

AUSTRALIAN FORESTRY STANDARD LIMITED

Setting the Standard

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Policy 03

V 1.8 -Issue 11/2016



[Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) has developed two Australian Standards® within the Australian Forest Certification Scheme which address wood production from sustainable forest management and the tracking of certified products in the wood and forest products supply chain by a chain of custody mechanism. These Australian Standards® were developed by and are maintained by AFSL Reference Bodies which comprise of representatives of nominating organizations/associations and individuals with a nominated Chair and secretariat support from AFSL.]

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This document describes the AFSL policies regarding the developing and maintaining standards. The procedures are outlined in a subsequent document

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1 Purpose of Document

This document details AFSL policies regarding the role that Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) has in developing and maintaining standards within its scope.

1.1 Management System

This manual is limited to the definition of policy only. Detailed processes and instructions further establish and explain how the policies defined in this document are to be enacted.

This document applies to the development of a Guideline, Rule, Code of Practice or a Standard. However, from this point forward, the term 'Standard' will be used to refer to each of the four aforementioned documents

This document identifies the essential elements of the Management System (MS) that has been established and maintained in order to control the process of development of Standards by AFSL. This manual also communicates the policy and processes that will be observed by all staff.

1.2 Application of this policy

This policy shall apply to:

- Board and staff (including contractors/consultants) of Australian Forestry Standard Limited;
- Members of Standards Reference Bodies;
- Other people and organisations with an interest in the Australian Forestry Standard.

A number of additional policies and procedures were also referenced in previous versions of this policy document and are therefore redundant.

The contents of these documents have been included in this policy document and the previously referenced documents indicated below have been removed.

- POL-07-PART-INT AFSL Policy on Participation in International Standards Development
- POL-06-REL_ABSDO-V1.2 Relationship with the Accreditation Board for Standards Development Organisations
- POL-08-REL-NSO-V1.3 Relationship with the NSO

1.3 Distribution and Maintenance

This document is controlled in accordance with the document control policies outlined in the AFSL Management System Policy

The current released version is held on the AFSL network and published to the Web Site.

References

AFSL Management System Policy (POL-01 AFSL Management System, 2010).

1.4 Definitions

All terms and abbreviations are defined in the AFSL Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations and Definitions (AFSL Glossary, 2010)

2 Background

The Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) project was an initiative sponsored by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (through the Forestry and Forest Products Committee of its Primary Industries Standing Committee), the National Association of Forest Industries, the Plantation Timber Association of Australia and the Australian Forest Growers during the developmental phase from 2000 to mid-2003.

The development of the standards was supported initially by a steering committee containing representatives of the above sponsors, together with representatives of the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council's Natural Resources Management Standing Committee and the Australian Council of Trade Unions

Both the Steering Committee and Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) were accredited by the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC)) to oversee the development of the forestry standards.

3 AFSL Standing in the Forestry Industry

3.1 *About Australian Forest Standard Limited*

Australian Forest Standards Limited (AFSL) is a national not-for-profit public company founded in July 2003 that is committed to promoting Sustainable Forest Management in Australia through independent third-party certification.

The vision of AFSL is "To make the Australian Forest Certification Scheme the pre-eminent forest certification scheme of choice for the forest products supply chain from forest to consumer in Australia".

The objects of AFSL are to:

- Promote sustainable forest management in Australia's forests through an Australian Forestry Standard;
- Support and maintain the development of the AFS, and other related or complementary standards;
- Maintain accreditation as a Standards Development Organisation;
- Support and facilitate the use of the AFS, and any related standards, for forestry certification within Australia through the Australian Forest Certification Scheme; and
- Maintain mutual recognition for the AFS internationally.

With 27 members and approved national forestry standard and chain of custody standard and approved national certification schemes (Australian Forest Certification Scheme – AFCS), AFSL is the largest Australian forest certification system and one of the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. There is currently over 10.2 million hectares of forest certified to AFS and currently over 120 AFS Chain of Custody certificates in use.

This represents 90% of the potential private and public certifiable forests in Australia.

AFSL is a member of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) Council (PEFC, 2010) - one of 31 countries on the Council including seven non-European countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Gabon, Malaysia and the USA) with 21 endorsed schemes.

The Forest Management Standards fully comply with the PEFC requirements and will be revised every five years as per the PEFC Guidelines.

The Australian Forest Certification Scheme (AFCS)

- Provides Australian and overseas consumers with an independent, internationally recognised third-party certification scheme for forest management in Australia; and
- Promotes a culture of 'continuous improvement' of the sustainable forest management practices in Australia.

AFSL provides the structure and framework within which the Australian Forest Certification Scheme is implemented, maintained, reviewed and promoted to all stakeholders interested in forest certification and wood and wood products chain of custody.

3.2 Management of AFSL

AFSL is managed by a board who are representative of all sectors of the Australian forestry industry. The register of board members is testament to the broad representation in the management of AFSL.

References

Membership of AFSL Board (AFSL Board Register, 2010)

3.3 Membership of AFSL

Membership of AFSL is open to any individual or organisation that supports the objects of AFSL. The four membership categories are:

1. Government,
2. Forest and Wood Products Sector,
3. Employee Representative Organisations,
4. General

All other stakeholders are included in the General membership category.

Members are invited to all general meetings of AFSL and provide guidance on issues affecting the Australian forestry industry.

References

- *AFSL Constitution* (AFSL Constitution, 2009)
- Work Instruction – Company Membership (Company Membership, 2010)

3.4 Continual Improvement

AFSL's commitment to continual improvement of its operations and services is aimed at:

- Ensuring an energetic, continuing focus on the needs of AFSL's members and stakeholders.
- Meeting or exceeding the expectations of investors, Members and customers.
- Achieving high levels of staff performance, satisfaction, health and safety.
- Ensuring AFSL personnel have the necessary skills to ensure continuous improvement.
- Providing important controls for corporate governance.

Reference - (Corporate Governance, 2010) Section 3.2

AFSL seeks to continually improve its operations through:

- Improvement in performance;
- Improvement in the standard of its documentation;

- Improvement in its systems and resources.

AFSL monitors and improves its operational systems and resources through

- Internal and external audits. (AFSL Audit Schedule, 2010);
- Review of complaints and grievances (Complaints Register)

4 Resources for Standards Development

AFSL maintains the capacity and resources to develop and to maintain standards within its area of accreditation.

All AFSL activities consume resources in the form of:

- Human resources;
- Financial resources; and
- Information.

These resources are managed effectively and efficiently to produce the best outcome for AFSL's Staff and the Forestry Industry.

4.1 Human Resources

AFSL maintains a core staff and co-opts specialist staff as required on either a casual or a contractual arrangement.

AFSL undertakes a selection process to ensure that specialist staff are involved in the development or ongoing management and review of standards within its area of accreditation.

All personnel working in areas affecting the quality of AFSL's Standards Development and Management Operations shall be competent on the basis of appropriate education, training, skills and experience, or work under the close and direct supervision of a competent supervisor.

References

- Corporate Governance Manual (Part 6) (Corporate Governance, 2010)
- Procedure for Purchasing - Sub Contractor_(Sub-contractor Purchase, 2010)

4.2 AFSL Business Model

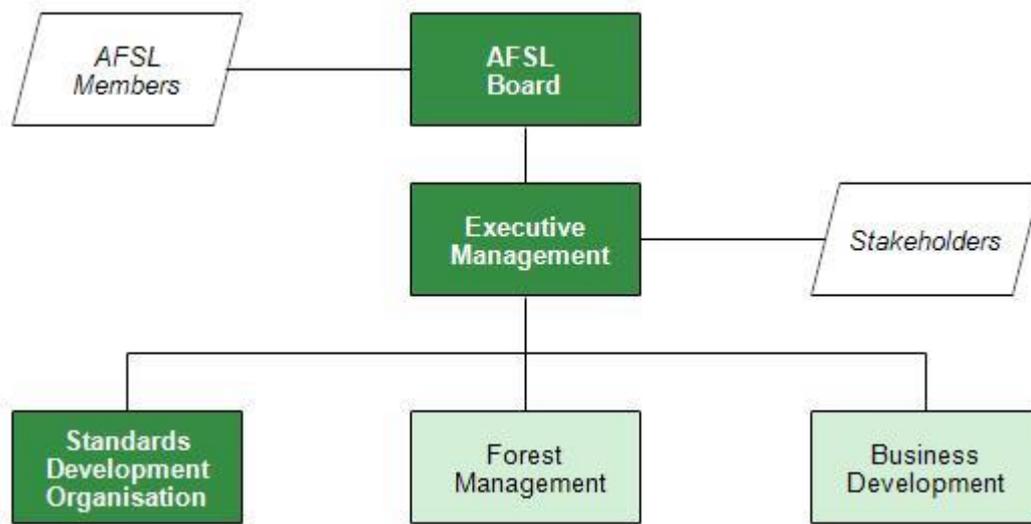


Figure 1: AFSL Business Model

4.3 Financial Resources

AFSL financial processes ensure that funds are available through the budget process. This includes staff costs as well as capital and recurrent costs.

The National Secretary ensures that financial records are retained including all financial forecasts, and progress reports showing actual budget against the forecast.

References

AFSL Business Plan – Funding Plan (AFSL Business Plan, 2010)

4.4 Information Resources

The aim of Information Management is to:

- Identify key knowledge for the organisation;
- Catalogue and store this knowledge and make it available to interested parties; and
- Communicate changes to interested parties who have a requirement to utilise the information.

AFSL is developing a Web portal to centralise all external information either by way of public access or secured log on.

It is proposed that this information will be managed through the implementation of MS SharePoint.

4.5 Capacity to engage with Interested Parties

AFSL has procedures in place to achieve engagement with all key interested parties.

AFSL will not however allow a group's refusal to engage to impact on its processes to effectively develop and manage its Standards.

Credible attempts will be made to involve significant interests and, as far as reasonably practicable, to achieve meaningful engagement. As a minimum, AFSL will inform these parties about the Standards development activity, and take pro-active steps to encourage their involvement.

AFSL makes all efforts to engage with all stakeholders, and retains evidence of this engagement.

References

Stakeholder Communication Management Plan (SDO Comm Plan, 2010)

5 Standards Development

5.1 Standards Australia

Standards Australia (Standards Australia, 2010) is the nation’s peak non-government Standards organisation. It is charged by the Commonwealth Government to meet Australia’s need for contemporary, internationally aligned Standards and related services.

The work of Standards Australia enhances the nation’s economic efficiency, international competitiveness and contributes to community demand for a safe and sustainable environment.

It leads and promotes a respected and unbiased standards development process ensuring all competing interests are heard, their points of view considered and consensus reached.

Standards Australia also recognises, rewards and promotes excellence in design and innovation through the Australian International Design Awards program and other design promotion initiatives.

5.2 Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC)

Objectives and Role

The primary objectives of the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) of the Board of Standards Australia Ltd (

- a) to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities as Australia’s peak national standards body and in the development of Australian Standards, which include joint Australian / New Zealand Standards, and related documents
- b) to perform the duties and responsibilities in accordance with the role and powers delegated by the Board in relation to the accreditation of Standards Development Organisations (SDOs) to develop and maintain Australian Standards

The primary role of the Committee is to assist the Board to:

- Exercise oversight of SA’s processes, policies and procedures as a developer of Australian Standards and related documents
- Provide process governance for the development of Australian Standards by SA, and as agreed on a case by case basis for other accredited SDOs as required and to ensure compliance with appropriate processes for the development of Australian Standards
- Determine which projects are resourced by Standards Australia, with reference to published criteria
- Provide guidance on, and if necessary make decisions on, priorities for the development of Australian Standards and other documents in the public interest
- Provide the final point of process dispute resolution within SA as a developer of Australian Standards and related documents.

And, pursuant to the role and powers delegated by the Board, to

- Accredite Standards Development Organisations (SDOs) to develop and maintain Australian Standards in accordance with the rules and guidelines in force from time to time.

5.3 *Benefits of standards*

Standards make a sustained contribution to national wealth, improving quality of life, increasing employment, improving safety and health (at home, work and play) and using our resources more efficiently. Standards deliver these benefits in the following ways:

- Offer an alternative to regulation, with less red tape and business costs, while still providing security for families, business and consumers;
- Give businesses and consumers confidence that goods and services are safe, reliable and will do the job they were intended for;
- Help consumers make everyday choices between one product and another;
- Support Australian innovation by providing a platform on which to build new ideas;
- Reflect the latest technologies, innovations and community needs;
- Boost Australian production and productivity;
- Save businesses time and money and cut production costs;
- Help cut energy bills and foster new technologies;
- Enable small businesses to become more efficient and grow by using standards, guidelines and handbooks developed by industry experts;
- Make Australian businesses more competitive - products that comply with standards have a competitive edge over products that don't;
- Using international standards, provide exporters with a head start in overseas markets;
- Ensure products manufactured in one country can be sold and used in another;
- Reduce technical barriers to international trade, increase the size of potential markets and position Australian firms to compete in the world economy;
- Complement regulation and make markets work better;
- Help make laws and regulations consistent across Australia - by using a standard, a consumer law in one jurisdiction becomes consistent with a fair trading regulation in another.

5.4 *Cooperation with Standards Australia and SDAC*

Standards Australia is responsible for the oversight, co-ordination and governance of SDO Standards development and related activities.

AFSL co-operates and liaises with the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) and Standards Australia with the intent of enhancing communication and co-ordination of Standards development activities across industry and government.

The Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) operates to encourage and accredit Standards Development Organisations (SDO) in Australia to produce internationally aligned Australian Standards.

Accreditation ensures that Australian Standards retain the quality inherent in the rigorous, transparent and internationally aligned development process.

AFSL fully cooperates with SDAC in the audit process and makes available all records required to demonstrate on-going compliance.

AFSL will fully comply with the requirements of the SDAC document, Requirements for the Accreditation of a Standards Development Organisation as available on the SDAC website at <http://www.absdo.org.au/Responsibilities.aspx> AFSL specifically will

- a) Register all new Standards development projects with Standards Australia prior to commencing substantial work;
- b) Prepare and make available to Standards Australia's Project Office an up to date Development Plan for each Standards development activity;
- c) Comply with all policies and procedures of the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee ('SDAC'), including for the determination and funding of appeals;
- d) Comply with Standards Australia's administrative procedures, including badging and the format of documents;
- e) Make copies of draft and final documents available to Standards Australia via the SDAC Secretariat, as required;
- f) Notify the SDAC of any significant changes in the organisation's Standards development procedures or significant changes that could materially affect AFSL's capacity to be an accredited SDO;
- g) Submit to the SDAC's determination where there is a conflict in the scope of areas of accreditation;
- h) Co-operate with Standards Australia and SDAC regarding hand-over of relevant information and records where an SDO's accreditation ceases;
- i) Co-operate with Standards Australia regarding activities of mutual interest;
- j) Facilitate auditing by SDAC to determine ongoing compliance;
- k) Provide a copy of all final published standards to Standards Australia;
- l) Comply with any additional policies and procedures as required by SDAC from time to time; and
- m) Pay all relevant fees to the SDAC to achieve and maintain accreditation.

6 Role of AFSL Board

6.1 Purpose

The AFSL Board gives autonomy to the Standards Reference Body SRB to conduct the Standards Development activity. The AFSL Board has to ensure that sufficient resources are provided to the SRB for standards development and maintenance activities.

6.2 AFSL Board Involvement

The AFSL Board has granted autonomy to the SRB and shall not influence, or direct, the SRB on the technical content of the final developed standard.

The AFSL Board will consider the following resourcing activities for standards development and maintenance.

Activity	Reference
Give appropriate delegation to the SRB	Delegation of Authority by AFSL Board
Approve the SDO Policies and Procedures under which the SRB will operate	

Activity	Reference
Appoint the independent Chair of the SRB	SDO Procedures Manual – Chair of Standards Reference Body
Approve or amend the Terms of Reference for the SRB for this activity	SDO Procedures Manual – Chair of Standards Reference Body
Approve the membership of the SRB and ensure that the SRB has a balanced membership	SDO Procedures Manual – Chair of Standards Reference Body
Ensure that appropriate secretariat support is available for the activity by either internal staffing or external service providers.	SDO Procedures Manual – Chair of Standards Reference Body
Consider reports on the progress of the Standards Development activity throughout the project	
Consider and approve the final process approval to be forwarded to Standards Australia after a successful final SRB ballot on the standard	SDO Procedures Manual – Process Approval and Publishing of Standards
Consider a report on the review of the Standards Development activity after completion of the project	SDO Procedures Manual – Regular Review of Standards Development Process

6.3 Delegation of Authority by AFSL Board

A clear separation of roles in relation to the maintenance of the two Australian Forestry Standards has been made between the AFSL Board and the Standard Reference Bodies through a board resolution of 29 October 2013.

The AFSL Board delegates authority to the Standard Reference Bodies:

- i. To act with independence and with authority on the review and maintenance of the standard and technical matters relating to the standard; and
- ii. To approve amendments to the Australian Forestry Standards subject to the bodies compliance with relevant policies, the bodies’ budgets, and procedures adopted by the AFSL Board and the terms of AFSL’s accreditation as a Standards Development Organisation.

The AFSL Board, as the accredited Standards Development Organisation, will:

- i. Set policies and the committees’ budgets, and procedures for the operation of the Standard Reference Bodies for the development and maintenance of the Australian Forestry Standards; and
- ii. Ratify the Standard Reference Bodies decisions subject to the committees’ compliance with the Board’s policies and procedures and the terms of AFSL’s accreditation as a Standards Development Organisation.

6.4 Impartial Facilitation

AFSL Management shall not influence, or direct, the Standards Reference Body on the technical content of the final document

AFSL may give guidance to the SRB at the commencement of the standards development activity. After that, any involvement of AFSL management in the standards development activity will be through any direct representation on the SRB.

Special circumstances where the AFSL may overrule the decisions of the SRB include but are not limited to:

- The AFSL is not satisfied that there has been adequate stakeholder consultation conducted;
- The AFSL is not satisfied that consensus has been achieved in the final deliberations of the SRB;
- The AFSL is concerned that a major stakeholder group has not had input to the development of the consultation draft.

Where the AFSL is proposing to overrule the decisions of the SRB, the AFSL shall communicate the changes to the SRB along with recommendations as to the steps that the SRB should take to remedy the concerns.

7 Standards Development Projects

AFSL shall develop standards within its scope of accreditation which is

To develop Australian Standards for forest management for wood production and Australian Standards that support the Australian Forest Certification Scheme.

AFSL standard shall not duplicate an existing Australian Standard.

Where such duplication occurs, justification or explanation shall be included in the standard.

AFSL developed Australian Standards will

- Have a high level of integrity and credibility;
- Have the support of the industry and stakeholders;
- Be developed in an open and transparent manner.

Any AFSL Standards developed for conformance assessment purposes (i.e. the basis of a certification scheme) shall comply with the principles in ISO/IEC 17007, Conformity assessment - Guidance for drafting normative documents suitable for use for conformity assessment.

Where AFSL is developing a standard for certification (or with the potential for certification) the SRB, and particularly those drafting the document, will need to be familiar with its requirements and recommendations.

AFSL will take all reasonable efforts to avoid the creation of conflicting requirements between AFSL Standards and other existing standards on the same or similar subjects.

The procedures that are used in standards development are documented in the SDO Procedures Manual (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012)

7.1 *Current approved Australian Forestry Standards*

AFSL currently has previously developed two approved Australian Standards

- AS 4707 – Australian Standard for Chain of Custody of Wood and Wood Products
- AS 4708 – Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management

7.1.1 AS 4707 - Australian Standard for Chain of Custody of Wood and Wood Products

Compliance with the Australian Standard for Chain of Custody of Wood and Wood Products (CoC) will provide assurance that forest and wood products can be tracked through the supply chain from their origin in a certified forest through to end use by a consumer.

7.1.2 AS 4708 – Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management

The Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (AFS) embodies forest management performance criteria and requirements that support continual improvement towards sustainable wood production in Australia's native forests and plantations.

7.2 *AFSL Role in Certification and Accreditation*

If AFSL were to undertake certification, accreditation or similar activities, the AFSL Board will ensure there is a clear separation of the policy-making and governance functions of such activities from those of standards development.

NOTE – This is currently not relevant to AFSL activities as AFSL does not have a direct role in certification activities.

7.3 *Project Proposals*

A new project proposal may be:

- To develop a new standard in areas that are not covered by an existing standard;
- To develop a new standard to complement or to support existing standards;
- To revise or amend an existing standard, where the content may not be current or appropriate;
- To adopt certain categories of Australian, industry, or international standards or guidelines.

The inclusion of new standards development activities in AFSL's work program is an important aspect of the process. Standards development activities can be triggered by requests from any of the following sources:

- The Board of AFSL;
- An external source such as government, industry, trade association, professional body, business, consumer organisation, or individual;
- An existing Standards Reference Body (SRB);
- Standards Australia.

AFSL will develop a project proposal for each standards development activity. This proposal shall cover

- 1) the scope and objective of the proposed standard;
- 2) the need for the proposed Standard;
- 3) a broad base of support for the development of the proposed Standard;
- 4) the Net Benefit of the standard including:
 - a. the benefits of the proposed standard in terms of one or more of the following:
 - i. Support for innovation, trade and economic benefit.
 - ii. Advancement of the health, safety and wellbeing of the community.
 - iii. Protection of the natural environment.
 - iv. International competitiveness.

- v. potential or actual impacts of implementing the Standard;
- 5) whether there are any International Standards on the same subject and the reasons why such International Standards were not being adopted or used as the basis for the proposed standard;
- 6) If appropriate, the nature of any likely conformity assessment activities (such as testing, inspection, and certification) that may be undertaken once the Standard is published, and the likely bodies that will undertake such activities.

Where a Net Benefit is required to be developed, guidance is available from SDAC (see http://www.absdo.org.au/pdf/ABSDO_Guide_to_net_benefit.pdf)

7.4 Approval of Standards Development Projects

The authority to approve a development project lies with the AFSL Board. At the time of approving the standards project,

AFSL will evaluate plan, and prioritise all new projects as detailed in the SDO Procedures Manual (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012).

Prior to approving any new project, AFSL shall review each project proposal to ensure

- the Standard is consistent with the national interest and demonstrates a net public benefit;
- reasonable attempts have been made to achieve harmonization with existing national Standards; and
- there has been adequate consideration of possible International Standards.

The AFSL Board will also:

- Approve the establishment a Standards Reference Body (SRB) as soon as practicable, unless the work fits within the scope of an existing SRB;
- Approve terms of reference for the SRB;
- Approve the allocation of resources required for the SRB to undertake its work program;
- Determine a priority ranking for the standards project;
- Set reasonable target dates for achieving the milestones of draft for public comment and committee agreement on the final content of the document.

7.5 Standards Development Plans

Following approval of the standards development project, AFSL will prepare a standards development plan that includes

- 1) the document being developed;
- 2) the SRB responsible for the project;
- 3) the person at AFSL responsible for the project including the project officer;
- 4) the type of project i.e. new Standard, revision of an existing standard(s), or an amendment to an existing standard;
- 5) the anticipated timeframe for completion of the proposed Standard including key milestone dates such as commencement, public comment and ballot; and
- 6) any key factors that may impinge on completion of the project.

The standards development plan shall be monitored and, if appropriate, updated at regular intervals throughout the development of the standard.

7.6 Submission of project documentation to SDAC

Once AFSL has approved a standards development project, AFSL will submit a project proposal and a Standards Development Plan to SDAC.

7.7 Standard Reference Bodies

The AFSL Board will appoint Standard Reference Bodies to oversee the development or review of the standard.

Each SRB will have a balanced membership representing a broad spectrum of relevant interests (SRC Representation, 2010) and is supported by an AFSL appointed Secretariat. (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012).

7.8 Balanced Representation

AFSL makes every effort to ensure that the Standards Reference Body comprises a balanced representation from all major stakeholder interests relevant to the Standard.

No one interest may have disproportionate representation or exercise undue influence.

No relevant interest group with a bona fide desire to participate is excluded from the standards development process.

The interest categories relevant to the Standard are defined in SD Procedure SRB Representation. The balance between these interests is clearly defined.

Where a major stakeholder interest group does not accept the invitation to participate, AFSL will determine whether the obstacle is due to:

- Lack of resources;
- Lack of interest in the subject; or
- Lack of confidence in the structural or procedural aspects of the process.

Where one of these issues is the obstacle, AFSL makes reasonable efforts to address the obstacle.

Reference – SD Procedure SRB Representation (SRC Representation, 2010)

7.9 Planning and Management of the Standards Development Activity

The AFSL Board provides the resources for each SRB to undertake the development or review of the standard. The Board may appoint project management consultants to undertake this function.

The SRB is responsible for the technical content of a draft standard. However most of the necessary drafting work is done offline by the consultants, subcommittees and expert working groups.

The SRB meets regularly to discuss progress, co-ordinate work programs and seek to maintain consensus in the technical content of the emerging draft.

The process to develop or review the standard is outlined in the SDO Procedures Manual Section 5 (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012).

7.10 Public review and stakeholder feedback

It is essential that anyone who feels that they can contribute to a draft standard is provided with an opportunity to comment on its provisions. The availability of draft standards is publicly announced and the drafts widely circulated via the AFSL website.

The process for public comment is outlined in Section 10 of the SDO Procedures Manual. (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012).

7.11 Achieving and Demonstrating Consensus

The SRB chair attempts to gain a consensus decision at all stages of the standards development or review process.

Consensus occurs when all of the major interests involved with the subject of the standard have collectively accepted the content of the document and have voted affirmatively.

Conditions for consensus are outlined in the (SDO Procedures Manual, 2012) and in SD Procedure on Achieving Consensus (SD-PROC-06-SRC-consensus)

The AFSL Board arbitrates on whether the criteria for achieving a consensus have been met. Where the AFSL Board deems that consensus has not been achieved it may recommend a process to resolve the impasse.

7.12 Transparency

AFSL will publicly make available details of all standards development activities.

This information shall be readily accessible and shall include details of:

- the work to be undertaken
- the formation of any new Standards Reference Bodies.
- The process for receiving and, if appropriate, acting on, input from those with an interest in either the content of the proposed standard or in the constitution of the SRB.

7.13 Process Approval

Once the SRB has achieved consensus and the technical content of the standard is finalised, the AFSL Board shall finally approve the standard for publication.

8 Regular review and maintenance of standards

AFSL is firmly committed to maintaining and reviewing the current Australian Standards® as well as any future Australian Standards® which it develops within its scope of accreditation.

In cognizance of maintaining the current Australian Standards®, AFSL recognises that inquiries concerning the interpretation of specific requirements/clauses of the Australian Standards® may fall into one of the following groups:

- *Opinion* – a response to a query which is supplied by AFSL and is based on experience with the workings of the relevant Standard Reference Committee;
- *Interpretation* – when a response to a query is agreed upon and supplied by the relevant Standard Reference Committee on a one-off basis on matters which are not regarded as having a wide area of application; and

- *Ruling* – when the relevant Standard Reference Committee provides an interpretation on a matter which has a wide area of application, but generally, does not contain specific requirements suitable for inclusion in the relevant Australian Standard®.

Based on the commitment to maintain and review the Australian Standards® as the basis of the AFCS, AFSL shall:

1. Maintain the current Australian Standards® by undertaking amendments to the Australian Standards® where such a requirement is demonstrated to and approved by AFSL;
2. Continually monitor emerging issues that relate to Australian forests and react appropriately should these issues impact on the content of the standards;
3. Provide a formal rulings process of the requirements/clauses of the Australian Standards® where the relevant standard reference committee provides interpretation of the requirements/clauses of the Australian Standards® or supplements to the Australian Standards® and the ruling is made available to the public;
4. Undertake any rulings process throughout the life of the Australian Standard®;
5. Regularly review the technical content its current Australian Standards®, supplements or other documentation as per the schedule included as 8.7.1 - Schedule of Reviews of Standards.
6. Conduct the review process in cognizance of the requirements of Standards Australia and SDAC;
7. Initiate the review process for Australian Standards® so that the revised version of the Australian Standards® is to be available before the expiry of the current version of the Australian Standards® expires based on 3. above; and
8. Ensure that its Standard Reference Bodies are regularly notified of the application of the Australian Standards® to provide a forum to discuss any suggested revisions or amendments to the Australian Standards®.

8.1 Schedule of Reviews of Standards

AFSL is committed to conducting a regular review of all standards within our scope.

The review cycle will not exceed 7 years of the date of publishing of the existing standard.

The timetable for the review of the standards is included in Section 4.1 of the “SDO Procedures Manual.

9 Regular Review of Standards Development Process

AFSL will prior to every review of its standards review and continually improve its standards development process (WI_SDP_Review, 2010).

All changes to AFSL standards development policies and procedures will be tracked for approval by the AFSL Board and made available for audit by SDAC on request.

10 Audit by interested parties

AFSL is subject to audits by SDAC to maintain its SDO status and promotes transparency of its standards development process within its standard reference bodies.

AFSL considers that other stakeholders need access to its standards development processes to provide the assurance of transparency and consensus.

The AFSL standards development process is available for audit by other interested parties subject to the AFSL Privacy Policy.

AFSL makes all relevant Standards Development documentation available on the AFSL website at <http://www.forestrystandard.org.au/resources/resources>

Reference

- Audit of Standard Development Process by Other Stakeholders (Audit - Other Stakeholder, 2010).
- AFSL Privacy Policy

11 AFSL Compliance with the Australian Privacy Provisions

AFSL shall incorporate suitable privacy protection measures, including maintaining confidentiality of SRB deliberations. These steps are included in the SRB Members Code of Conduct.

AFSL staff shall take steps to protect the privacy of all parties and advise SRB members as to their responsibilities in protecting the privacy of individuals.

Further details are included in the Australian Privacy Provisions Fact sheet at <http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-resources/privacy-fact-sheets/other/privacy-fact-sheet-17-australian-privacy-principles>

12 International Participation

References

1. *Standards Australia Standards Development – SG-015 – Australian Involvement in International Standardisation*, available at http://www.standards.org.au/StandardsDevelopment/Developing_Standards/Documents/S-G-015%20Australian%20Involvement%20in%20International%20Standardisation.pdf
2. *AFSL Policy SD PROC-05 Reimbursement of Travel Costs*
3. *SDAC Policy International Participation in Standards Activities*
<http://www.absdo.org.au/InternationalInvolvement.aspx>

AFSL participates in international forums and workshops addressing the development of consistent and credible international guidelines for sustainable forest management.

AFSL will ensure that appropriate funding for travel and accommodation costs for AFSL staff to attend relevant International Standard development activities is available in the AFSL budget.

12.1 Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) Council

AFSL is a member of the **Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) Council** (PEFC, 2010) one of 35 countries on the Council including seven non-European countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Gabon, Malaysia and the USA) with endorsed schemes.

The PEFC Council oversees a global forest certification scheme which includes its own international standards and other relevant documentation and the PEFC Council encourages all its members to participate in the development of PEFC international standards and documentation.

AFSL is committed to be an exemplar member within the PEFC Council and, to that effect, shall:

- Ensure that AFSL staff effectively engage in PEFC Council International Standard development in a timely manner to provide an Australian perspective;
- Provide opportunities for AFSL staff to engage with the PEFC Council and its members by suitable electronic media where attendance at International Standard development meetings is impractical;
- Seek the advice of relevant AFSL standard reference bodies for PEFC International Standard development activities which are within the scope of the forest management and chain of custody standards;
- Collaborate with Standards Australia to further any development pathway for PEFC International Standards to be developed under an ISO International Standard development process where benefit can be demonstrated to all parties.

12.2 International Standards Organisation and Standards Australia

AFSL recognises that Standards Australia is the Australian member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

AFSL shall engage in relevant international standards development which may be initiated by Standards Australia or AFSL.

Where AFSL participates in International Standards development which is aligned with its scope of accreditation, AFSL shall:

- Comply with the appropriate SDAC procedures relating to international involvement as outlined at <http://www.absdo.org.au/InternationalInvolvement.aspx>;
- Liaise with Standards Australia on the schedule of International Standard development opportunities which would be within the scope of AFSL as an accredited SDO;
- Provide New Work Items (NWI) for international Standards where such NWIs would be within its scope of accreditation from SDAC;
- Consider requests from Standards Australia to provide suitably qualified delegates for International Standard development work which is within its scope of accreditation;
- Consider requests from Standards Australia to provide secretariat for international technical committees Standards where the international Standards activity would be within its scope of accreditation;
- Ensure that any nominated delegate has the backing and support of AFSL for international Standards development work;
- Ensure that the nominated delegate has technical support of one of AFSL's SRB's or the support of a balanced group of Australian interested parties as agreed between AFSL and Standards Australia;
- Agree to utilise *Standards Australia Standards Development – SG-015 – Australian Involvement in International Standardisation* to facilitate the delegate's nomination and work activity;

- Seek the advice, expertise and experience of Standards Australia in preparing the nominated delegate for international Standard development work;

Reimbursement for funding for international standards development activities is outlined in *AFSL Policy SD PROC-05 Reimbursement of Travel Costs*.

12.3 AFSL Compliance with Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement

AFSL recognises that Australia is a signatory to the WTO GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) which includes the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) agreement (http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tbt_e/tbt_e.htm)

As a general policy, AFSL will:

- Make all endeavours to comply with the provisions of the TBT. AFSL will further ensure that AFSL Standards do not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade.
- Not permit AFSL Standards to give a more favourable treatment of products of national origin when compared to like products originating in any other country.
- Take steps to comply with the TBT agreement as outlined in the TBT agreement http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/17-tbt.pdf imposes certain requirements on standards bodies (Annex 3), “Code Of Good Practice For The Preparation, Adoption And Application Of Standards”

In practice, AFSL will take steps such as:

- Make copies of the TBT available to AFSL staff and SRB Members;
- Ensure involved in standards development are aware of the main provisions, particularly of Annex 3.

13 AFSL Information Management

AFSL retains documented information as evidence to demonstrate compliance for a minimum of 10 years and two standards review cycles from the date of publication of the Standard.

Documented information is retained in PDF format:

- where the absence of such information would reduce confidence in the quality of the product and/or service supplied by AFSL; and
- to demonstrate compliance to SDAC Requirements.

Documented information is legible and identifiable, clear in intention and are self-explanatory or supported by documentation that provides precise descriptions of the information contained.

Documented information is stored and maintained in such a way that it is readily retrievable in facilities that provide a suitable environment to prevent damage or deterioration and to prevent loss.

Documented information is made available for evaluation by the SDAC Auditor and other interested parties.

Note: Documented information may be in the form of any type of media, such as hard copy or electronic media (PDF format).

Reference

Records Management Policy (Records Mgmt Policy, 2010)

14 Administrative Procedures

14.1 Document Management Policy

AFSL maintains a management system which is based on the ISO 9001 framework.

Maintenance of the Management System is focussed on SDAC compliance and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of all AFSL operations.

14.2 Records Management Policy

Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) recognises its responsibilities to provide a framework to initiate and maintain record keeping practices to meet its needs and accountability requirements that are compatible with relevant standards and reflect prevailing community concern for best practice.

The AFSL Records Management policy supports the company's business in an efficient and accountable manner as well as supports and document decision-making processes.

- Records retained will include but not be limited to
 - Net benefit and project approval;
 - Standards Reference Body (SRB) or work group composition (interest groups);
 - Public comment document ;
 - Comments and their disposition;
 - Document approved by the SRB;
 - SRB approval, including compliance with consensus procedures; and
 - Final process/publication approval.

References

- AFSL Management System Policy (AFSL Management System Policy, 2010)
- Records Control Procedure (SM PROC-01 Records Control , 2010)
- File Naming Procedure (AFSL Procedure SM PROC 07 File Naming, 2010)

14.3 Audit of Administrative Procedures

AFSL conducts an internal audit of all processes to ensure ongoing compliance. Administrative processes are updated accordingly where necessary.

Reference

- Internal Audit Procedure (Internal Audit, 2010)
- AFSL Audit and Review Plan (AFSL Audit Schedule, 2010)

14.4 Audit of Administrative Procedures by Other Parties

The AFSL administrative procedures are available for audit by any interested parties.

Reference

- Audit of Standard Development Process by Other Stakeholders (Audit - Other Stakeholder, 2010)

15 Neutrality and Independence

15.1 Objectivity and impartiality

AFSL is operated to safeguard the objectivity and impartiality of the individuals and groups responsible for Standards Development.

AFSL has a privacy policy in place to respects the privacy of its members and is committed to complying with the requirements of the National Privacy Principles which are contained in the *Privacy Act 1988* and subsequent amendments to the Act. (Privacy Policy, 2010)

AFSL ensures that there is a balanced representation of all stakeholder groups on the Standards Reference Body in the Standards development process. (SRC Representation, 2010).

15.2 Communication between governance structure and the SRB

Any communication concerning the content of a Standard between the governance structure of the organisation and the Standards Reference Body is documented, open and available for audit.

Any communications arising from the Standard Reference Bodies are a standing item on all AFSL Board agendas. The chair of each SRB provides a status report to each board meeting on progress and issues that may require a Board resolution.

Reference

- SDO Communications Plan (SDO Comm Plan, 2010)

16 Enquiries and Complaints

16.1 Enquiries about a Standard

The National Secretary will respond to enquiries regarding the technical content of standards within AFSL's scope of accreditation in a timely manner.

16.2 Complaints Procedure

Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) recognises that disagreements may arise against the organisation or against the standards development process.

All complaints, appeals and grievances are

- Investigated in a fair and unbiased manner
- Handled so as to not place an undue burden on the party;
- Addressed in a timely manner.

All complaints are fully addressed and tracked as per the AFSL Complaints Procedure.

The AFSL complaints procedure outlines the type of grievances and complaints which may occur and the steps taken to resolve them.

- **Reference** Complaints Procedure (Complaints Procedure, 2010).

A register of complaints is maintained which is available for audit and to any interested parties.

- **Reference** - Complaints and Grievances Register (Complaints Register)

The AFSL Complaints Procedure will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure effectiveness where appropriate.

17 Existing Rights and Obligations

If AFSL were to accept responsibility for standards developed by another Organisation (including an SDO), AFSL will ensure that

- All existing rights and obligations related to these Standards have been negotiated and agreed with the Organisation.
- All copyright has been transferred from the organisation to AFSL
- Any licensing agreements that had been entered into with third parties have been transferred to AFSL.

18 Intellectual Property

All intellectual property rights created by AFSL are owned by AFSL (unless otherwise agreed between parties).

The Standard(s) developed by AFSL do not infringe the rights of any third party (including without limitation any intellectual property rights).

18.1 Copyright

The copyright of all AFSL developed standards is negotiated prior to the standard being published. In the absence of an agreement the copyright is normally vested in AFSL.

It is the responsibility of SRB members to ensure that any material put forward for inclusion in a standard does not infringe a third party's copyright. Material covered by a third party's copyright may be included in a standard only after permission has been obtained from the copyright holder.

Where SRB members submit material that they, their employers or nominating organizations have originated, and where such material is subsequently included in a standard, the right of the originator of the material to continue to reproduce that material in the form in which it was originally submitted is recognised.

18.2 Patents

A standard does not confer a monopoly on one section of industry to the detriment of another that can provide an equally satisfactory article. Nonetheless, on exceptional occasions, technical reasons may justify inclusion in the standard of items or services covered by patent rights. There is no objection in principle to this, provided that certain rules are adhered to. The rules governing patented items in standards are those adopted by ISO and IEC.

AFSL recognises that it is highly desirable not to specify patented items as a requirement in a standard. To do so may inhibit use of the standard and/or provide the owner of a patent an unfair advantage. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where inclusion of a patented item is essential.

- AFSL will not include any patented item or material in a standard unless the use of a patented item is justifiable for technical reasons.
- Where patented items or material is included in a standard, appropriate licenses will be negotiated with the rights holder.

18.3 Trade marks

All trademarks developed and owned by AFSL will be registered with IP Australia (IP Australia).

The AFSL trade mark is registered for the following goods and services:

- Paper, cardboard and goods made from these materials including packaging and wrapping material printed matter, stationery being goods in class 16
- Building materials (non-metallic) especially derived from wood either in solid or composite form being goods in class 19
- Forestry products not included in other classes being goods in class 31
- Forestry services being services in class 44

18.4 Trademark Licence

While AFSL retains copyright on AFSL developed standards, AFSL is required to enter into an agreement with Standards Australia to provide to Standards Australia an exclusive worldwide licence to publish, distribute, market and sell each Australian Standard® brand standard developed by AFSL.

Standards Australia will then sublicense to SAI Global the rights to publish etc. these standards. Royalties are paid by SAI Global to AFSL.

AFSL will enter into a licensing agreement with Standards Australia regarding the use of the 'Australian Standard®' trademark, logo and any associated graphics.

AFSL shall comply with the SDAC style manual including any requirements relating to the use of the word mark, logo and text required to be included in published standards. (see http://www.absdo.org.au/pdf/ABSDO_style_manual.pdf)

AFSL may enter into other agreements with SAI Global regarding sale and distribution of AFSL developed standards.

19 Publishing the Standard

19.1 Publishing Date

In the course of development and implementation of standards, three significant dates apply:

Approval Date

This is the date on which the SRB approves the document for publishing. For Australian Standards it is the date on which the document is approved by or on behalf of the relevant Standards Sector Board or Standards Development Board.

Publication Date:

This is the date that the standard becomes publicly available. It is also the date on which the standard comes into effect.

Implementation Date

This is the date that a standard becomes effective, where that date differs from the publication date. For example, when there is a need to provide a period of grace to allow products and practices to be modified or upgraded. Occasionally, legislation or certification programs may also require a later date of implementation for a standard than its publication date.

19.2 Referencing other standards

References to other standards must be valid and relevant to the standard being prepared. Do not reference specific clauses as they may change in subsequent editions. Only the current edition of another standard may be referenced. The applicability of subsequent editions or amendments of referenced standards is a matter for determination by the users of the standard. References must be dated unless it is accepted that it will be possible to use all future changes of the referenced document for the purposes of the referring document or for informative references.

19.3 Amending standards

After a standard has been published, new information may be presented or errors found in the printed document. When this occurs an amended issue of the standard may be issued.

Correction amendments may correct misprints or production faults in the document but not add new material or affect the application of the standard. Revised text amendments add new material or change existing requirements that affect the application of the standard.

19.4 New editions of standards

When a SRB votes on the approval for publication of a standard, there is an implied rider that this approval is for a finite period and that the standard will be revised or withdrawn at some time in the future as circumstances and technologies change.

Once a new edition of a standard is published, the previous edition is deemed to be superseded in terms of representing current practice. Occasionally, copies of the superseded edition may be kept publicly available for special purposes, for instance during a phased implementation or for servicing of older equipment.

19.5 Automatic withdrawal of standards

To ensure that all standards represent current practice, even those in slow-moving areas of technology or ones that are not widely used any standard older than 15 years will be a candidate for automatic withdrawal.

The intention to withdraw these standards is announced well in advance of the proposed withdrawal date, so that users are afforded the opportunity to nominate those standards that they feel are still valid and should not be withdrawn. Where there is sufficient interest in retaining the standard it will be revised and reissued (revision may be simply updating references, the content remaining unchanged). Where there is no interest in retaining the standard it will be withdrawn.

19.6 Availability of standards

Any standard bearing the name Australian or New Zealand or Australian/New Zealand Standard is available through SAI Global and Standards New Zealand.

20 Interpretations and rulings

Although individual SRB members may reasonably express their own point of view on the background and intent of standards that they have been involved in developing, they do not have the authority to present an official interpretation of provisions in the standards, unless specifically requested and authorized to do so.

In furtherance of this policy, committee records are treated as confidential and the identity of individual committee members is not divulged to any person seeking an interpretation of a standard.

21 Cooperation and Liaison

Where appropriate, or as requested, AFSL shall cooperate with other similar SDOs, including Standards Australia, regarding activities of mutual interest and with the intent of enhancing communication and co-ordination of Standards development activities across industry and government.

AFSL will participate in joint SDO forums and share information as appropriate with other SDO's

22 AFSL Termination as an SDO

In the event that AFSL ceases to be accredited as an SDO, the IP attached to AFSL developed standards within its scope of accreditation will be transferred to another like-minded accredited SDO or to Standards Australia.

Where there is an intention for AFSL to cease being accredited, key stakeholders, including SDAC and SRB members, will be notified as soon as practicable.

(See SD Proc 01 SDO Procedures Manual - Revision And Creation Of A Standards Development Project Section 19)

23 Annex A – Scope of Accreditation

Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) is hereby accredited to develop Australian Standards for forest management for wood production and Australian Standards that support the Australian Forest Certification Scheme.

accreditation board for
standards development
organisations

Certificate of Accreditation as a
Standards Development Organisation

**Australian Forestry Standard Ltd
(AFSL)**

is hereby accredited to develop Australian Standards for forest
management for wood production and Australian Standards that support
the Australian Forest Certification Scheme.

Period of Accreditation: to 1 January 2017



Martin Dwyer, Chairman
Accreditation Board for Standards
Development Organisations (ABSDO)
10 December 2013



24 Valuable Websites

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2. Standards Australia (2010); About Standards Australia; available online at <http://www.standards.org.au/default.asp>
3. ABSDO (2010); About the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee ; available online at <http://www.absdo.org.au/>
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13. Standards Australia (2010); Standardisation Guide - Standards Development Policies and Procedures SG-007 Adoption of International Standards; available online http://www.standards.org.au/downloads/SG/SG007-Adoption_of_International_Standards.pdf

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15. Standards Australia (2010); Standardisation Guide - Standards Development Policies and Procedures SG-017 - Drafting of Standards that may be referenced under Occupational Health and Safety Legislation; available online <http://www.standards.org.au/downloads/SG/SG-017-1.pdf>
16. Standards Australia (2010); Standardisation Guide - Standards Development Policies and Procedures SG-020 - Participation by Consumers in Standardization; available online <http://www.standards.org.au/downloads/SG/SG-020.pdf>

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