

Development Process

The aim of developing the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) is to provide a basis for credible, verifiable statements on the sustainability of forest management for wood production from individual or group forest ownerships.

To ensure that the Australian Forestry Standard is developed in accordance with accepted Australian and international practices, the Australian Forestry Standard Steering Committee (2001 to 2003) and AFS Limited (2003 to current) have been formally accredited by Standards Australia as a Standards Development Organisation. Initially, it was Standards Australia's Standards Accreditation Board which endorsed the structures and processes proposed by the Australian Forestry Standard Steering Committee and maintained by AFS Limited as a sound basis for developing an Australian Forestry Standard and are subject to the monitoring and audit of those processes. The Standards Accreditation Board has now become the Accreditation Board for Standards Development Organisations in 2007 and will oversee the accreditation of AFS Limited as a Standards Development Organisation.

This award of accreditation, as a Standards Development Organisation, committed the Australian Forestry Standard Steering Committee and AFS Limited to working towards an outcome that is equivalent in terms of balanced participation, transparency and consensus to standards developed by Standards Australia.

The development process for the Australian Forestry Standard has been adapted from the recommended developmental stages, as outlined in Standards Australia's Standardisation Guides and consisted of five main draft stages prior to its recognition as AS 4708 in 2002:

1. Draft framework - submitted by the Project Manager for consideration by the AFS TRC, to provide an agreed basis for the preparation of the preliminary draft.
2. Preliminary draft - submitted by the Project Manager and based on the framework agreed by the AFS TRC for consideration by the AFS TRC;
3. Committee draft - incorporates decisions of the AFS TRC after examination of the preliminary draft and any subsequent Technical Reference Committee drafts due to contentious areas requiring investigation or elaboration prior to the next stage;
4. Public Comment draft - this draft represents the AFS TRC's recommendations for the Standard and the document is made available to the public for their views and comments (ten weeks); and
5. Final draft - all comments received on the public draft must be considered by the AFS TRC as part of the process of finalising the Standard. Formal voting for approval of the final draft as a Standard is by postal ballot to the AFS TRC members with a process review by the applicable Standards Development Board.

The definition of consensus in this process is taken from *ISO/IEC Guide 2 – Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary*:

"general agreement, characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments.

Note: Consensus need not imply unanimity."

Consensus is achieved within the technical committee of a standards development body based on Standards Australia's methodology for consensus in standards development which is set out in Standardization Guide 001 – Preparing Standards¹

If the differences are unresolved due to one or more negative votes then the following would allow the Standard to proceed for publication:

- a minimum of 67 per cent of those eligible to vote have voted affirmatively (ie a 19 member TRC would require 13 affirmative votes); and
- a minimum of 80 per cent of votes received are affirmative (ie if 19 votes were cast this would require 16 affirmative votes); and
- no major interest maintains a negative vote.

If a negative vote is registered it must be supported with a reason for rejection of the Standard so that processes of resolution can be instigated. Every effort must be made to resolve differences before the draft proceeds to publication. The majority vote is only accepted with the condition that no major interest maintains a negative vote. A major interest may be within one stakeholder grouping or a combination of votes that have a similar reason, whether social, economic or environmental, for registering a negative vote.

The initial development process included two public consultation periods:

- the initial period of thirty days (8th April to 8th May 2000) that occurred prior to the commencement of the development of the Standard. A Summary of Public Submissions paper is available; and
 - The call for public submissions at the start of the process is normal practice and ensures that all interested parties are aware of the initiative and have an opportunity to provide an input at the very start of the process; and
- a subsequent period of sixty days (11 August to 19 October 2001) that allowed public comment on a Public Comment draft.
 - The Public Comment draft standard, takes account of the submissions received during the initial public comment period and incorporates the comments and responses from a report on the public consultation process which was made publicly available so that interested individuals and parties can see what submissions had been received and how they were considered in the development of a Public Comment draft standard

¹ <https://committees.standards.org.au/POLICY/SG-001/STANDARDIZATIONGUIDE-SG-001.HTM>

As with the initial call on 8 April 2000 for submissions and expressions of interest on the development of an Australian Forestry Standard, which appeared in The Weekend Australian; The Sydney Morning Herald; The Melbourne Age; The Adelaide Advertiser; The Brisbane Courier Mail; The West Australian; The Canberra Times; The Hobart Mercury; The Northern Territory News - the Public Comment draft was similarly advertised in the national and state media on 11 August 2001 seeking comments or submissions by the deadline of 19 October 2001.

The review of the AFS

AFS Limited commenced the review of the AFS in July 2004 with the re-convening of the AFS Technical Reference Committee (AFS TRC). Prior to the technical committee being brought together, AFS Limited advertised the public comment period on the AFS review by placing a Public Notice in all State and Territory newspapers (see the last paragraph above for newspapers) in mid June 2004.

The AFS TRC meet formally in September 2004 to be briefed on the process approval for the AFS in 2002, the implementation of the AFS in Australia from 2003 onwards and the process to review the AFS in order to seek consensus agreement for it to be forwarded to Standards Australia for recognition as a full Australian Standard®.

The AFS TRC considered five drafts of the AFS during the review in 2004/05 and formally met on three occasions in 2006 to consider further drafts of the AFS. The AFS TRC agreed in April 2007 to go to ballot on the reviewed version of the AFS and a postal ballot for all committee members on the reviewed draft was conducted in May/June 2007 to reach a consensus decision on the reviewed AFS.

As the Interim AS status conferred by Standards Australia meant that it was a two year public comment period for the AFS, the requirements utilised in the initial drafting of the AFS were quite different to the requirements in the AFS review. All comments received on the AFS from the two years in use or as a result of the Public Notice as well as the views of the stakeholders on the AFS TRC were discussed and reflected in the drafts of the AFS.

As with the initial drafting of the AFS, once the final draft was approved by the AFS TRC in July 2007, as a result of the postal ballot, it was forwarded to a National Standards Office in Standards Australia who has been delegated the final approval powers for recognition of Australian Standards® by the Council of Standards Australia. The National Standards Office approved the AFS for recognition as a full Australian Standard® after having confirmed that committee consensus had been achieved, that specific Standards Australia requirements had been met and that appropriate public consultation, as an Interim AS, has occurred based on a review process by two Standards Sector Boards.

SAI Global publishes the AFS on its web site (www.saiglobal.com) for purchase in hard copy or electronic copy.

Australian Forestry Standard Limited publishes the AFS on its web site (www.forestrystandard.org.au)

Comment on the AFS?

Feedback over the life of the AFS is always welcome on the technical contents of the AFS and its Supplements which may be generated by the general community reading, reviewing and commenting, by forest owners and managers applying the AFS in practice for the certification of a forest estate or by interested organisations contrasting it with comparable forest management performance standards either domestic or international.

The AFS Technical Reference Committee welcomes your comments on the AFS and its Supplements. To be of assistance, your comments should reference a page/paragraph or clause or section it would be greatly appreciated by the drafting group when you or your organisation provides its submission.

Please e-mail your comments or submission - rich text message, or WORD or PDF document - to afs@forestrystandard.org.au

OR mail as hard copy to:

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