongfully confused by key decision makers and influencers as being incompatible with the mitigation of climate change, the maintenance of biodiversity and native forest health. The implication that sustainable forest management is possible in plantation forests, but not in native forests, is not borne out by scientific evidence. It is also inconsistent with the approaches used in other regions, such as in Europe, where the sustainable management of native forests has been practiced for many centuries.

Responsible Wood is Australia's leading certification system for sustainable forest management. It is based on AS4708, Australia's national standard for sustainable forest management developed under accreditation by Standards Australia. Responsible Wood standards are endorsed by the PEFC, the leading global forest certification scheme recognised in over 50 countries.

Timber harvesting and the associated forest regeneration activities, when practiced in accordance with forest certification systems does not reduce carbon stocks or biodiversity across the certified forest estate. Neither does it lead to deforestation. To be clear, deforestation and the associated environmental harm is readily understood to be the clearing of forests for conversion to other uses such as urban development, agriculture and mining. Certified, sustainable forest management is the exact opposite and prohibits deforestation.

Put simply, applying scientifically based sustainable forest management provides healthy forests and, in many cases, improves forest health through the application of best practice management. Importantly, the managers of certified forests are required to maintain or enhance the forest's contribution to carbon cycles and to identify significant biodiversity values and then to implement practices to support the maintenance or enhancement of these values.

The contributions to society delivered by sustainable forest management include significant investments in bush fire mitigation, conservation and recreational benefits and the sustainable economic contribution to rural communities from the sale and processing of sustainably sourced forest products. In dealing with climate

change, Australia will need to make greater use of manufactured hardwood and softwood timber products.

All of Australia's public native wood production forests in NSW, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia are independently certified as complying with the Responsible Wood forest management standard. This means that natural and cultural values are identified and protected, with independent audits conducted annually.

This statement also addresses the credibility of the Responsible Wood certification scheme, including the trust mark that provides the evidence that the forest, whether it is a native forest or a plantation is being sustainably managed. Significant investment has been made since 2002 to develop the Responsible Wood Standard (previously known as the Australian Forestry Standard) and in the skills, experience and sophisticated systems developed by forest managers to comply with the Standard.

The standard development process is incredibly robust, as it should be and as the community should expect. The ongoing health of our forests and everything that lives within them, is our number one priority objective including the protection of old growth forests.

By way of further context, the Responsible Wood certification system undergoes rigorous independent assessment against the global Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification's (PEFC) demanding Sustainability Benchmarks, to ensure consistency with international requirements which are recognised and valued across the planet. (PEFC certifies more than 325 million hectares of proven, sustainably managed forests globally and is the world's largest forest certification system).

Here in Australia, we are further audited by the Australian Standards Development and Accreditation Committee of Standards Australia. In other words, Responsible Wood is the official Australian Standard for Forest Certification and Chain of Custody.

If that isn't enough, the forest managers themselves are rightly, audited against our standard by independent auditors

accredited by JAS-ANZ. Third-party accreditation—the type that JAS-ANZ provides—is recognised around the world as the highest and most credible type a certification an inspection body can obtain.

"There is one material so versatile, so extraordinary that if it didn't exist, we'd have to invent it. Wood. Grown in Australia, in sustainably managed forests. Our forests are amazing places, and Australians use products made from wood and its components, every single day."
www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/planning-tomorrow

Australia has an exceptional opportunity to sustainably manage its forests for the greater good of the environment, unique habitat, the built environment, essential everyday domestic products, the local economy, the global fight against climate change while mitigating bushfire risks.

Timber and other forest products are globally recognised as a sustainable alternative to plastics, concrete, steel, etc. If such products aren't supplied in a trusted way by Australia, for Australia, then where is it coming from? By closing off sustainable native forestry in Australia, are we exacerbating a global environmental crisis?

Failure to maintain sustainable options for the management of our native forests will:

- Diminish Australia's capacity to meet the challenges posed by climate change to our forest estate, and in providing low carbon materials to society;
- Lead to hardwood timber for Australia being imported from other countries, many of which do not have equivalent forest management standards, or worse have ineffective forest law enforcement;
- Exacerbate bushfire management issues/costs and associated increased risk to human life, wildlife and communities;
- Deplete sustainable forest management skills, expertise and systems at the very time when the need is increasingly urgent; and
- Increase economic disadvantage in many rural communities.

Responsible Wood is the trust mark to ensure certified forests are regenerating as healthy, if not healthier because of science based, generationally proven, sustainable forest management practices. Forests require sustainable management and Responsible Wood certification is Australia's recognised response to protecting our most precious forest resources while actively contributing to the needs of our society.



An example of healthy regeneration through sustainable forest management.