

Responsible Wood Recertification Backs VicForests

VicForests, today, announced its successful 3-year re-certification under the Responsible Wood standard.

An audit was conducted across the business in December 2018 and recommended VicForests re-certification highlighting its thorough workplace and contractor safety standards, contractor management and continued contribution to research.

The Responsible Wood standard is endorsed by the international Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) – the largest such system in the world which covers more than 300 million hectares of forest, has 49 national members and equates to around two-thirds of the world's total certified forest area.

General Manager of Corporate Affairs, Alex Messina, said VicForests was proud of its Responsible Wood certification which has been maintained for more than 10 years.

“This is a terrific result which shows VicForests continues to be a responsible native timber harvesting business,” Mr Messina said

“Over the past twelve months, VicForests has shown itself to be agile and adaptive in the face of an ever-changing environment.

Mr Messina said VicForests harvests native timber resources in a sustainable manner which protects local biodiversity and ensures the long-term future of Victoria’s forests.

“This is a clear endorsement of VicForests’ management systems and protection of biodiversity.

“We go to great lengths to regenerate harvested areas with the same forest type that was there prior to harvesting. What we harvest, we grow back.

“Our practices are based on a scientific approach to forestry management.

“VicForests also actively contributes to research and knowledge-building across the biodiversity and forest management professions.”

VicForests has maintained Responsible Wood certification since 2007 and undertakes regular independent audits to monitor its management systems and operations in accordance with these requirements.

All major commercial native timber harvesting enterprises across Australia are certified under this system including Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.



Under the standard, VicForests' operations are assessed against 9 criteria, including its management systems, biodiversity and stakeholder engagement.

To achieve re-certification, VicForests demonstrated a commitment to revised and adaptive harvesting and regeneration systems which focus on more consistently using greater retention harvesting methods and lower intensity burning; revised High Conservation management and responsive stakeholder engagement.

VicForests is audited under the Responsible Wood standard every nine months to ensure it continues to meet the Australian standard of environmental protection, safety and corporate compliance.

The re-certification audit proved very useful in identifying two major non-conformities, which VicForests responded to with immediate corrective actions. The two major non-conformities were:

- The availability of a publicly available map of the Defined Forest Area; and
- Monitoring of Heavy Vehicles mass management requirements for measured sawlog loads.

These non-conformities were subsequently closed.

Corrective action is also being progressed on one minor non-conformity relating to associated non-conformities that require further work. This will be completed before the next audit in nine months.

In 2018, VicForests also announced it would seek FSC Controlled Wood standard by 2020.

The Responsible Wood Audit report is available at the VicForests website at www.vicforests.com.au.

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Background:

- *There is 7.1 million hectares of public forests across Victoria, about 94 per cent of which is protected in parks, reserves or is unsuitable for native timber harvesting.*
- *VicForests harvests around 3000 hectares per year, or 0.04 per cent of that area – nominally equivalent to 4 trees in 10,000.*
- *VicForests is certified under the Responsible Wood certification.*
- *High Conservation Values (HCVs) are protected through rigorous conservation practices including exclusion zones for threatened species and buffer zones to prevent encroachment on rainforest areas.*
- *VicForests protects any Leadbeater Possum or colonies through a 12.6-hectare Timber Harvest Exclusion Zone, equivalent to about 6 MCG fields. This protection has been consulted and agreed upon with a wide range of independent scientists, regulators and environment groups.*
- *VicForests also applies Greater Gliders protection zones, throughout East Gippsland, of 100 hectares in areas where more than 10 Gliders are found in a one-kilometre line.*
- *VicForests is committed to the highest standard of regeneration. VicForests replants all the areas that are harvested, replanting areas with the same trees that were there previously.*