

## MEDIA RELEASE—CANBERRA (08 January 2009)

### AUSTRALIA LAGS BEHIND INTERNATIONAL MOVES TO ERADICATE ILLEGAL LOGGING THROUGH PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Australia could make a substantial difference in stopping illegal logging through state and territory procurement policies, says the CEO of Australian Forestry Standards Limited (ASFL). In doing so, states and territories will fall in line with the best practice of other major governments around the world and support Australian companies that have already taken the responsible step of becoming certified through the Australian Forestry Certification Standard's (AFCS) chain of custody standard.

Kayt Watts says the United Kingdom's recent announcement to continue supporting environmental and sound forestry management practices by requiring its government departments to procure only legal and sustainable or FLEGT-licensed timber\* for public sector projects is not just progressive, it is common sense.

"Wood and wood product certification is the leading process for sustainable forest management," says Ms Watts. "Australia would do well on a state/territory and even a national level to follow the UK model. At the moment the Public Works Department in Queensland has taken the lead in Australia by introducing next month a procurement policy that requires organisations to use certified wood products. Other governments, including at the Commonwealth level, have no such policy and risk lagging behind."

The UK has publicly endorsed the national standards of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)—the world's largest certification system—saying its sustainable forest management standards and procedures meet the Government's procurement requirements for sustainable timber. "In doing so the UK has taken the world a step closer to eradicating illegal logging and suspect trading of forests and wood products," says Geoff Gorrie, AFSL's Chairperson. And it has aligned itself with and endorsed our Australian Forestry Certification Scheme (AFCS) which forms part of PEFC global scheme of national standards for sustainably forestry management."

In a media release entitled 'Leading public procurement policy confirms PEFC's sustainability status', the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirmed its new procurement policy. "This confirms the robustness and integrity of credible forests certification schemes," says Ben Gunneberg, Secretary General of PEFC. "Furthermore, the revised procurement policy sends a strong message to companies and consumers to buy responsibly and to support sustainable forest management by choosing PEFC-certified products."

PEFC is an umbrella organisation for national standards from around the world, with 35 member countries. Through PEFC's National Governing Bodies more than 209 million hectares of forests, producing millions of tonnes of certified timber for the marketplace. Australia imports \$4.3 billion of wood products and exports \$2.4 billion. Through the AFCS, this country has more than 7.9 million hectares of certified forests.

"The UK move is important in part because of the increasing role forest certification is playing in tackling climate change management" says Mr Gorrie. "The real challenge is to double or treble the

present nine per cent of forests certified internationally. This would do more to promote sustainable and legal forest management globally than any other measure."

"For today and for our future, we need to do much more," says Ms Watts. "This is one reason our governments must begin to move in the same direction as others internationally, whether it is through PEFC or any other legitimate certification body. We are still only scratching the surface."

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#### **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.

\*iii FLEGT—The EU Action Plan for Forest law Enforcement Governance and Trade is the European Union's response to the global problem of illegal logging and the international trade in illegally-harvested timber. See <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/eupresidency2005/flegt.asp> for further details.

\*Defra has set up a Central Point of Expertise on Timber to provide practical support and assistance in implementing the policy. This includes assessing the certification schemes most widely used to certify timber used in the UK to establish which provide adequate evidence of legality and sustainability. <http://www.proforest.net/cpet/activities-and-news>