

### 5-yearly Revision

### AFSL Australia Standards for Forest Management (AS 4708)

### Public Meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2010

12:30pm to 2:00pm

Winston Room, Windsor Hotel, Spring St. Melbourne

TOPIC:: Standards Reference Committee AS 4708 –Be involved to make a change

### **BRIEFING NOTES**

Kayt Watts, the CEO of Australian Forestry Standards Ltd (AFSL), Dr Paul Biggs the Chair for Standard Review Committee (SRC) for AS 4708 and Tim Woods from Fitzpatrick Woods Consulting (FWC) provided an information session and open dialogue with stakeholders to the review of the Australian Standards, AS 4708 and AS 4707.

The presentation provided to attendees is also available from the AFSL website.

### **Tim Woods introduced the meeting and presentation.**

The process behind the review of AS 4708 has commenced. The review of AS 4707 is planned to commence soon. The revision process in its entirety is expected to take around 2 years.

AFSL management and FWC make up the Standards Review Support Team and will manage the review process, lead by independent Chair Dr Paul Biggs.

Standards Review Committees (SRCs) have the decision making roles in the Standards review, where AFSL management and the AFSL board does not. The SRC will be working on a consensus basis, where it is the requirement of the Standards Review Support Team to provide assistance to the SRC in meeting its revision commitments. The AFSL Board will ensure the revision project is managed in compliance to the Standards Setting and Revision compliance criteria.

There are many and broad stakeholders to this Australian Standards revision process. There will be a comprehensive, inclusive and metronomic approach to stakeholder engagement over the term of the revisions.

It is a Standards Australia requirement that the Standards are reviewed every 5 years. As the last revision process was complete in 2007, it is expected that these reviews will need to be started now to ensure they are completed in 2012.

### **Introduction by Dr Paul Biggs (SRC Chair AS 4708)**

These reviews are a very important aspect of the whole forest and wood products supply chain. It will be imperative that the reviews are conducted to 'keep the Standard up to date with community and environmental desires'.

AFSL is one of the few Standards Development bodies in Australia.

AS 4708 is underpinned by 9 criteria. These criteria have linkages with international criteria through the PEFC framework and through Australian Government regulation.

The original Standards were built by Technical Reference Committees, in some ways similar to an SRC. This revision process will be simpler, as the Standard has already been developed. It will also be different due to support provided by FWC and the rest of the Standards Review Support Team who will conduct many of the onerous tasks.

Time commitments for SRC members will include a few physical meetings, but most contribution will be conducted by phone and email.

Full stakeholder engagement will be underpinned by a fully collaborative process. The review of AS 4708 will consist of a 20 person SRC plus contribution from broader stakeholders. Success will depend on meaningful contribution from all stakeholders.

Expected outcomes of the revision include a solid and fully inclusive public engagement process.

### **Brief by Kayt Watts (CEO AFSL)**

The AFSL is a Standards Development Organisation (SDO). The rigour and transparency in the documentation and procedure development process are important in maintaining SDO status.

Timeframe for public consultation as part of the reviews is early 2011. Management and evidence based record keeping will be critical to the review along the way.

It is estimated that 12 – 18 months will be required for the review of AS 4707.

We are currently finalising the membership of the SRCs. We are also finalising project plans. We envisage that the public consultation papers and processes will commence mid 2011.

The consensus framework will underpin SRC decision making. To clarify, the AFSL Board involvement is not related to content but rather to oversee the revision project to ensure progress and that milestones are met within certain timeframes and compliance to the standards setting and revision process is adhered to.

Of importance in building the SRCs is that there is still significant work to be done to attain Indigenous involvement in the SRCs.

## Questions

*Q. What is the expected time commitment of an SRC Member?*

A. Not that much. It is anticipated that SRC member participation will be required at intervals consistent with the extensive public consultation phases of the reviews. This means chunks of time where SRC members provide considered intellectual contribution, then fairly large lags where time is given for response to public consultation. FWC, as part of the revision support team, will conduct the onerous tasks, allowing SRC members to focus their efforts at an intellectual level and within their area of expertise.

*Q. Can the revision take longer, or shorter than the expected timeframe?*

A. Yes. The 2 year timeframe for the review of AS 4708 (SFM) and 18 month timeframe for AS 4707 (CoC) is an estimation only. The actual duration of each review will depend largely on how long consensus and public engagement takes. A longer timeframe for the review of AS 4708 is planned to take into account the many issues surrounding forests in Australia at present.

*Q. How do you get consensus?*

A. The process of consensus within the SRC will be consistent with the requirements of Standards Australia. It will be democratic and rigorous, noting that consensus does not have to be totally unanimous.

*Q. How many meetings, and are they all required to be in person?*

A. It is anticipated that up to 4 face to face meetings of each SRC will be needed. Most meetings will be conducted by teleconference and will occur as issues arise. As SRC membership is a voluntary role, every effort will be made to minimise impost on participation.

*Q. Will there be just one SRC for both reviews or two individual SRCs?*

A. There will be two, 1 for AS 4708 (SFM) and 1 for AS 4707 (CoC). The two SRCs will operate separate review processes.

*Q. How do you ensure reviews don't become mixed up? Is there a need for the committees to come together?*

A. The two Australian Standards are quite different and overlap is not foreseeable. In the event of overlap there may be some call for Chairs of each SRC to meet to discuss issues.

*Q. What are the first tasks and requirements expected of the SRCs when the reviews begin?*

A. Once the introductory process is complete, were SRC members build an understanding for each other, the first task will be to 'get the issues on the table'. The questions that need answering by the SRC to begin with will be:

- In consideration of stakeholders, what are the elements of the current criteria within the Standard that are out of date? This is an analysis of the issues. Many of the topical issues around the Australian Standards will emerge in this process
- What are the actions that are required to address topical issues? This will lead to building the public consultation process.

Sub-groups within the SRC may be established to further research issues and advise the SRC. FWC will work with and support sub-group in such research tasks.

*Q. Will the SRC be assessing implications for a joint AS/NZ Standard?*

A. This raises the question about scope of the SRC. It may be out of the scope of the SRC to engage NZ stakeholders to determine their interest in a joint Standard. AFSL may be better placed to open dialogue with NZ on this issue. The SRC would only be directly involved in the instance where a joint AS/NZ Standard has been agreed upon by stakeholders in both countries, and the Standards development process begins.

*Q. Will the 'small grower guidelines' be looked at as part of the AS 4708 review?*

A. As the small grower guidelines is a guidance document, it will be part of the AS 4708 review. It is possible that small grower issues will emerge as a topical issue for the review, including the role of Group Certification within the Standard.

*Q. At what point do PEFC get involved?*

A. This 5-yearly review is a requirement of the Australian Standards development processes. Accreditation through the PEFC is technically a separate process. However, the Australian Standards are built to meet PEFC criteria as a minimum, so PEFC requirements will be used to guide the review. To note, the PEFC Meta-Standard has recently been reviewed and has more detail that will require consideration by the SRC.

*Q. What do I do if I have any another questions?*

A. Contact the AFSL through the Standards Review Support Team.  
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