



# REPORT

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## FORESTRY PLANTATIONS QUEENSLAND

AFS SUMMARY AUDIT REPORT  
MAY 2008

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This audit was a Re-certification audit of the Forest Management System operated by Forestry Plantations Queensland (FPQ) according to the requirements of the Australian Forestry Standard.

## **2. THE AUDIT**

### **2.1 Audit Scope**

Management operations associated with native forest, softwood plantations, hardwood plantations and nurseries on Defined Forest Areas and related forest management services under FPQ management.

### **2.2 Audit Objectives**

Conduct a re-certification audit against the requirements of the Australian Forestry Standard (AS4708:2007).

### **2.3 Audit Protocols**

The audit was conducted in accordance with JAS-ANZ Procedure 26 Revision 3, DNV Certification audit protocols and with the requirements of the Australian Forestry Standard. The audit was conducted by a lead auditor assessed by DNV as meeting the competency requirements for qualification as an AFS auditor. The lead auditor was assisted by a RAB-QSA recognised Lead Environmental Management System Auditor. The audit comprised ten audit days in total.

### **2.4 Audit Process**

The audit was conducted from the 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at Central Office -Brisbane, and Beerburrum, Imbil, Gympie and Byfield offices, workshops and field operations. The audit included an opening meeting, review of operational documentation, interviews with operational management and senior Management, review of records associated with management and control of the forest management system, and field audits of forestry activities.

### **2.5 Background of Client**

Forestry Plantations Queensland (FPQ) is a Queensland State Owned Corporation (SOC) that manages softwood and hardwood plantations on behalf of the Queensland Government. The Corporations core business is the commercial and sustainable management of state owned plantation assets including exotic pine plantation, hoop pine plantations and hardwood plantations across north, central and southeastern Queensland. FPQ also provide specialist forest management services to public and public sectors, interstate and internationally, in carbon sequestration and mitigation, biofuels, soil and water salinity management, water quality, and conservation and propagation projects.

Established in May 2006 Forestry Plantations Queensland formerly traded as DPI Forestry. DPI Forestry achieved certification of its environmental management system to ISO14001 in 1999 and to the AFS in 2005. Native forest and plantation operations were separated in April 2006.

## **3. AUDIT RESULTS**



## Performance against assessed Criteria & Requirements

Findings of this audit demonstrated a high level of achievement of the requirements of the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS), including continual improvement of forest management performance.

FPQ retain detailed records of the DFA, broken down to Plantation Areas and species types, at 1:25,000 and these are given ongoing attention due to levels of land procurement. However, FPQ cannot demonstrate that maps of these at a scale of no smaller than 1:250,000 are publicly available, as required by JAS-ANZ Procedure 26.

### 3.1.1 Criterion 1 – Forest management shall be undertaken in a systematic manner that addresses the range of forest values

The FPQ Sustainability Plan (Version 3, April 2008) is an internal core document describing the sustainable forest management system implemented and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the AFS. An overview of the document (*Sustainable Plantations Management – An overview of Forestry Plantations Queensland’s sustainable forest management activities*) has recently been published. These instruments effectively and appropriately describe the systematic approach for management according to the requirements of the AFS.

Specifics and applicability of legal and other requirements are very rigorously documented (Appendix 12 of FPQ Sustainability Plan) and linked to “Aspects and Impacts of Activities”, Management Policies & Strategies, and Performance Indicators. However, FPQ could implement checks of some Commonwealth and local laws (including regional planning schemes) that may be relevant to land acquisition and plantation development on freehold land at specific planning stages. For example, application to the Commonwealth to determine whether or not plantation establishment at an area near Byfield was a “controlled action” according to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* was undertaken after the land was purchased.

The analysis of impacts associated with plantation establishment, tendering and harvesting considers only operational type and does not consider variables associated with different locations, species types and operational methodologies. Also FPQ has not identified and assessed aspects and impacts associated with non-core small scale activities / projects conducted outside forests, the operation of depots and workshops, purchasing (both suppliers and contractors) and land acquisitions considering risks from potential impacts associated with previous use.

No evidence was available to show FPQ consider significant environmental aspects when identifying training needs, especially for personnel occupying senior management positions

The FPQ *Annual SFM Continuous Improvement Action Plan (07-08)* demonstrates monitoring and evaluation of forest management outcomes commensurate with AFS criteria. However, while FPQ have established an effective process for periodical auditing of forest management operations, an internal audit of the Sustainability Plan to determine whether or not it conforms with the requirements of the AFS has not been effectively conducted. Further, management review of policy, objectives and targets and changes needed to address new information and changed management processes is not well demonstrated.



### **3.1.2 Criterion 2 – Forest management shall provide for public participation and foster on-going relationships to be a good neighbour**

FPQ continue to be committed to identifying and establishing contact with relevant stakeholders and interested parties. The Sustainability Plan lists key stakeholders and interested parties at State and regional levels. FPQ intend to establish greater interaction and collaboration with stakeholders towards improved sustainable forest management. Collaboration with government conservation bodies and ornithologists at Paddy's Lagoon, via Byfield, show impressive biodiversity conservation efforts and outcomes.

### **3.1.3 Criterion 3 – Forest management shall protect and maintain the biological diversity of forests, including their successional stages, across the regional landscape**

FPQ can claim significance contribution to biodiversity and soil and water conservation and general forest ecosystem health and vitality through their appreciation and dedicated management of non-commercial areas. Establishment of PDU's involve considerable assessment of biodiversity issues. FPQ maintain a policy of no clearing of remnant native forest for plantation establishment. Non-remnant "scrub" is carefully assessed using *Vegetation Management Act 1999* maps and the Qld Govt. GIS is used to identify important habitats and ecosystems before conversion to plantations. Examples of fire management for Casuarinas assisting the conservation of Glossy Black Cockatoos near Imble are notable.

### **3.1.4 Criterion 4 – Forest management shall maintain the productive capacity of forests**

FPQ's core business is the production of sawlog and plywood grade trees, and while round and chip grade logs are produced the emphasis is on increasing sawlog production. Other productive uses of the DFA (e.g. grazing, beekeeping and recreational activities, carbon sinks and green belts) have been well identified.

Silvicultural practices for native and exotic pines are well developed and based on many years experience. Practices for the establishment and maintenance of native hardwood plantations in dry land areas are not yet well established, however an increasing effort using horticulture and forest science is designed to develop best practice.

Damage during thinning and other silvicultural treatments is systematically monitored and addressed. Considerable evidence of planting methodology (e.g. row spacing and direction) to reduce subsequent risk of damage to growing stock is evident in Hoop Pine plantations.

FPQ maintains a comprehensive fire detection/protection system to prevent, or minimise the impact of wildfires. The fire control communication centre at Beerburrum, featuring sophisticated real time video footage of fire direction and intensity is an impressive facility and demonstrates FPQ's commitment to the maintenance of the productive capacity of plantation forests.

### **3.1.5 Criterion 5 – Forest management shall maintain forest ecosystem health and vitality**

Vertebrate and invertebrate pests, weeds, root rot fungus and other pathogens and diseases have become apparent over a long period of time and FPQ maintain a diligent surveillance effort of plantation health based on a combination of aerial and ground-based inspections. FPQ has in place a Pest Management Strategy and Regional Pest Management Plans are in place. Contingency plans are in place to deal with the potential incursion of



identified damage agents (e.g. siren wood wasp which has progressively moved north towards the Qld. border).

FPQ have reduced their reliance on chemical use by adopting alternative silvicultural techniques (e.g. mechanical clearing and slash retention) and the use of residual chemicals (e.g. use of knock down herbicides that readily break down in the soil).

### **3.1.6 Criterion 6 – Forest management shall protect soil and water resources.**

Protection of soil and water is a feature of forest operations. All sites inspected showed excellent attention to potential erosion and sedimentation issues, especially the condition of forest roads and stream crossings. In addition, FPQ recognise the importance and complexity of hydrological flows in plantation management and have established water monitoring, sampling and research programs to provide baseline data and determine the cumulative impacts of operations over multiple rotations.

The condition of the workshop and yard at Beerburrum is not reflective of FPQ policy and is not conducive to the prevention of soil and water contamination. Also the condition of a contractors container and surrounding area at the Byfield Forest Office presents real risk of soil and water pollution.

### **3.1.7 Criterion 7 – Forest management shall maintain forests’ contribution to carbon cycles**

FPQ is committed to supporting the Qld. Govt’s climate change strategy “Climate Smart 2050” through developing capacity to measure carbon sequestered in plantations, adopting silvicultural practices that maximise carbon stored in trees, roots and soil, increasing its carbon sink by increasing plantation area, and producing timber products where carbon is stored in buildings and structures.

### **3.1.8 Criterion 8 – Forest management shall protect and maintain, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, their natural, cultural, social, religious and spiritual heritage values**

Indigenous peoples rights and responsibilities are built into FPQ planning processes, including procedures for legislative requirements for determination, consultation and recognition of native title claims and cultural heritage values (e.g. *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) & *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*.). Plantation Design Units showed detailed interrogation of cultural heritage registers and assessment of potential native title issues.

The development and implementation of the FPQ Visitor Use Strategy is recognised. Assessment of Recreation Visitor Management at Beerburrum showed authorised users to be well identified and controlled (e.g. through permit system). Unauthorised users are also well identified, but present considerable control challenges.

### **3.1.9 Criterion 9 – Forest management shall maintain and enhance long-term social and economic benefits**

FPQ is committed to be a good corporate citizen and can demonstrate support and benefits to local and regional communities by contributing to many facets of the forest industry and related industries and support businesses. FPQ maintain regional community support registers and provide employment opportunities.



FPQ are participating in a National Indigenous Forestry Strategy with the purpose bringing together industry groups, indigenous organisations and government representatives to discuss potential partnership/joint venture opportunities in forestry.

Plantation Design Units contain process for identifying OH&S hazards and developing measures to avoid or minimise risks. Contractors are required to operate according to the Forest Harvesting Code of Practice 2007 and are responsible for conducting their own risk assessment and developing appropriate controls. However, audit findings suggest and increased focus on safety issues in depots and workshops is required; particularly in relation to plant and equipment testing.

In accord with Queensland Government Policy and a Code of Conduct, FPQ supports equal opportunities and use qualifications, skill and experience as the basis for recruitment and advancement of staff. The rights for employees to join a union or associated and to collectively bargain is also Queensland Government Policy.

## **4 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS**

The re-certification of Forest Plantation Queensland to AFS AS 4708 - 2007 is recommended with no additional audit requirements.

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