

**National Report to the Fourth Session of the  
United Nations Forum on Forests**

**Australia**

**April 2004**

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## I. Key contacts

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## II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

### **Assessment of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context**

Australia conducted the first comprehensive review of its implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action in 2000. The outcomes of this assessment, including the methodology used, were presented at a side event at the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF1), in New York in 2001, and an update of this assessment is expected to be developed in time for UNFF5 in 2005.

Australia's most recent notable achievement, in terms of the themes for discussion at UNFF4, is the development of a National Indigenous Forestry Strategy (NIFS), which will be gradually implemented over the coming years. Australia is also in the process of reviewing its legislation on intellectual property (IP) rights to better clarify IP for traditional knowledge, including traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK).

### **Development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests**

Australia launched its National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) in 1992. The NFPS was jointly developed by the Australian Government and the governments of all states and territories and in consultation with the Australian Local Government Association, unions, industry representatives, conservation organisations and the general community. The NFPS was developed concurrently with the Ecologically Sustainable Development National Strategy and the National Greenhouse Response Strategy.

The major initiative to implement the NFPS, which was developed by the Australian Government and the Western Australian, Victorian, Tasmanian and New South Wales State Governments was the finalisation of ten Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) for the long-term management and use of commercial native forests in specific regions. RFAs are 20-year plans for the conservation and sustainable production of Australia's native forests within the RFA areas. While RFAs have not entirely ended tensions between proponents of conservation and production in Australia, they have resulted in a world-class forest reserve system that includes significant forest biodiversity, old growth forest, wilderness and cultural heritage components.

RFAs have attempted to deliver certainty of access to forest resources for the timber industry and encouraged and/or assisted the timber industry onto a more value-added processing footing. The RFA process has contributed overwhelmingly to a quantum increase in Australia's forest knowledge base through a process of

Comprehensive Regional Assessments (CRAs) of the environmental, economic, social and cultural values and uses of forests.

A further important contribution of RFAs is that they have helped pave the way for considerable advances in Australia's approach to sustainable forest management. One of the most significant achievements of the RFA process was to refine the methodology for assessing, and continually improving, sustainable forest management. We now have developed criteria and indicators (C&I) of sustainable forest management (SFM) as part of the Montreal Process, and these tools have been incorporated into forest management as a means of monitoring and continually improving management.

To encourage plantation expansion, the Australian Government, in collaboration with the state and territory governments, has developed the Plantation 2020 Vision. This agreement provides the national framework for the sustainable expansion of Australia's plantation resource, including the reduction of pressure on Australia's native forest resources. The strategy was further developed in consultation with a number of industry representatives, plantation growers and processors, investors, landholders, local governments, researchers, farmer associations, unions, landcare groups and others with an interest in natural resource management and the environmental benefits of plantations.

#### **Mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation**

Australia has several procedures in place to facilitate stakeholder participation. These are detailed under social and cultural aspects of forests (pages 6–17 of this report).

#### **Australia and its political structure**

Spanning about 4000 kilometres from west to east and about 3600 kilometres from north to south, Australia is the world's sixth largest country, with an area of about 768 million hectares. It experiences a wide range of climates: temperate, monsoonal tropical and wet tropical, Mediterranean, arid and semi-arid, and even an alpine zone. Australia's people are highly urbanised in the country's major cities, which are mostly located along the coastal fringe.

Politically, in addition to the national government, Australia is a federation consisting of six self-governing states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia) and two mainland self-governing Territories (the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory). There are also several external or offshore Territories administered by the Australian (or Federal) Government. The Australian Constitution explicitly defines the responsibilities of the Australian Government. These cover foreign affairs and international trade, international agreements, defence, quarantine and taxation. Management of land and natural resources, including forests, is largely the responsibility of the state and territory governments. Through its external powers, the Australian Government is responsible for meeting Australia's international obligations through the conventions and treaties to which it is party. In the past the

Australian Government has used its external powers in relation to domestic land use and environmental issues, for example in 1983 in the case of the proposed Franklin River dam in Tasmania, through the *World Heritage Conservation Act 1983*. Use of these powers is uncommon and it is more usual for the Australian Government to develop national policy and the means for implementation, in consultation and coordination with the states and territories. The NFPS of 1992 and the RFAs that were developed over the following years to implement the policy are good examples of this collaboration.

**Streamlined reporting**

This report on Australia's forest policy and programmes was largely produced using information that was gathered in the 2003 State of the Forests Report (SOFR). Throughout this report there are several references to detailed information available in tables etc. from SOFR. SOFR can be accessed online at <[www.daff.gov.au/stateoftheforests](http://www.daff.gov.au/stateoftheforests)>. Alternatively, the Australian Government may be contacted regarding any other information relevant to this report.

### III. Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to thematic issues of UNFF 4

#### **Social and cultural aspects of forests**

##### **Intellectual property rights for forest-related knowledge**

Australia is a biologically rich country with the world's highest incidence of endemic genetic resources (up to 10% of the world's genetic resources) and has an overriding obligation to pursue the protection and sustainable use of these resources. Moreover, Australia, under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), recognises that the Convention's third primary objective — the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources — is fundamental. Australia recognises its responsibility to develop frameworks for the access to, and utilisation of, genetic resources consistent with this Convention, and that these frameworks should also respect Indigenous peoples' special relationship with these resources.

Australia has made significant progress in the last decade in meeting these requirements. In addition, Australia has made a significant contribution to the development and adoption of the CBD guidelines for such frameworks — the 2002 *Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization*.

Current arrangements to protect indigenous knowledge on biodiversity, which includes indigenous forest-related knowledge, is outlined in the *Nationally Consistent Approach for Access to and the Utilisation of Australia's Native Genetic and Biochemical Resources* (NCA), and was adopted by all Australian governments in 2002. The Principles established in this framework provide for legislative and administrative action by all Australian governments to deliver on objectives of the *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity* (National Strategy) and to implement the Bonn Guidelines, including by:

- developing the terms of access to resources that encourage local, national and international investment in Australia's biotechnology research and development capabilities, including, biodiscovery research, bioprocessing and product development; and
- recognising the need to ensure the use of traditional knowledge is undertaken with the cooperation and approval of the holders of that knowledge and on mutually agreed terms.

The latter consideration reflects the objective set out in the above National Strategy that use of traditional knowledge in the scientific, commercial and public domain proceeds only with the cooperation and control of the traditional owners of that knowledge, ensuring that the use and collection of such knowledge results in social and economic benefits to the traditional owners. The principles set out in the NCA aim to position Australia so that it obtains the maximum economic, social and

environmental benefits from the ecologically sustainable use of its genetic and biochemical resources whilst protecting its biodiversity and natural capital.

The first legislative response to the NCA is likely to be regulations to be adopted and introduced in late 2004 under the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

The development of the *EPBC Act* regulations followed a national public inquiry into access to biological resources. In the course of that inquiry, extensive consultation was undertaken and included Indigenous traditional owners, their statutory representative bodies, national and regional Indigenous organisations and interested Indigenous persons as well as Australian and State and Territory Government departments and agencies with policy responsibilities for Indigenous Australians. Input on drafts of the regulations of the Act, were also actively sought from stakeholders of each of these groups.

In addition, Australia actively participates in a number of international fora where issues such as intellectual property, genetic resources, traditional knowledge, folklore and their relationship with Indigenous people are currently being discussed. These include the World Intellectual Property Organization Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (WIPO IGC), the Conference of Parties (COP) of the CBD, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and the Agriculture and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. These varying fora in which discussions are taking place underline the point that there are a complex range of policy considerations and policy implementation options (some of which overlap) that are relevant to these issues.

Australia has been actively engaged in the work of the WIPO IGC and has made significant contributions to this process, including supporting and providing input into a survey on traditional Indigenous knowledge protection. The WIPO IGC has encouraged Indigenous participation at its meetings and Indigenous Australians have attended meetings as ad hoc observers.

#### **Supporting women's participation in sustainable forest management**

The Australian Government acknowledges that women play a fundamental role and are significant contributors to the whole agricultural and resource management sector. It has committed itself to a range of policies and programmes, which support women that are involved in rural industries, including women in forestry. Within the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Women in Rural Industries Programme (WIRI) aims to improve the recognition of women's contributions to rural industries, increase opportunities for women's decision making in agriculture, fisheries and forestry and promote the wide adoption of best practice models.

The WIRI Programme works with government, industry and community organisations to facilitate the inclusion of women in consultation and decision

making and to support women to become industry leaders. An important aspect of the programme is to increase the capacity and self-reliance of women in the rural sector through support for individual women and national women's non-government organisations (NGOs).

Its activities include:

- developing women through partnerships with industry that offer scholarships and mentoring. Such programs can assist women to develop the skills, knowledge and networks they require to take a more active and representative role in their industry;
- encouraging greater recognition of women and their role and contribution to rural industries through supporting, in partnership with others, an annual award designed to recognise and encourage women's contribution to Australia's rural industries and through providing winners of the award with resources to develop their management, business and leadership skills;
- supporting women's NGOs to enhance their ability to provide leadership, contribute to and participate in rural industries and to develop a more independent and strategic NGO sector; and
- encouraging greater involvement of industry in creating opportunities for women to increase their professional skills and personal profile through partnerships and participation in WIRI Programme initiatives.

#### **Timber Communities Australia**

Timber Communities Australia (TCA) is a national NGO. One of its aims is to increase the number of women taking an active role in the timber industries. Some of the ways that TCA is encouraging and assisting women include providing support for training to develop women's skills and knowledge, holding the biennial Women in Timber Conference and encouraging recognition of women's achievements and contribution to the timber industry.

#### **Local and Indigenous communities**

In Australia there are specific programmes relating to Indigenous peoples. This section of the report has therefore been split into a) local communities and b) Indigenous peoples.

##### ***a) Integrating local communities in sustainable forest-management programmes***

###### *The attainment of secure land tenure arrangements for local communities*

Community forest management is an emerging theme in Australia and applies to several community organisations located throughout the country. For example, the Wombat Forest Community group has been granted joint management

responsibility over the Wombat State Forest in Victoria (see case study, page 12 of this report).

*Participation in decision making regarding the management of forests*

Opportunities for public participation are well established in Australia. The model that has generally been adopted in Australia has the following components:

- the public announcement of a forest management plan or review;
- the publication of a factual document describing the geographical, ecological, resource and social attributes of the area;
- requests for submissions about how the area should be managed;
- the issuing of a draft plan which usually contains the number and nature of the submissions that have been received;
- a draft plan that is explained in public meetings, to stakeholders and individuals;
- a request for a second round of submissions;
- the final plan, prepared and submitted for government approval; and
- the public participation process, facilitated under local government planning legislation.

As part of the RFA process, governments undertook a review of public participation and consultation in harvest planning for public forested land. An essential element of the RFA process was broad consultation to obtain the views of as many people as possible with an interest, or stake in, Australia's forests. RFAs also require five-yearly reviews to allow 'fine tuning' of the agreements. Public consultation is a key component of these reviews.

Most public forests within nature conservation reserves have some form of legislative and institutional commitment to public participation in their management, similar to the process within RFA regions. Formal processes for facilitating communication about the management of public forests between stakeholders such as local communities and relevant government ministers and agencies, have been developed by both the Australian Government at a national level and some states and territories. In addition, there are several local community 'friends of the forest' groups which have varying degrees of participation in the management of their local forests. Victoria boasts the largest number of community forest groups, including the Wombat Forest Community group which has entered into a formal arrangement with the State forest managers (detailed on page 12 of this report).

The effectiveness of public participation in influencing final decisions has not been assessed, but is thought to vary widely. Consultation is thought to have been less effective with the Indigenous community because consultation requires longer lead times and reaching consensus within the communities takes longer (SOFR 2003).

The commitment to public participation in SFM is not as well established in plantations which are publicly managed, such as corporate or commercial enterprises, as it is in native forests. Within private forest estates the commitment to public participation varies widely and is largely dependent upon the owner of the land in question. In light of this, the Australian Government entered into a process of consultation with communities and other stakeholders to revise the 1997 Plantation 2020 Vision for the expansion of Australia's plantation estate, to more closely consider the social issues. The revision includes providing a role for community participation in the ongoing development of plantation resources.

Another initiative to assist with public consultation and information regarding private forestry are Private Forestry Development Committees (PFDCs), of which there are 18 in the main plantation regions of Australia. These committees are jointly funded by the Australian Government and the responsible agency in each state/territory. The roles of the PFDCs vary between regions but all have a key role in communication and addressing issues that hinder forest-development specific activities.

An increasing number of forest management companies are entering into voluntary certification schemes such as the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) and public consultation is a key component of these schemes.

The opportunities for public involvement in forest-related matters are detailed in Table 117 of section 7.2a of the Australian SOFR. SOFR also identifies the extent to which the legal framework (laws, regulations, guidelines) supports the conservation and sustainable management of forests, including the extent to which it provides opportunities for public participation in public policy and decision making related to forests and public access to information (see section 7 in SOFR).

*Capacity building and technology transfer for sustainable forest management directed at local communities*

Within Australia there is considerable interest from communities and organisations to undertake environmental work. Programmes supported directly by the Australian Government include the Landcare programme (<http://www.landcareaustralia.com.au>) that provides regional facilitators and resources for communities to undertake land restoration activities such as tree planting. There are also various state and territory initiatives.

Environmental and community groups may apply for financial assistance from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), an initiative managed by the Australian Government. One of the three broad objectives of the NHT is 'community capacity building and institutional change' to be achieved through supporting individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills development, knowledge acquisition, and the provision of information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management. The selection criteria for projects seeking funding under the NHT require that projects demonstrate consultation processes with relevant stakeholders as well as local community support. Within the NHT, the Australian Government has also established the Envirofund (<http://www.nht.gov.au/envirofund>) to provide the

funds for community groups to build capacity through assisting groups to undertake small or locally-based projects.

**Wombat Forest case study (Victoria)**

The communities surrounding Victoria's Wombat State Forest are the first in Australia to establish a collaborative partnership with the government and thereby gain direct access to the decision-making processes that determine how the forests in their region are to be managed. The Community Forestry Management (CFM) process began with a series of public meetings in towns and hamlets around the Wombat Forest, to broaden the local understanding of the potential of CFM. Later workshops were run in all the local towns to develop the Wombat CFM management structure.

The start-up process to hand over jurisdiction for some aspects of management of the Wombat Forest to the community started in mid 2003 with the appointment of a Community Development Officer contracted by the Victorian State Government Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Office space and equipment, information resources and training have been provided by the Victorian Government to facilitate the community management process. An umbrella group of community, stakeholders and interest groups, in conjunction with community-run Working Groups have produced a management system and manifesto as a first step towards CFM. This provides the framework for the devolution of management of some aspects of forest management.

Website: <[www.wombatforest.org](http://www.wombatforest.org)>

***b) Integrating Indigenous communities in sustainable forest management programmes***

For an overview of where legislation exists for various aspects of Indigenous input into SFM in Australia's states and territories see Table 113 of SOFR.

*Recognition and respect of the customary and traditional rights and privileges of Indigenous communities*

Australia is committed to developing and implementing legal and management arrangements to protect forest values of importance to Indigenous people. To achieve this, there needs to be access and recognition of custodial rights. Australia acknowledges the cultural, spiritual, and religious connection between Indigenous communities and forests. In addition to procedures for land rights claims, there are several other mechanisms, that provide for Indigenous peoples' rights and interests on the land.

In most states and territories everyone may access land and carry out recreational activities. Permits may be arranged for additional activities such as hunting, firewood collection, collection of food and medicinal plants, etc. New South Wales has been particularly active in working with Indigenous communities to grant access and rights to undertake traditional activities within State Forests and has

signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local indigenous people's communities.

On lands to which Indigenous people hold no formal land title access, the use of resources may be determined under the Commonwealth's *Native Title Act 1993* and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) made under the same legislation.

Native Title is the recognition in Australian law of the rights and interests of Indigenous Australians in land and waters according to their own traditional laws and customs. Native Title may be claimed on any crown land but not freehold land (private land). Under Native Title, non-Indigenous Australians may still carry out activities on crown land for which they hold a valid right, including construction of, or residing in, a dwelling, holding a pastoral lease or having a mining licence. ILUAs are voluntary agreements between Indigenous Native Title claimants, the Government (or agency/ies managing the area claimed) and other parties with a legal interest in the area or areas subject to claim. The Federal Court determines whether Native Title exists and the ILUA specifies parameters for the exercise of Native Title rights. Increasingly, parties are seeking ILUAs or other forms of agreement to provide clarity and certainty concerning the future management of lands and waters within an agreement area.

In addition, many forest management companies are entering into voluntary certification schemes. Most of these, including the AFS have requirements to address issues that relate to the rights of Indigenous peoples in a cooperative manner, including protection of cultural sites and the ability to undertake traditional activities. Such mechanisms are particularly important to improve access for Indigenous people to forests on private and commercial lands.

For more information on recognition and determination of Native Title within each State and Territory, see Table 111 in section 6.5d of SOFR. In addition, Australia reports nationally on similar issues using the national indicators. Further information on these national indicators can be found in SOFR under indicators 6.5d and 6.4a(i).

#### **Fire management in Australia's north (Northern Territory)**

A good example of how Indigenous people have gained rights and responsibility for land management under Native Title is their control of fire management in Australia's north. Many different groups of Indigenous people have now revealed the basis, under customary law, for their fire management. Customary law determines not only how fire should be managed, but also who should be involved in burning activities. The *Native Title Act 1993* gives some protection to Indigenous peoples' rights to control fire management without the need to obtain permits under certain sub-national laws. Government agencies wishing to develop fire management plans for national parks and protected areas, must give an opportunity to Native Title-holders to comment on the proposal.

**Mirring Women's Group (New South Wales)**

The Mirring Women (Indigenous women's group) approached State Forests of New South Wales regarding the management of the Strickland State Forest, and in particular the area surrounding a sacred women's teaching site. Currently, the development of a management plan in collaboration with a local community group 'Friends of the Strickland' is progressing. The plan aims to reintroduce an indigenous people's fire regime and restore the ecosystem. An ecologist of State Forests is working with the Mirring Women's group to help develop appropriate flora and fauna management practices through integrating traditional indigenous knowledge and relationships with the land and conventional Western understanding of local ecosystems and natural vegetative communities. The Mirring women are also investigating the potential for seed collection and native plant propagation as commercial enterprises.

*The attainment of secure land tenure arrangements*

Despite the existence of unique forms of legal ownership, there are no lands in Australia where Indigenous people fully determine the objectives and practice of land management. Environmental or resource allocation laws made by states or territories and the Australian Government have effect across all tenures. Nonetheless, full legal title in land has permitted the re-establishment of a high level of customary control. The probability that Indigenous people will achieve title to land varies markedly by jurisdiction, and hence with geographical location and formal land valuations.

In general, rights are weaker and less land is held by Indigenous people in those areas that have been settled longer in southern Australia and on the more fertile (often forested) lands of the eastern and south-western coasts, where land has been under non-Indigenous jurisdiction and management the longest. The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), which purchases land on behalf of Indigenous people, is addressing the situation within the limits of its financial resources by entering the rural property market. For example, they have purchased a property in Western Australia which is capable of commercial timber production, and plan two more purchases in Central Queensland that include farm forestry in business plans. In 2000, about 18% (more than 7 million square kilometres) of Australia's total land, and 21% of its forested land, were under Indigenous ownership of some sort (SOFR, 2003).

For recent estimates of the proportion of the Australian continent under Indigenous ownership and land purchases for Indigenous people, see Tables 95–97 in section 6.4a(i) of SOFR. In addition, Australia reports nationally on similar issues using the national indicators. Further information can be found in SOFR under indicator 7.1a.

### **Uluru–Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks, Northern Territory**

All of the land in the Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park and approximately half of the land in Kakadu National Park is vested in an Aboriginal (Indigenous people) Land Trust by grants made under Territory legislation. Almost all of the remaining land in Kakadu is under claim for Native Title by the local Indigenous communities. Local Indigenous communities hold and exercise all rights as the owners of their respective land, including the rights to biological resources for the benefit of the indigenous people. In addition, in relation to indigenous people's land in Kakadu and Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Parks, Territory legislation preserves traditional rights in relation to the land.

At a national level, DAFF is working jointly with the national commission for Australian indigenous people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to develop a NIFS. Due to be launched in mid 2004, the objectives of the NIFS are to:

- identify and address the barriers to the increase of Indigenous people and communities participating in the forest growing, timber processing and non-timber forest products sectors;
- outline the possible means and support that will assist Indigenous people and communities to participate in the above activities, particularly where they promote the economic independence of Indigenous people and communities, the sustainable management of public and Indigenous held forest resources and improve the outcomes for existing industry participants; and
- provide a link to key government policy areas and existing industry strategies, and thereby provide a structure for Indigenous people to assist with the development of Australia's forest and timber industry.

Development of the NIFS has involved extensive consultations to ensure that relevant Indigenous groups participate. DAFF has also launched the Indigenous People in Rural Industries Programme in July 2002, to coordinate and support the work of the Department's Indigenous Strategy Steering Committee, which was established to increase Indigenous access to Departmental programmes, and assist Indigenous people through networking, consultation and capacity building activities.

Assessments of Indigenous heritage, economic values and social values were included in the CRAs as part of the RFA process. Written agreements provide explicitly for the inclusion of mechanisms of consultation that identify and protect Indigenous heritage and for the inclusion of Indigenous views into the management of this. RFAs are subject to the Commonwealth Government's *Native Title Act 1993*.

Processes for formally securing Indigenous engagement in forest management vary between jurisdictions. For example, in New South Wales, Aboriginal Land Councils (formal councils consisting of one group of Australian Indigenous peoples organisations), elders and other groups are consulted during the preparation of operational plans to ensure Indigenous sites and artefacts are

identified and protected. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officers are employed in many forest regions to manage Indigenous heritage values in forests and facilitate communication with local Indigenous groups. In some regions, MoU have been drafted that document local procedures for the management of Indigenous issues. In addition, there are examples of joint venture forestry activities between the government and Indigenous communities.

Large areas of forest in Australia that are not used for timber production and not covered by a RFA are subject to the Federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The principal objectives of the Act that relate to Indigenous peoples' participation in land management include:

- to recognise the role of Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity;
- to promote the use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of biodiversity with the involvement of, and in cooperation with, the owners of the knowledge; and
- to promote a cooperative approach to protection and management of the environment among governments, the community, landholders and Indigenous peoples.

These goals are pursued collaboratively between the Federal and State/Territory Governments through bioregional plans, similar in principle to RFAs, that integrate broad-scale socio-economic, cultural and biodiversity conservation goals. An example of Indigenous peoples' involvement in the management of such plans includes the re-establishment of customary fire management regimes in western Arnhem Land, in the Northern Territory. More recently, regional natural resource management plans under the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the NHT have been developed and these provide for participation by Indigenous communities and encourage the use of Indigenous knowledge where appropriate to reverse land degradation. In addition to these processes, a Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) was launched to provide work for Indigenous people in land management activities that contribute to forest condition. The application of customary skills and knowledge in CDEP-funded work to maintain forest values has made socially valuable contributions to resource and biodiversity conservation.

In addition, Australia reports nationally on similar issues using the national indicators. Further information can be found in SOFR under indicators 6.6a and 7.1e.

**'Wur-cum barra' and the Indigenous Partnerships Strategy (IPS), (Victoria)**

'Wur-cum barra', the Victorian Public Sector — Indigenous Employment Strategy, is an initiative of the Victorian Government that aims to improve the diversity and responsiveness of the Victorian public sector to Indigenous employment across the whole of the public sector and provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to become involved in the management of natural resources.

The employment of six Regional Indigenous Facilitators throughout the State has ensured that the initiatives within the IPS are maintained. The Parks and Forests Division of the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment have provided employment for Indigenous people as forest management trainees and as trainee rangers. The aim is to supplement existing staff resources, strengthen relations with local communities, provide a focus for cultural heritage management and contribute to the employment targets in the IPS.

Furthermore, the Project Fire-Fighter Programme has been promoted as an employment opportunity for local Indigenous people throughout the State. The programme provides Indigenous peoples with an opportunity to develop a range of skills related to fire management and increases their employment prospects; in the longer term it builds the confidence of Indigenous peoples to assume greater roles with the local community.

## **Traditional forest-related knowledge**

At present there is no integrated national approach to cataloguing TFRK. There is however, recognition by most relevant state and territory agencies of the value of TFRK and many of these agencies are undertaking project work to catalogue TFRK. However, more coordination is needed to ensure that a comprehensive and adequate method of gathering data for all of Australia's forests is developed and to ensure this method is sensitive to Indigenous peoples' cultural beliefs and retains intellectual property rights for the indigenous owners of this knowledge.

**Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park (Northern Territory)**

The Anangu people (Indigenous people) have been closely involved with researching and cataloguing the fauna and flora of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory. The Anangu have worked successfully with CSIRO scientists and have shared their detailed knowledge of animal habits and habitats. One result of this sharing of knowledge is the possible reintroduction of Wayuta (Brushtail Possum), one of the most important species for the Anangu. The relationship that the Anangu have achieved with the Federal Government is the direct result of the joint management arrangement between the two. Indeed, in this relationship where the Anangu own the land of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park and are in a joint management arrangement, the provision of knowledge is seen by both parties as part of the joint management process.

## Scientific forest-related knowledge

### **Disseminating scientific knowledge, strengthening capacity and mobilising funding for national and regional research institutions and networks**

Within Australia there are a number of organisations and bodies, both public and private, which conduct forest-related research. Significant Australian Government-funded forest research occurs through the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Divisions of Forestry and Forest Products, Sustainable Ecosystems, and Land and Water. Research is also funded by the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC), established to provide a national, integrated research and development focus for the Australian forest and wood products industry. The FWPRDC is funded primarily through industry levies and government appropriation. Increasingly, industry is providing more support for research, especially within the areas of genetic resources and harvesting technologies. In addition, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) funds research into rural issues including forestry.

Other Australian Government agencies that conduct forest-related research, include: the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE), the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS), the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) and the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH).

The NHT and the NAP also fund research activities at the national, regional and local levels. Projects are selected based on how they target Australia's most pressing environmental issues. The Australian Government also hosts a website to assist communities and organisations to find suitable and relevant grants: <http://www.grantslink.gov.au/>.

Most public land management agencies and several public companies have research branches, which focus on forests. Some NGOs conduct research on risks to forest ecosystems. Australia also has public and privately funded tertiary institutions where research is undertaken that contributes to the knowledge and understanding of forest ecosystems and management.

At a national level, the Forestry and Forest Products Committee (FFPC) and the Natural Resource Policies and Programs Committee (NRPPC) help coordinate research activities and disseminate the outcomes and findings of research undertaken by state/territory and Australian Government agencies, research bodies and private industry associations. FFPC and NRPPC operate under the auspices of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC), which were established in 2001 by agreement of Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments.

The major role of these Ministerial Councils is to better integrate Australia's conservation and sustainable production objectives. In addition, all Australian Government agencies, organisations and councils regularly publish research

papers, which are available to the general public either electronically from their respective websites, or as hardcopies.

Australia also supports research collaboration and sharing of research outcomes at an international level, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region. Australia is signatory to a number of intergovernmental organisations which fund research and promote the sharing and dissemination of knowledge/research. These include the CBD, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the International Tropical Timber Organization.

In addition, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) facilitates a range of bilateral and multilateral forest research activities. ACIAR works primarily in the Asia-Pacific region through collaborative research projects involving research institutions from Australia and developing countries. Projects are selected on the basis of their contribution to the reduction of rural poverty and the benefits they can deliver to the collaborating countries. The ACIAR forestry programme supports research that improves tree-growing practices and encourages the use of wood and non-wood products for the benefit of farmers and local communities. Past research has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of eucalypts and acacias that are grown on farms in China and South-East Asia, and has helped to build strong rural industries in those countries. ACIAR also supports research by international agricultural research centres that deal with forestry issues, such as the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Kenya, and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Indonesia.

CSIRO also leads a research consortium that manages AusAID's South Pacific Regional Initiative on Forest Genetic Resources project and has a specific research agreement with the Chinese Academy of Forestry. Further projects with China are being developed under the umbrella of the Australia-China Agricultural Co-operation Agreement (ACACA).

Australia participates in several other regional multilateral initiatives, such as the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP) and the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC). The AFP aims to foster regional cooperation in research, dissemination of knowledge, and technology transfer. The APFC is a forum for discussing regional forestry issues, including future directions for the FAO forestry activities in the region, and for progressing practical work aimed at promoting the adoption of SFM practices.

#### **Enhancing interaction between scientific research and policy processes**

Within Australia the majority of decisions regarding the management of public forests are made at State level. In order to facilitate communication and coordination between the state, territory and federal forest agencies as well as neighbouring countries (New Zealand), the FFPC meets twice yearly. The FFPC is supported by a network of subcommittees and working groups, which provide advice on policy and technical issues. One of these subcommittees is the Research Priorities and Co-ordination Committee (RPCC), which is responsible for coordinating a series of research working groups.

The Australian Government also supports a more industry-focused research priority-setting group through the FWPRDC (see above). The main aim of the Corporation is to provide support for research which is considered to have a broad sectoral, and/or cross-sectoral industry benefit. The Corporation utilises industry-based advisory groups, developed in consultation with the industry representative organisations, to support its investment decision making. The advisory groups help the Corporation to identify and define research priorities and major project areas, as well as assist it in the identification and ranking of any short-term issues that may arise. A further role of the advisory groups is to assess, either internally or through consultation with the wider industry, the effectiveness of the research programmes towards addressing industry needs and knowledge gaps.

The Australian Government encourages research bodies, including universities, the CSIRO and other government laboratories, to cooperate with industries, government and clients as a means of seeing that collaborative research is focused on needs. Such research is often undertaken through Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), which bring together researchers and research users from universities, the public sector and industry. CRCs are a critical step to efficient use of resources and to address critical knowledge gaps. There is an explicit link between the industry and other end users and the research undertaken, which ensures that results from research are included in policy-making processes and that information needed for the policy process is gathered through scientific research. There are several CRCs that incorporate forest issues. Three which are particularly relevant to forest management are the Bushfire CRC (which deals with forest fire management), the CRC for Sustainable Production Forestry and the CRC for Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Management.

At a national level, a team within the Australian Government's forestry department coordinates data collection and analysis through a number of programmes. These include the National Forest Inventory (NFI), which collects data from all forest types and tenures across Australia, and the Forest and Vegetation Sciences Programme which analyses forest and vegetation data, and reviews forest management systems and performance to facilitate industry development and encourage ecologically sustainable forest and vegetation management. The Programme provided the scientific basis for the CRAs of forests that underpin the bilateral RFAs between the Australian Government and state governments. The resource assessments cover wood, water, soils, grazing, apiculture, non-wood products, tourism, recreation and management systems and processes for SFM. RFAs have commitments to improvement, including interim milestones and five-yearly reviews. Progress and achievement of milestones in RFAs will need to be monitored and reported by governments, hence the Programme provides scientific and technical support to post-RFA Australian Government obligations. The Programme works collaboratively with other national and state/territory government departments, CSIRO and other forest research centres.

Public native forests and plantations managed by government agencies employ scientifically and technically trained people who apply the results of research, as do the larger private sector forest and plantation owners. Government extension services advise smaller private sector forest and plantation owners. All of these

entities receive advice from the FFPC, and the NRPPC, which helps them to coordinate and prioritise research and development and to address knowledge gaps through a series of subcommittees, working groups and taskforces.

## **Monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions**

State and territory agencies and private forest owners and managers collect primary forest inventory data in Australia. The frequency and scope of these data varies across states and territories and tenure. For areas where RFAs are in place (most harvested native forest) there are annual reporting requirements as part of the contract between the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments. These reports are published on the internet and are made publicly accessible in hard copy. To date, all RFAs have included references to identify sustainability indicators based on the regional (sub-national) framework, which are used to produce the annual reports.

While preliminary resource assessments have been undertaken on private native forests in most RFA areas, only Tasmania has included both the private and the public forest in its final resource analysis. Private native forest managers do not have access to the same level of resources to undertake forest mapping or inventory and whilst there is a high compliance of reporting in terms of what data are available, there are many national indicators for which information can currently not be extracted. In New South Wales, access to natural resources data for private land managers is being improved through the Community Access to Natural Resources Information Programme. The highest statistical reliability in inventories undertaken in Australia occurs where there is consistent annual monitoring, which is most common for plantations. However, public access to private inventory information is considered sensitive and is limited because of data confidentiality agreements.

In addition to traditional forest inventory, broader forest assessments require a variety of social and economic data. To this end, many forest management agencies are moving towards measuring and reporting performance using a 'triple bottom line' approach, recognising that a balanced triple bottom line maintains economic prosperity, environmental quality and social responsibility. This approach builds on existing approaches to inventory and assessment in those states. Many state agencies are producing reports that incorporate social and economic as well as biological data. State Forests of New South Wales, for example, produces an annual publication called the 'Seeing Report' for the publicly-owned multiple-use forests that it manages, and National Parks of New South Wales produces a 'State of the Parks' report for conservation forests. At a national level, social and economic data are obtained from a wide variety of sources including Australian Government agencies and research agencies.

The majority of current inventory, assessment and monitoring activities in native forests have focused on the relatively small area of Australia's public forests that

are managed for commercial timber production. Fewer resources have been allocated to the inventory of nature conservation reserves.

Australia's largest gaps in forest information exist in privately managed forests and for non-timber attributes. In the last five years information has been enhanced by the substantial investment in public forest inventory, which included environmental, social and economic data, through the CRA process. A Continental Forest Monitoring Framework (CFMF) trial is being developed by the NFI to provide the capacity to monitor and report on trends in the condition of a range of forest values including biodiversity, timber and non-timber resources, soil and water, carbon, forest health (insect pests, diseases, weeds), and fire fuel status.

At a national level, the NFI (a partnership between federal and state/territory governments) is primarily responsible for undertaking national forest assessment and reporting information, through the compilation and integration of disparate State/Territory Government and private grower supplied data, into the national classification schemes and national databases. This substantial undertaking involves integrating data with different spatial scales, quality, classification methods and attributes, both within and between states. This process involves periodic calls for data to enter or update the NFI and national forest resource assessments at least once every five years.

Plantation forests are inventoried annually due to their changing nature. They are reported at both the state/territory level and nationally, as well as in detail at a regional (sub-national) level every five years. Australia's wide variety of forest types and their distribution results in varying data collection techniques, ranging from coarse-scale remotely-sensed data with low levels of accuracy (e.g., remote areas such as the Kimberley in northern Western Australia), through to data obtained from aerial photograph interpretation, to finer-scale field data of high accuracy (e.g., Tasmania). Inventory data based on permanent plots under State/Territory management represents the minority, and is likely to decrease further as reduced funding results in many of these plots no longer being maintained.

Copies of the information collected by the NFI are available on request. The NFI Geostationary Information System is capable of producing high-quality maps, tables and graphs in a form useful to a range of interest groups including land managers, policy makers and consultants. It can compile summary data for each state and territory and for the nation as a whole. In addition, the nature of the data and the way they are stored permit powerful analyses: these can assist forest and infrastructure planning at various scales, from the regional (sub-national) through to the national. Where requests for information seek larger-scale regional (sub-national) datasets, permission must be obtained from those organisations and individuals contributing data in the area of interest in order to comply with the custodial rights of the contributors.

The most comprehensive reports produced by the NFI, are the five year publications of the national SOFR, the first of which was released in 1998 and the second in 2003. Data contained in the SOFR are aligned with all other national and

international reporting requirements, i.e. the same regional (sub-national) data framework is used as required to complete the State of the Environment and Montreal Process reporting requirements. SOFR is available publicly on the internet <[www.daff.gov.au/stateoftheforests](http://www.daff.gov.au/stateoftheforests)> and hard copies or CDs can also be ordered (see 'further information' on page 5 of this report).

Information on Australia's plantation estate is collected by the National Plantation Inventory (NPI) and the National Farm Forestry Inventory (NFFI). The NPI focuses on growers whose total estate is greater than 1000 hectares. Information on smaller scale plantations, is facilitated by the NFFI which uses a network of regional (sub-national) and state coordinators. Based primarily on information provided by growers or grower representatives, compliance for reporting is voluntary, however this has not proved an issue with 100% or near 100% compliance where information is available. The comprehensive reports, released five-yearly, present information on location, species, area, ownership, planting period distributions, previous land use of land currently under industrial plantation, and business categories of growers within the industry. The data are presented at both the national and regional (sub-national) level, allowing readers to undertake their own analyses and interpretation. The tabular reports (released annually) report on area, ownership and type and provide summaries of plantations. These are all available to the public on request in hard copy or electronically in addition to the publication of summaries on the NFI website <<http://www.affa.gov.au/nfi>>.

The extent and status of native forests, plantations and other vegetation are reported to national and international bodies and the Australian community through the NFI and the National Vegetation Information System. Further information on Australia's forests is available through national programmes including the National Land and Water Resources Audit, the NHT and the AGO. All public forest-management agencies also publish forest-related information and technical papers, which are available on request in hard copy or through electronic links on their respective websites.

National sources of data for assessing the state of Australia's forests are detailed in Table 123 of section 7.4b of SOFR. International processes or agencies to which Australia reports forest information are detailed in Table 124 of section 7.4c of SOFR. In addition, Australia reports nationally on similar issues using national indicators. Further information can be found in the SOFR under indicator 7.4b.

### **Vanuatu**

Australia has been developing practical methods to assist countries in assessing and reporting their progress towards the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Australia has developed a comprehensive, integrated summary of the proposals for action that can be used as a tool to help countries measure progress and identify priorities for sustainable forest management. It aims to improve the understanding of the intent of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by simplifying the wording and by grouping related proposals for action. In cooperation with the Programme for Forests at the World Bank, Australia has linked the above summary with the extended forest work programme of the CBD to provide a more comprehensive means of conducting assessments of progress and setting national priorities within the forests sector. Using these tools Australia successfully aided Vanuatu in completing a national assessment of their forest resources and progress towards implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action in late 2003.

## **Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management**

Australia is actively engaged with the global community in measuring, monitoring and reporting indicators for SFM. As a member of the Montreal Process, Australia has participated in annual Montreal Process Working Group and Technical Advisory Group meetings since 1993, and has reported progress with developing Criteria and Indicators (C&I) of SFM for the Montreal Process countries. Australia has been involved in significant scientific and technical cooperation with member countries on all issues of C&I reporting. Australia has increased its focus on the Montreal Process for progressing C&I internationally in recent years. The work done in the Montreal Process has guided national report planning, reduced national reporting costs by the sharing of information, techniques and resources, and has helped clarify international expectations for SFM reporting. Australia has also used the C&I of the Montreal Process to develop a national set of C&I for reporting and monitoring (see pages 18–20 of this report).

Australia has reported forest-related activities to the FAO since its establishment in 1945. Currently, Australia is a member of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) Advisory Group and the UN Economic Commission for Europe-FAO Team of Specialists. These groups collect forest data and make these available to all countries and to industrialised countries, respectively. Involvement with the FAO FRA ensures that Australia is engaged in resolving a range of global forest inventory issues, including forest definitions, and is able to contribute to these inventories with current national reporting processes, such as this report. Through these activities, the definition of forest used in Australia's SOFR is now more compatible with international forest definitions.

In addition, Australia reports nationally on similar issues using the national indicators, further information can be found in SOFR under indicator 7.4c.

### **FAO Forest Resources Assessment National Correspondents Training Work shop**

Australia actively participated in the UN FAO FRA National Correspondents Training Workshop in November 2003 in Rome. The workshop agreed on a set of definitions and technical details regarding national reporting on FRA, to reduce the work burdens on countries and to improve harmonisation of global C&I processes.

In regards to regional cooperation, the role of the FAO regional forestry offices in coordinating and facilitating country responses to the FRA 2005 was highlighted and a regional Asia-Pacific workshop was scheduled for Bangkok, to be held late in 2004. Australia also proposed a Team of Specialists (ToS) be formed for the Asia-Pacific region, similar to that of the European countries.

### **Australia–China**

Australia and China have jointly organised two workshops on criteria and indicators, the first of which was held in Fuzhou, China in December 1997 and investigated China's national level indicators. The second was held in Melbourne, following the International Union of Forestry Research Organization conference in August 1998, and aimed to accelerate progress on implementation of criteria and indicators through capacity and confidence building.

## **Report compilation**

The Data Management and International section of the Forest Industries Branch of DAFF has had primary responsibility for compiling this report. DAFF worked closely with other relevant Australian Government Departments and Agencies including ATSIC, DEH, BRS, the Attorney-General's Office, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), and Intellectual Property Australia. In addition, the report was sent directly to the state and territory forest management agencies and case studies were developed with other key forest stakeholders including stakeholders from private forest industries and businesses, educational institutes, research centres and other forest-related organisations.

Australia places great emphasis on reducing resources required to complete reporting obligations. In order to facilitate the reporting processes Australia produces five-yearly State of the Forest Reports which provide summaries of Australia's progress towards a set of national C&I based on those designed under the Montreal Process. Throughout the report links are made to more detailed information in tables contained in the SOFR. Australia's voluntary national report to UNFF4 also draws heavily on information gathered for Australia's report to the Montreal Process, State and Territory reports from each of the RFA areas as well as other State reports such as the reports to the NIFS on strategies to facilitate Indigenous peoples' participation and consultation in SFM.

## Acronyms

ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ACACA	Australia–China Agricultural Co-operation Agreement
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AFP	Asia Forest Partnership
AFS	Australian Forestry Standard
AGO	Australian Greenhouse Office (Australian Government)
APFC	Asia–Pacific Forestry Commission
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Australian Government)
BRS	Bureau of Rural Sciences (Australian Government)
C&I	criteria and indicators
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDEP	Community Development Employment Programme
CFM	Community Forest Management
CFMF	Continental Forest Monitoring Framework
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CRA	Comprehensive Regional Assessment
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Australian Government)
DEH	Department of the Environment and Heritage (Australian Government)
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (Australian Government)
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victorian State Government)
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFPC	Forestry and Forest Products Committee
FRA	Forest Resource Assessment
FWPRDC	Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry

ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IP	intellectual property
IPF/IFF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCA	Nationally Consistent Approach for Access to and the Utilisation of Australia's Native Genetic and Biochemical Resources
NFFI	National Farm Forestry Inventory
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NFPS	National Forest Policy Statement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NIFS	National Indigenous Forestry Strategy
NPI	National Plantation Inventory
NRMMC	Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council
NRPPC	Natural Resource Policies and Programs Committee
NSW	New South Wales (Australian State)
PFDC	Private Forestry Development Committee
RFA	Regional Forest Agreement
PIMC	Primary Industries Ministerial Council
RIRDC	Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
RPCC	Research Priorities and Co-ordination Committee
SFM	sustainable forest management
SOFR	State of the Forests Report (if not stated otherwise this refers to the 2003 report), available online at: <a href="http://www.affa.gov.au/stateoftheforests">http://www.affa.gov.au/stateoftheforests</a>
TCA	Timber Communities Australia
TFRK	traditional forest-related knowledge
ToS	Team of Specialists
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
WIRI	Women in Rural Industries Programme
WIPO IGC	World Intellectual Property Organization Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore