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VicForests to seek FSC certification

VicForests has announced today that it will be seeking Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Controlled Wood certification.

The Controlled Wood standard provides evidence that wood has been controlled to ensure it is legally harvested, in accordance with traditional and civil rights, and does not threaten High Conservation Values or result in natural forest conversion to plantations.

Chief Executive Officer, Robert Green, said the announcement is part of VicForests commitment to independent third party forest certification.

“Seeking Controlled Wood certification is the first step for VicForests in a process towards gaining full FSC Forest Management certification.

“Full forest management certification provides assurance to consumers that the wood products they buy come from sustainable forestry practices which meet world-class standards,” said Mr Green.

“VicForests’ is currently certified to the Australian Forestry Standard, which has been specifically designed for Australian forests and is recognised by the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification, the world’s largest forest certification scheme.

“We have decided to seek FSC Controlled Wood certification to further demonstrate our strong commitment to transparency and continual improvement in our operations.

“Australia is currently importing \$4 billion a year in wood and wood products and this demand is expected to increase significantly in the future,” he said.

“We believe that seeking additional, independent certification provides further assurance to consumers about the sustainability of our locally produced wood products from responsibly managed Victorian forests.

“We will continue to maintain our Australian Forestry Standard certification as part of our commitment to managing our forests for a range of social, economic and environmental outcomes,” he said.

Mr Green said VicForests underwent a preliminary assessment against two FSC standards last year to understand where the organisation needed to adapt or improve practices.

“We have publicly released the preliminary assessment report drafted by SCS Global Services in order to provide as much transparency as possible around this process.

“The report acknowledges our positive practices and also identifies possible non-conformances with both standards,” he said.

“We plan to undergo an audit against the Controlled Wood standard in the first half of 2015 as part of a stepped approach towards achieving full FSC Forest Management certification.

“We want to be methodical and considered in our approach to seeking certification under FSC.

“The community will have the opportunity to provide input into our practices through a detailed consultation process as part of the certification bid,” said Mr Green.

More details and a copy of the full SCS Preliminary Assessment Report can be viewed at:
www.vicforests.com.au