

# Can forest certification effect positive social change within Australian plantation forestry?

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# Presentation Outline

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# Forest Certification

“Forest certification is a voluntary process by which planning, procedures, systems and performance of on-the-ground forestry operations are audited by a qualified and independent third party against a pre-determined standard designed to ensure that operations are environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable”

*source: <http://adl.brs.gov.au/forestsaustralia/facts/certification.html>*

# The global advent of forest certification

- **NGO targeting of forest management companies**
  - Alternative to ‘blunt’ tools such as boycotts and bans
  - Need for credible standardized evaluation of corporate claims of sustainability
- **International institutional neoliberal agenda**
  - Restrictions imposed by neoliberal agendas associated with international trade led to the need for private forms of regulation



# Forest certification Australia

- **Certification of Australian forest management began in 2003**
- **Two competing certification schemes, the ENGO based FSC and government/industry based AFS which is under the global umbrella of PEFC**
- **9.2 million hectares certified**
  - **8.7 million hectares AFS**
  - **500,000 hectares FSC**

# Influences on certification

## 4 forms of influence on forest certification:

1. **Political** – regulatory environment, policy development, local politics
2. **Corporate** – internal organisational culture, recruitment, available resources & training, external market demands, corporate ethics
3. **Professional** – professional training, performance standards
4. **Social** – social perceptions, community characteristics (demographics, prior history, values, knowledge base), power relations

# Tasmanian Criterion and Regulation Comparison

Impacts	
<b>Forest Practices Code</b>	Potential off-site impacts of plantation development will be considered and reasonable measures taken to address issues
<b>Good Neighbour Charter</b>	We will take account of community aspirations and issues in planning the development of new tree farms
<b>Australian Forestry Standard</b>	Considering the impact of forest operations on neighbours; and taking appropriate actions to minimise any adverse impacts;
Notifications	
<b>Forest Practices Code</b>	Notification of local government and landholders located within 100m of boundary of planned practices at least 30 days prior to operations commencing
<b>Good Neighbour Charter</b>	We will inform local government of forest practices operations as required under the FPC We will ensure active, ongoing and timely communication with neighbouring landowners by, informing neighbours of planned forest operations,
<b>Australian Forestry Standard</b>	Notifying neighbours that may be directly affected and responsible authorities, where appropriate, before commencing forest operations

# Limitations of practical certification impacts

- Nothing ‘new’ in the certification criterion

- No ‘real’ change to CE practices in regulated environments

*“...basically we haven’t had to change a lot [CE practices]. Our main focus has been on just **improving our reporting**... and a focus on managing remnants.”  
(WA Private Forest Manager 1)*

- Change occurred in a less regulated environment

*“Yep **there is no doubt about it**. If we didn’t get FSC certification, we probably would not be this far down the track as we are.” (VIC Private Forest Manager 1)*

- Limited practical improvement due to prior compliance with governing regulations

# Corporate influences on certification

- **Organisational culture** – corporate values influences practical actions
  - *“The reason we decided to adopt FSC was because the **principles of FSC lined up very closely with our business management systems....**” (WA Private Forest Manager 2)*
  - *“**Because of our clients wanted it.** And ‘Trees Limited’ always been on the environmentally sensitive end of the timber industry and it’s [FSC] the obvious recognised one by the ENGOs. Yeah.” (WA Private Forest Manager 3)*
- **Operational and Economic Realities** - Re-evaluation of forest certification highlights dynamic business environment and impacts of continual improvement and criterion changes



# Social influences on certification

## Personal Traits

- Personal approach to CE and forest certification

## Social Perceptions & Prior History

- *“Well I think the forest industry has a **terrible history of public perception**. .....We’re riding on the back of something that a lot of people perceive as a big dark cloud. **They don’t understand the industry and they don’t particularly like it.**” (TAS Private Forest Manager 3)*

## Social capacity to be involved in forest management decision-making

- Raised expectations of influence in decision-making and operational outcomes
- Limited local interest, same old faces
- Values and negotiated outcomes



# Certification and social learning

- **Changes in practices through changes in forest manager capacity**
  - **Limited acknowledged** improvement in CE
  - **Reinforcement of social values** within commercial forest management
  - **Promoting applied discourse** in the management of social outcomes amongst the forest management profession
  - **Promoting critical reflection** and acknowledgement of engagement 'performance'
  - Encourages further development and **experimentation** of engagement practices
  
- **Changes in community capacity**
  - **Little improvement** in community capacity observed
  - **Expected to improve** as forest managers improve their skill, strategies etc

## Conclusion

- **Does certification make forest managers do more in terms of CE**
  - Yes and no...
- **Does certification make CE promote social learning?**
  - In the future...

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<http://www.crcforestry.com.au/research/programme-four/communities>

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