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## **STAKEHOLDERS FORUM WRAP UP**

BRISBANE 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY, 2009

By Rebecca Campbell

Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL) hosted a well received Stakeholders Dialogue Forum in Brisbane last month. The forum was attended by approximately 40 delegates who were given the opportunity to listen to key presentations from a range of experts and to network with their peers.

Kayt Watts, CEO of Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFSL), gave an overview of the Australian Forest Certification Scheme. She covered the role the certification scheme plays in domestic and international markets as an independent, internationally recognised, third-party certification scheme for forest management and chain of custody.

EWPAAs General Manager, Simon Dorries, discussed the issues associated with certification in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. His presentation was supported by input from international guest, Axel Wilhelm of the Rimbunan Hijau (PNG) Group. Some challenges faced in moving forward with PNG certification include; lack of government support, technical and financial capacity, and landowner disputes. Simon suggested that a PNG specific standard may need to be developed to counter some of the certification problems that exist within the PNG region. In New Zealand FSC is entrenched as the main certification scheme making it difficult for alternative schemes to get traction.

Chris White, Senior Sales Manager of Moxon Timbers highlighted some issues timber merchants have with Chain of Custody certification. According to Chris, there is confusion and lack of awareness among timber merchants regarding the details of certification. More education is required to work in conjunction with promotional campaigns for chain of custody certification. Timber merchants are not against promoting the use of certified wood, a process which ultimately protects and guarantees that they will have product to sell in years to come.

The hot topic of the forum was the Green Building Council of Australia's (GBCA) Green Star MAT-8 'timber criteria' revised assessment framework. The presentation was delivered by GBCA's Green Star Rating Tool Manager and Queensland Manager, Andrew Aitkin. Green Star was covered in relation to its rating tools and timber credit review. Andrew also discussed GBCA's Assessment Criteria for best practice certification and forest management. Discussion time was heated, with delegates raising concerns and questions about the revised assessment framework. Many delegates questioned whether there had been adequate communication between GBCA and its stakeholders. In particular, concern was raised as to whether the draft 15 criteria assessment tool was clearly published for public review or comment.

AFSL are committed to engaging and communicating with their stakeholders. The next AFSL Stakeholders Dialogue Forum will be held at The Hyatt Hotel in Canberra, from 2pm-5pm, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. For further details contact AFSL: [info@forestrystandard.org.au](mailto:info@forestrystandard.org.au) or 02 6232 5356.

## NOTES

**Australian Forestry Standard** Limited is a Standards Development Organisation and a not-for-profit public company registered in July 2003. The company owns the standard development functions and manages the elements of the **Australian Forest Certification Scheme**. The Australian Forest Certification Scheme (AFCS) will:

- provide Australian and overseas consumers with an independent, internationally recognised third-party certification scheme for forest management in Australia
- promote a culture of 'continuous improvement' of the sustainable forest management practices in Australia
- support a market for forest products that are a result of sustainable forest management practices and value adding processes that maintain the integrity of the source forest certification and promote the broader environmental benefits of using wood-based products.

**PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes)** PEFC is a framework for the mutual recognition of credible national or regional forest certification schemes that have been developed based on internationally recognised requirements for sustainable forest management. Since its launch in 1999, PEFC has become the largest forest certification umbrella organisation covering national schemes from all over the world, delivering hundreds of millions of tonnes of wood to the processing industry and then on to the market place from over 200 million hectares of certified forests. PEFC has strong grass roots support from many stakeholders including the forestry sector, governments, trade associations, trade unions and non-governmental organisations.

**Forest Certification** Forest certification is a process, which provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that the wood used in the products comes from sustainably managed forests. Sustainably managed forests are those whose management implements performance standards based on internationally agreed environmental, social and economic requirements.

## MEDIA CONTACTS

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