



Group Forest Certification Scheme

Forest Management Plan

July 2025

Contact

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Reliance Forest Fibre acknowledges the Palawa and Pakana peoples' connection with Country, and their active land management of the forests of lutrawita/Tasmania over thousands of generations.

We acknowledge the Palawa and Pakana peoples, as the Traditional Owners and spiritual custodians of the land on which our sector operates, and we pay our respects to their leaders.

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Preface

Forest Certification Principles

This Australian Forest Management Standard AS/NZS4708:2021 (the 'Standard') is based on the following factors underlying the three forest certification principles of:

Governance:

- being independent and impartial, including a clear separation between development of standards and accreditation of certification bodies
- complying with and where practical exceeding, legal and other requirements and
- involving competent national accreditation bodies and independent, accredited third party certification bodies.

Quality:

- being scientifically based and involving the scientific community in its development
- incorporating performance levels at appropriate scales through an open process involving all interested stakeholders
- being based on the principles of sustainability
- compatibility with an internationally-recognized environmental management system
- being easily understood and leading to the same results when used by different certification bodies and
- being regularly assessed, revised, and updated in the light of new knowledge as part of a continual improvement process.

Accessibility:

- having transparent and understandable processes that are accessible to all stakeholders
- being accessible to stakeholders with a balance of interests
- being voluntary and including the broad participation of forest managers
- accommodating all forest types, scales, and ownership structures and
- minimising costs of certification

Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme

The Standard allows Group Certification whereby individual forest owners or managers come together under a group structure. The certification process involves evaluating and certifying forest owners or managers under a single certificate for the group which covers the total area of the participating Group Participants.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), has chosen to implement a Group Forest Certification Scheme known as the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme. Group Participants can join the Scheme if they can satisfy certain requirements for forest management practices.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) Forest Management Plan

The Group Entity represents the participants in the Group Organization and has overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the Standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

The Group Entity enters the Certification Agreement with the accredited and notified Certification Body.

The purpose of this **Forest Management Plan** (the Plan), a strategic planning framework, is to communicate management objectives and principles as applied to Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's (as Group Entity) DFA and the systems and procedures to achieve them.

This Plan is the oversight document supported by the Tasmanian Forest Practices System. The Tasmanian Forest Practices System works in an adaptive management framework considering social, economic, environmental, and cultural outcomes of its decision-making processes. It is supported by legislation, the *Forest Practices Act 1985*, a code of practice, the Forest Practice Code 2020, a regulator, the Forest Practices Authority, a specialist group, on ground research, trained and appointed planners and supervisors, Forest Practices Officers (FPO's) and detailed operational plans, Forest Practices Plans, (FPP's).

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This Plan is a critical component of the documentation and management practices that are in place for the certification of the **Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme** as meeting the requirements of the Standard.

Scope of certification for the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme

The scope of this Forest Management Plan encompasses the requirements of the Standard within the legislative and planning framework of Tasmania. It has been designed as appropriate to scale. This document is the oversight document for Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme. Activities covered by the Group scheme include planning, establishment, maintenance, roading & harvesting over which Group Members have management control of contracted. The Group produces round wood which may be sold for woodchips, pulp wood or saw logs.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity), has Responsible Wood certification scope which covers native forest and plantations.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme (Scheme)

The Group Entity for the purposes of this Forest Management Plan (FMP) and associated documentation is Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (ACN – 620 491 536, ABN – 50 857 475 089).

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, is represented by Mr Heath Blair, the Manager operating the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme on behalf of the Group Entity.

The Scheme was established to enable certification of groups of forest owners to gain benefits of increased scale, while retaining management control of their forest. Certification in a group allows individual forest owners or managers to benefit from efficiencies that can accrue as being part of a larger group, as well as gain access to services that can be cost effectively provided through a group structure.

Sustainable Forest Management Group Certification provides an approach to forest certification whereby individual forest owners or managers come together under a group structure. Inclusion into the Scheme involves evaluating and certifying forest owners or managers with individual properties under a single certificate held by *Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd* for the group which covers the total area of the participating Group Participants.

Reliance Forest Fibre (RFF) Group scheme is committed to managing forest under our control for the sustainable production of wood and wood products to meet our stakeholders' needs without compromising the productive capacity of the land for future generations.

All group participants are required to follow these guidelines and it provides the strategic direction and framework for all group activities.

RFF Group scheme is committed to:

- Independent certification of our forest practices.
- Undertake activities in a socially responsible manner providing a safe working environment for staff, contractors and visitors while respecting the social and cultural values of stakeholders and the local community
- Proactively engage and value the contributions of our stakeholders
- Comply with relevant legislation, regulation, Government policies, codes of practice and other external requirements relating to our business
- Conservation management of natural and cultural values delivered through strategic review, preplanning and operational implementation
- Not to degrade or convert natural vegetation or natural ecosystems
- Not to use genetically modified trees in any of our operations
- Set and review objectives and targets to mitigate any significant impacts
- Monitor operations to continually improve forest management and environmental outcomes
- Regularly monitor, audit and review our system and performance to facilitate continual improvement

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- Ensure our staff and contractors have sufficient information, skills, training and resources to implement this policy
- Communicate this commitment with staff, business partners, service providers and customers.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's commitment to sustainable forest management

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), is committed to achieving sustainable forest management throughout its operational portfolio. Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), is committed to undertaking and managing silvicultural prescriptions conducive to the long-term productivity of the properties we manage.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), has developed strong relationships with individual landowners, forest managers, plantation estate owners, timber processors, customers, other stakeholders, and government agencies. Our attention to detail, knowledge of industry developments and the timely completion of complex projects ensure we deliver professional and highly regarded forest management practices.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), employs professionally qualified, highly trained staff and maintains quality operating systems to ensure the viability of the company and the natural resources we manage.

Within the context of Federal, State and Local Government regulatory frameworks, and our own management strategies, which ensure environmental protection, we work cooperatively to address the needs of our clients when selecting a forest management regime.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), is committed to delivering resource owners with maximum sustainable returns for their forest resource commensurate with the productive capacity of the forest and land. Correct segregation and treatment of the forest resource ensures that wood products are always directed to their highest end-use value when markets permit. This in turn maximises the return to the landowner by selling each product at their maximum value and not allowing higher value products to be undersold.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), ensures that its forest management is based on the results of current and ongoing scientific research where available and other sources of information, including expert opinion, ecological theory, and practical experience.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity), actively supports the conduct of relevant research activities carried out by other organisations.

1.2 Scheme Structure

The Scheme has a simple hierarchy structure with roles assigned to each element of the Scheme's structure to achieve and maintain compliance with certification requirements.

Table 1. Definitions, descriptions and nominated person/organisation for the Scheme structure

Definition	Description	Nominated Person/Organisation
Group Entity	An entity that represents the Group Participants, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the Standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.	Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd
Group Forest Certification Scheme	A scheme or arrangement managed by a Manager on behalf of a Group Entity allowing for the certification of Group Participants under one Forest Management Certificate.	Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme
Manager	A person with delegated responsibility for administering the rules of the group, especially the admission and removal of Group Participants in a manner that ensures the integrity of the scheme.	Mr Heath Blair
Group Organization	Forest owners/managers or other entity who:	Various

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Definition	Description	Nominated Person/Organisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is covered by the Forest Management Certificate • has the legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area • has the ability to enter a legal agreement with the Group Entity and • can make arrangements to ensure that the requirements of the Standard are implemented in that area. 	

The following information and comments are provided about the role of each element of the Scheme.

1.4.1 Group Entity

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) will conduct the following functions –

- (a) To represent the Scheme in the certification process, including in communications and relationships with the Certification Body, submission of an application for certification, and contractual relationship with the Certification Body
- (b) To provide a commitment to comply with the Standard and other applicable requirements
- (c) To establish and maintain written procedures for the management of the Scheme including recommended practices for forest management (silvicultural systems)
- (d) To clearly define and document the responsibilities between the Group Entity, the Manager and the Participants of the Group Organization in relation to forest management activities
- (e) To keep records of:
 - the Group Entity and Group Organization's conformity with the requirements of the Standard, and other applicable requirements
 - all Group Participants, including their name, legal status, contact details and maps and supporting documentation describing the Certified Area
 - any records of training provided to staff or Group Organization, relevant to the Group Forest Certification Scheme
 - records of annual production of forest products from the Certified Area
 - the internal monitoring programme, and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken; and
 - internal reviews of the Group Forest Certification Scheme
- (f) To establish a written agreement with all Group Participants that includes the Group Participant's commitment to comply with the Standard
- (g) To provide Group Participants with a Document Confirming Participation upon acceptance into the Scheme
- (h) To provide all Group Participants with information and guidance required for the effective implementation of the Standard and other applicable requirements
- (i) To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the Group Participants' conformity with the Standard and other applicable requirements
- (j) To annually review the Scheme's conformity with the Standard that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme and the Certification Body's findings and
- (k) To establish and enforce rules to ensure the correct use of the Forest Management Certificate, logos and other intellectual property belonging to Responsible wood by Group Participants.

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In discharging its functions and responsibilities the Group Entity has prepared this Forest Management Plan in conjunction with other procedural, policy and management documentation.

1.4.2 Manager

The Manager is to conduct the following primary functions –

- (a) administer the group to ensure that the requirements of the Standard are being implemented and achieved
- (b) accept new Group Participants into the Scheme, guiding the group and its participants through the Certification Process
- (c) understand and interpret the Standard in the context of the Scheme which includes interpreting and appropriately applying the Standard in the context of the group and to clearly explain the criteria and requirements to the Group Participants
- (d) determine how the requirements of the Standard relate to individual Group Participants
- (e) ensure that appropriate records are maintained, both for administering the Group and for use in Certification audits and surveillance audits
- (f) ensure that any new Group Participants are added to membership and mailing lists, are invoiced for any applicable fees, and take care of any other administrative details
- (g) evaluate training needs of the group and individual Group Participants to ensure sufficient knowledge to implement and maintain the Standard requirements. The Manager should periodically assess the need for training in:
 - technical forestry
 - silvicultural techniques appropriate to the forest area
 - relevant laws and regulations
 - biodiversity, wildlife, soil and water protection
 - the audit process and possible audit findings
 - the corrective action process
 - the Standard requirements and certification processes and
 - the requirements of the Group Forest Certification Scheme.
- (h) periodically monitor the forest management plans and activities of the Group Participants to ensure that they continue to conform to the Standard
- (i) establish a procedure and schedule for conducting ongoing monitoring of the Group Participant's conformance with the Standard
- (j) document each step in the Group Participant expulsion process to clearly outline the problem, allow time to correct the problem, check to ensure that corrective action has taken place, or notify the Group Participant of their removal from the Group Entity
- (k) work with the lead auditor who will select field sites for inspection, as well as Group Participants and other personnel that may serve as interviewees
- (l) applying to Responsible Wood for access to the RW Logo and the PEFC Logo based on the accredited Certificate and

- (m) advise Group Participants on their unique registration number, which will also include the Group Entity unique number, for the two logos and on the claims which can be made because of Certification.

1.4.3 Group Organization

Participants of the Group Organization are required to –

- (a) To enter a written agreement with Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity) which includes a commitment to comply with the Standard and other applicable requirements of the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme
- (b) To comply with the Standard and other applicable requirements of the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme
- (c) To provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the Group Entity, the Manager or Certification Body for relevant data, documentation or other information
- (d) To allow access to the Manager or Certification Body to the Certified Area, whether relating to formal audits or reviews or otherwise
- (e) To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the Manager and
- (f) To use the Forest Management Certificate and logos and other intellectual property belonging to Responsible Wood in accordance with the rules of the Group Forest Certification Scheme.

Who can be a Participant of the Group Organization?

Each Participant is responsible for implementing the requirements of the Standard and for implementing any policies, rules and procedures specified by the Group Entity.

This involves working either independently or with a service provider or the Manager to ensure that forest practices are properly implemented, maintain an up-to-date management plan, and provide objective evidence demonstrating the Standard criteria and requirements have been achieved.

As per the definition in Table 1, a Participant in the Group Organization is defined as –

‘A forest owner/manager or other entity who:

- is covered by the Forest Management Certificate
- has the legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area
- has the ability to enter a legal agreement with the Group Entity and
- can make arrangements to ensure that the requirements of the Standard are implemented in that area.

The critical requirement of a Participant in the Group Organization is that they have, and can satisfactorily demonstrate, the legal right to manage a clearly defined forest area and can make arrangements to ensure Responsible Wood requirements are implemented.

Direct Landowner/Forest Owner Relationship

A Group Participant may be the landowner of the land upon which the forest resource is located. The landowner may be an individual, company, partnership, trust, or other legal entity.

Sometimes the forest owner may be the Group Participant, and this entity may not own the land upon which the forest is located – in such cases there is ordinarily a forest rights agreement in place that bestows rights and ownership to the forest owner.

The legal status of an entity other than an individual or group of natural persons will need to be provided at the time an application to join the Scheme is made. There will also need to be evidence provided that the applicant for group membership can demonstrate they own the resource.

The Group Participant can make arrangements to have services conducted on their land and forest but they must retain legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area in the event that the services being conducted do not comply with requirements.

Services would most likely be those conducted by a contractor such as harvesting, weed spraying, replanting, thinning, pest management etc.

The Manager may ask a prospective Group Participant to provide sufficient demonstration of arrangements prior to recommending entry into the Scheme. A Group Participant is required to keep records of works and service provision arrangements they have made in managing their forest which can be requested by the Manager, Certification Body or other Scheme representative.

Delegated Relationship

A landowner or forest owner may appoint a third party to act on their behalf to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Scheme.

The Manager may not meet the land or forest owner. Instead, the landowner or forest resource owner may delegate forest management to another party – in this case, the delegate party are the Group Participant. Notwithstanding this, the delegated person/entity must always be able to demonstrate they have legal control of the forest operations undertaken they take on the behalf of the landowner/forest owner.

1.3 Purpose of this Document and Planned Reviews

The purpose of this **Forest Management Plan** (FMP) is to clearly communicate the Scheme's sustainable forest management policy and describe how and why we manage forest resources included within the Scheme.

This FMP applies to all activities occurring within the Scheme's *defined forest estate*. The FMP includes descriptions and references to components of the management systems in place to achieve sustainable forest management.

We want ongoing collaboration with our stakeholders to maintain continual improvement and learning in the way we manage our forests. Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) welcomes feedback at any time, and all comments will be considered for inclusion in our current and future policies, management plans and procedures.

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2.0 Sustainable Forest Management

Sustainable forest management is the management of forests according to the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while conserving environmental values, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

Management of forests should use the Precautionary Principle for prevention of environmental degradation and the principle of inter-generational equity to maintain the suite of forest values for present and future generations.

2.1 Standard Principles

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The Standard embraces four sustainable forest management principles:

2.1.1 Cultural sustainability

This entails maintaining and enhancing the cultural capital of the community. Cultural capital refers to the collective knowledge, wisdom, cultural practices, and related environmental assets valued by communities and handed down from generation to generation by various means.

2.1.2 Economic sustainability

This entails optimising the economic benefits for income, employment, goods and services from the mixture of forest uses within ecological constraints. It requires that benefits exceed the costs incurred, and that some form of equivalent capital is handed down from one generation to the next so that our use of the forest does not preclude utilization options for future generations.

2.1.3 Environmental sustainability

This entails maintaining and or enhancing:

- the ecological processes within forest ecosystems
- the forest soil and geological features
- food chains and energy flows
- carbon, nutrient and water cycles and
- the biodiversity of forests -

to provide viable and functional forest ecosystems.

The forest ecosystem needs to support organisms to reproduce, whilst maintaining its productivity, adaptability, and capability for self-renewal. Forest management needs to support, and build upon these natural ecological components and processes.

2.1.4 Social sustainability

This entails maintaining and enhancing the net social benefit derived from the mixture of forest uses while maintaining options for the future. This includes sustaining the relationship between ethics, social norms, human rights and development. An activity is socially sustainable if it conforms to ethical values and social norms, upholds human rights standards, and does not exceed a community's tolerance of change.

2.2 Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management

The Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme is committed to carrying out sustainable forest management within a forest management system that empowers Group Participants to address the Scheme's management activities relevant to forest management performance requirements.

The forest management framework is flexible and adaptable for Group Participants within the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme.

This Forest Management Plan is relevant to the nature, scale of ownership and impacts of the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme. It underpins the long-term commitment the Scheme has to sustainable forest management and the forest management criteria and requirements of the Standard.

The Scheme, as a Group Organisation defined in the Standard, is appropriately motivated to be leaders in the community regarding the systematic management and continual improvement of the Scheme's forest management performance.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) is committed to the following forest management outcomes within the Scheme:

- Resource and maintain a forest management system that is certified compliant to the Responsible Wood Forestry Standard
- Establish a systematic approach to sustainable forest management, appropriate to the nature, scale and impacts of the forest and forest activities
- Comply with all relevant legislative and contractual requirements, codes and standards to which we subscribe

- Operate in an environmentally, socially, culturally and economically responsible manner
- Regularly monitor, audit and review our performance so we can continually improve
- Develop objectives and targets that assist us in mitigating our significant impacts
- Continual improvement in management performance and forest management outcomes to enhance the quality of the environmental, economic, social, and cultural values of forests and forest resources
- Proactively engage with and consider the views of our stakeholders
- Provide a safe and healthy working environment for our workers, contractors and visitors
- Ensure our workers and contractors have sufficient information, skills, training and resources to implement this policy and carry out their duties safely and
- Support research so that operational practices are strengthened by sound science.

3.0 Planning

3.1 Scope

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's (as Group Entity) scope of certification includes all native forest and plantation forest management activities within the Defined Forest Area (DFA), which encompasses properties in the State of Tasmania.

Forest harvesting and management is conducted day-to-day by Group Participants within the management framework and procedures stipulated by the Scheme. Auditing, monitoring, training and administrative reviews are conducted by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) to ensure compliance with the requirements of certification.

Land that may become privately owned by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) and managed in accordance with the Scheme's requirements is also within scope of the certification.

3.2 Resource Base

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) currently sources wood from native/natural regrowth forests and softwood and hardwood plantations.

Timber resources are currently accessed by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) under two broad categories:

1. Native forest managed and harvested on private freehold or commercial properties;
2. Plantation managed and harvested on private freehold or commercial properties.

Activities that **may be conducted** by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) in the future may include –

1. Management of its own freehold properties; and/or
2. Harvest plan preparation and contractor supervision.

These latter activities are not exhaustively described in this FMP however they are within the scope of certification.

3.3 Defined Forest Area

The **Defined Forest Area** (DFA) currently consists of plantation and native forest with the native forest portion of the DFA being multi-aged, regrowth forest in the drier forest types, which are managed using various partial harvesting techniques. The DFA includes plantation area and any other forest being managed for wood production.

The nature of the business means that the composition of the DF A changes periodically as properties pass into and out of Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's (as Group Entity) management control.

A register of properties included in the DFA is updated quarterly to reflect current operations, and

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submitted to Global-Mark, the certifying body used by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity), and to Responsible Wood.

When a Group participant is officially within the Scheme their forests will be added to the DFA register.

The locations of properties and areas within the DFA which make up the Resource Base are shown on maps available on the Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd website (<http://www.relianceforestfibre.com.au/>)

3.4 Forest Operational Planning Principles

This Forest Management Plan is the oversight document which is supported by the Tasmanian Forest Practices System (TFPS). Group Participants must make themselves aware of the forest practices system which operates within Tasmania and abide by its requirements.

Information about the TFPS is provided below.

3.3.1 Overview of forestry regulation in Tasmania

The sourcing of wood in Tasmania is highly regulated by Government via the *Forest Practices Act 1985* and *Forest Practices Regulations 2007*.

A Quick Reference Guide supports the State Specific Guideline for Tasmania which was issued by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments for use by processors of raw logs from Tasmania to facilitate their due diligence process in accordance with the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012* and the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment Regulation 2013*.

The elements of the Forest Practices System in Tasmania are described in more detail below.

3.3.2 Forest Practices System

The forest practices system was set up by the Tasmanian Parliament through the *Forest Practices Act 1985*. The system recognises the many values that forests have and it is designed to ensure that reasonable protection for the natural and cultural values of the forest is provided when forest practices are carried out.

The forest practices system has evolved over more than 25 years to become a complex system with many inter-related elements.

Forest practices, defined by the *Forest Practices Act 1985*, are:

- harvesting and regenerating native forest
- harvesting and/or establishing plantations
- clearing forests for other purposes, including agriculture
- clearing and converting threatened native vegetation communities
- constructing roads and quarries for the above purposes
- harvesting tree ferns.

The system is based on a co-regulatory approach, combining self-management by the industry and independent monitoring and enforcement by the FPA.

Forest Practices Officers are trained and authorised by the FPA and employed within the industry to plan, supervise and monitor forest practices. FPA staff provide advice on regulatory and technical matters, including requirements for the protection of natural and cultural values. The FPA also monitors forest practices to ensure that standards are being met. Corrective action is taken where required, which can include completion of remedial works, fines or prosecution.

The FPA has a statutory responsibility to report annually to parliament on the forest practices system and the operations and performance of the FPA.

The forest practices system aims to foster co-operation amongst all stakeholders, including the government, landowners, the forest industry and the broader community. There is an emphasis on planning, training, education and continuing improvement.

The objective of the Tasmanian forest practices system, as set down in Schedule 7 of the *Forest*

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Practices Act 1985, is to achieve sustainable management of public and private forests with due care for the environment in a way that is as far as possible self-funding. This is achieved through:

- an emphasis on self-regulation
- planning before forest operations
- delegated and decentralised approvals for forest practices plans and other forest practices matters
- a Forest Practices Code which provides practical standards for forest management, timber harvesting and other forest operations
- an emphasis on consultation and education
- an emphasis on research, review and continuing improvement
- the conservation of threatened native vegetation communities
- provision for the rehabilitation of land in cases where the Forest Practices Code is contravened
- an independent appeal process
- through the declaration of private timber reserves, a means by which private land holders are able to ensure the security of their forest resources.

3.3.3 Forest Practices Code

The Tasmanian Forest Practices Code was the first in Australia and is central to the forest practices system. It is the only forest code in Australia and one of a very few world-wide to apply equally to public and private land. The code is applied in accordance with a guiding policy that explains the contribution to be made by the code towards sustainable forest management in Tasmania. The guidelines and standards in the Forest Practices Code cover:

- planning
- building access into the forest (roads, bridges, quarries etc.)
- harvesting of timber
- conservation of natural and cultural values (soil and water, geomorphology, visual landscape, botany, zoology and cultural heritage)
- establishing and maintaining forests.

The FPA developed the code through extensive consultation and public comment. It is reviewed periodically, incorporating suggestions from scientists, government, the forestry industry and the public. The code is legally enforceable under the *Forest Practices Act 1985* for both public and private forests.

3.3.4 Forest Practices Officers

The Forest Practices Authority trains and authorises Forest Practices Officers (FPOs), who are either employees of forest managers or work as private consultants. Although FPOs are generally employed by industry or land owners, their responsibility under the *Forest Practices Act 1985* is to the FPA.

FPOs prepare and certify forest practices plans (FPPs), which must be in accordance with the Forest Practices Code and legislation. FPOs liaise with neighbours and ensure that contractors are familiar with the FPP. They supervise the implementation of plans and modify forest operations where necessary.

FPOs have the authority to issue notices to cease operations and repair any damage.

FPOs must regularly inspect operations and lodge a certificate of compliance with the FPA upon completion of each operational phase in the certified FPP, such as road construction, quarry development, harvesting and reforestation. The certificate details the way in which the operation has complied with the FPP. The FPA closely monitors the performance of FPOs and undertakes regular FPO training and coupe assessments to ensure that uniformly high standards are achieved. Disciplinary action can be taken by the Board of the FPA against FPOs who are not carrying out their duties in a manner consistent with the *Forest Practices Act 1985*. Action can include warning,

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suspension or revocation of warrant.

3.3.5 Forest Practices Plans

Forest practices plans (FPPs) are required for almost all forest practices on public and private land. The few exemptions are detailed in the Forest Practices Regulations.

FPPs must be prepared in accordance with the code and other legislation, such as the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.

Before operations begin, FPPs must be certified by a Forest Practices Officer (FPO) and applicants for FPPs must notify immediate neighbours and local government.

FPPs provide details of the operation area, boundaries, roads, snig tracks, landings, bridges, streams and forest areas retained for conservation purposes. They also include prescriptions for protection of natural and cultural values, planned harvest systems, and reforestation.

During the preparation of the FPP, FPOs are required to identify natural and cultural values that may be impacted by proposed operations. The Forest Practices Code and associated approved guidelines prescribe measures to be incorporated into FPPs to protect certain natural or cultural values, or manage risks associated with forestry operations around them. For complex issues, FPOs may seek advice from FPA specialists, or the Forest Practices Code and its associated guidelines may require that advice is sought. FPA specialists provide advice based on regulatory requirements, field observations and the results of research and monitoring. Liaison with other scientists may be required. The advice received may result in some areas being excluded from harvest or forest management being changed.

Forest operations may also need approval from local government under the planning scheme and if the land is not a private timber reserve or State forest. The council may impose additional conditions on the proposed operations.

The FPA charges an application fee for FPPs to contribute to the cost of providing advice, conducting research and developing planning tools. The fee varies according to the area, forest type and operation prescriptions involved in the plan (for further information refer to the Forest Practices Regulations).

The FPA has a policy on communication of information in relation to FPPs.

The Regulations describe circumstances in which an FPP may not be required because of other approval instruments such as Vegetation Management Agreements, Conservation Covenants, Fire Management Plans, electricity infrastructure and Environmental Management Systems.

3.3.6 Forest Practices System Integrity

Forest practices plans (FPPs) are required for almost all forest practices on public and private land.

FPOs have a unique login through which they access and certify FPPs. This approach minimises the risk of illegal logging due to the issuing of a false or misleading FPP. The auditing conducted by the FPA and presence of FPOs in the broader landscape also provide opportunities for the checking of forest practices and forest practices activities more generally.

The FPA compliance system is designed to detect any breaches of the forest practices plan (FPP) early, so that environmental effects are minimised. This process of early detection is aided by the many tiers of checks and balances in the system to determine the degree of compliance of operations with FPPs:

- Forest contractors are skilled operators and typically have a high level of understanding on the Forest Practices Code. Where further advice is required, e.g. a stream which is not shown in the FPP is detected during operations, contractors seek advice from an FPO to avoid environmental harm. Where a breach may have occurred, contractors typically report this to supervisors and/or FPOs.
- Forest Practices Officers supervising FPPs are often the first people to identify a breach. They have the authority to require compliance with the plan and repair any damage.
- FPP applicants are required to submit to the FPA a certificate of compliance at the end of each

stage of the FPP. These certificates detail the compliance of the operations with the FPP and alert the FPA's Compliance Program to any breaches.

- An annual assessment of FPPs is facilitated by the FPA's Compliance Program. This systematic assessment is based on a stratified random sample of certified forest practices plans and is one of the FPA's statutory obligations.
- Anyone can report a suspected breach of the *Forest Practices Act 1985* to the FPA, such as a breach of an FPP or forest practices taking place without an FPP.
- The FPA investigates alleged breaches of the *Forest Practices Act 1985*. Where breaches are identified, the FPA prefers corrective action including: repairing any damage; education; and improving systems to ensure similar issues do not arise in the future.

3.4 Property Operational Planning for Group Organization

3.4.1 Existing FPP Instruments

A Group Participant when they apply to join the Scheme may already have one or several FPPs on their property to authorise forestry operations. In such circumstances, the Group participant is required to provide the FPPs for review with their application to join the Scheme.

A property assessment may be conducted by the Scheme Manager to discuss options for forest management which would include a briefing on Scheme requirements and expectations of sustainable forest management if the landowner was to join the Scheme. This assessment may identify additional areas of forest available for harvest but not covered by an FPP.

3.4.2 No FPP Instruments

In some cases, a potential Group Participant may not have any existing FPPs on their land. In such circumstances, an initial property assessment is conducted by the Scheme Manager to discuss options for forest management which would include a briefing on Scheme requirements and expectations of sustainable forest management if the landowner was to join the Scheme.

The property assessment considers initial estimates of the volume of merchantable timber, silvicultural system proposed and any aspects of the property that may prevent acceptance into the Scheme. If the property is suitable, Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) will write a proposal to the landowner for their consideration. When an agreement is reached, Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) and the landowner sign an Agreement. Formal assessment and planning work on the property then begins.

3.4.3 Coupe Planning

Operational Plans ('forest practices plans' or similar) are completed for properties where required, with these plans underpinned by reference to the Legislation Register prepared for each State and other relevant registers and checklists. Separate Operational Plans may be completed to cover roading, harvesting, spraying and reforestation/establishment.

The planning process takes into consideration:

- The evaluation of natural, cultural, social, high conservation and biodiversity values
- Catchment management and stream protection
- Earth sciences including geological stability and erosion control
- Landscape impacts
- Operational restrictions and
- Stakeholder needs and expectations

The planning process has a significant mapping component, incorporating features such as existing roads and landings, private property boundaries, flora and fauna, forest community types, watercourses, hazards, emergency meeting points and other natural, cultural, social, high conservation and biodiversity values. These features are located and mapped using GIS technology where appropriate.

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Draft Operational Plans are subject to a systematic internal peer review prior to finalisation and, if required, certification/authorisation to ensure that due diligence has been considered in their preparation.

3.5 Legal Context

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) recognises the importance of ensuring that its forest management practices comply with or exceed the requirements of all relevant legislation and policies at both the State and Commonwealth level and applicable international legislation and agreements.

The formal agreements between Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) and land/forest owners are structured to establish clear written responsibilities with the Group Participant including the procedures to allow a Group participant to voluntarily leave the Scheme, be evicted from the Scheme and be allowed to re-join the Scheme under certain circumstances.

We have also identified other requirements we must comply with including the relevant codes of practice, permit requirements and any other best practice strategy we subscribe to.

Appendix E, (Legal and Compliance Register) contains the detail about how the legal and other requirements are integrated into our operations. An assessment of compliance with relevant State and Commonwealth legislation is provided in Appendix E, (Legal & Compliance).

3.6 Local Government

Operations conducted by Group Participants within the Scheme are located across many local government areas. Our interaction with local government authorities may consist of general stakeholder communication, planning permits, development applications, road use and maintenance issues, and communication regarding school bus routes and truck traffic.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) strives to proactively build relationships with local government representatives and staff through field days and direct communication and interaction.

3.7 Water Catchment Management Authorities

Water catchment management issues are considered at the operational planning level as well as at the wider landscape level. The water catchment management authorities (in this case, Taswater Corporation Pty Ltd) responsible for the watersheds in which each of our operations lies are considered stakeholders of Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity). Specific catchment goals and requirements, where present, are to be incorporated into forest practices plans and Property Management Plans.

3.8 Access and Security

3.8.1 Group Participants

Group Participants are required to control access (eg gates, locks, signage etc) to the forest estates, where operationally feasible, which they have entered into the DFA.

3.8.2 Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd private freehold properties

Private freehold properties owned by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity), when purchased, will be gated and locked where feasible and signs erected at key entrance points. Appropriate signage will be installed.

3.9 Chain of Custody

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) ensures that forest products and services that are sold and supplied as "certified" are identifiable as originating from the DFA and/or FMUs by the provision of appropriate documentation such as a Log Delivery Docket.

The Manager will provide the certification details of the Group Participant to the nominated customer. Information provided to the customer will include the Group Participants current DFA, Certificate of Approval, and statement of certification as "100% Responsible Wood Certified"

To achieve this Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) maintains policies and procedures that

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demonstrate control of the forest products up to the point of sale.

4.0 Corporate Goals

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's (as Group Entity) commitment to the Corporate Goals stated herein, and the successful implementation of a forest management system which meets the certification requirements of the Australian Standard, are subject to periodic external audits.

Audits results will be made available on the company website
(<http://www.relianceforestfibre.com.au/>).

The Scheme operates a management system to demonstrate its commitment to the following:

- Sustainable Forest Management
- Environmental Management and Protection
- Social Responsibility
- Risk Identification and Management
- Monitoring Compliance and Continual Improvement.

4.1 Goal: Sustainable Forest Management Value

Objective: The Scheme aims to have forest management practices conducted in a manner which will maintain or enhance the productive capacity of the land and forest.

4.1.1 Native Forest

Silvicultural Systems

The native forest managed through the Scheme is characterised by multi-aged regrowth.

Silvicultural techniques are designed to ensure adequate regeneration and the maintenance of stocking levels over time. The duration of Group membership means that individual private properties could be managed on a medium-term basis (eg 3-10 years) and when they enter the Scheme represent a variety of ages and historical forest management histories.

Group Participants may hold specific land management objectives, which may be accommodated if permissible under relevant state codes of practice for forest operations, and the certification requirements.

Forests are to be harvested at an age appropriate to the forest type and structure. Where present, mixed age structures are maintained. Stands are harvested using either hand or mechanical felling, depending on the site and safety considerations. Logs are snigged to the landings, graded and cut to appropriate lengths.

The Scheme adopts silvicultural prescriptions to maintain the long-term productive capacity of the land and forest areas included in the Scheme's DFA.

Tasmanian has several information sources to aid the development of silvicultural practices most notably the Native Forest Silviculture Technical Bulletin series.

Silvicultural systems are to be carefully chosen considering current stand age and structure, inventory understory, and other factors including altitude, regenerative capacity of the forest and climatic exposure. Where the forest structure is already characterised by a range of ages, various partial harvesting techniques are utilised. A seed bed can be prepared in unstocked gaps by top disposal burning or mechanical disturbance to promote the establishment of new seedlings.

In even-aged forests with well-formed trees, pole thinning is employed to encourage the growth of trees containing potential sawlogs for the future. At high altitudes, shelterwood is generally retained to allow new growth to develop under the canopy of mature trees, which are removed when the younger trees are of adequate size. Prescriptions are determined based on staff experience, Technical Bulletins and other guidance prepared by regional or State authorities, and other relevant literature.

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Stand Growth Rates

Given that the ages and harvesting histories of individual properties within the DFA are often largely speculative, it is difficult to precisely describe the average growth rates of specific stands. However, the Scheme is committed to ensuring that the removal of selected timber products is likely to preserve or enhance the long-term productive capacity of these properties. The goal of sustainable forest management is addressed in the first instance by assessing the stand and researching its history, then identifying forestry practices that could affect the future capacity of the area to produce wood and non-wood products. Regrowth height and density are instrumental in determining management prescriptions and estimating rotation length.

For some areas which have been harvested in the past, a selective harvest that leaves an area fully stocked, while creating gaps in the regrowth canopy, may be the most reliable way to ensure long-term productive capacity. Following harvest, regeneration monitoring, restrictions on grazing and the assessment of the need for remedial regeneration treatments serve to promote sustainability.

Regeneration

It is important that selectively harvested areas are either left in a stocked or regenerated state within the period of membership of the Group Participant. Partial harvesting techniques recommended by the Scheme rely on natural seeding, retained seed trees and the presence of advanced growth to re-establish on site. Regeneration surveys, via standardised formal strip line surveys or structured visual assessment, are scheduled within two to three years of the completion of harvesting, and areas requiring remedial treatments identified.

Fire

Low-intensity fires can be used to reduce fuel load and/or promote forest health. Lower-altitude areas with grassy understories may have low-intensity burns specified in their Operational Plans or FPPs. Individual burn plans for these coupes are developed, and burns undertaken with consideration to community safety and seasonal fire risk.

Clearfall, burn and sow techniques could be utilised in appropriate forest types such as wet eucalypt forests. For this method of silviculture, collection and sowing of on-site seed is the preferred alternative, followed by the sourcing of seed from geographically similar sites.

Degraded Areas of Forest

The Standard defines degraded forest as –

A forest that has reduced capacity to provide goods and services because it has lost structure, function, species composition and or productivity normally associated with the forest type on that site.

Note 1: A degraded forest requires silvicultural intervention to restore its productivity.

Degraded areas of forest are generally excluded from operational areas in the initial stages of property assessment. The Scheme would allow the inclusion of already degraded areas under an Operational Plan prepared for an adjacent commercial area to undertake remedial treatments to regenerate these areas. Remedial treatments include light burning, scarification, and/or hand sowing of local seed. A similar approach would be taken if regeneration requirements were difficult to meet on an area of forest included within the Scheme's DFA.

Clearance and conversion of native forest

The Scheme does not allow the clearance and conversion of native forest, natural vegetation or natural ecosystems, either within the DFA or on the property owned and managed by the Group Participant.

4.1.2 Plantations

Silvicultural Systems

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) aims to maximise the productive potential and value of the plantation whilst maintaining and/or enhancing the sustainability and environmental values of

the land.

The selection of an appropriate silvicultural system and species requires the consideration of several factors. These include but are not limited to the proximity and diversity of markets, site environmental factors, natural and cultural values, long term property objectives, operational constraints and community expectations.

Rotation lengths can vary between 10 years (pulpwood) to 40 years plus (sawlog). In this time, several managers or landowners may have implemented various silvicultural systems.

To achieve its goal of maximising productive value and maintaining sustainability, Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd or the Group Participant would need to review stand history, current stand condition, inventory, market availability, resource owner's objectives, and site and environmental factors prior to deciding upon the future silvicultural management of the stand.

Species Selection

Plantation species are generally chosen based on their suitability for the site, potential for high sustainable growth rates, and prevailing market opportunities for products. Plantation species which may come under the management of the Scheme primarily include *Pinus radiata* (pine), *Eucalyptus globulus* (blue gum) and *Eucalyptus nitens* (shining gum).

In general terms, *E. nitens* is more cold-tolerant and frost-resistant, can be planted up to elevations of 750m, but does not self-prune particularly well. *Eucalyptus globulus* is more drought-tolerant and can be planted up to elevations of 350m if frost hollows are avoided and can be coppice-managed.

The performance of species and provenances in comparable areas local to the plantation in question will inform the choice of stock used for re-planting. The preference of local mills for species is also considered.

Management objectives will generally have been determined by the landowner when the plantation was established and range from pruning and thinning regimes designed to maximise clearwood for veneer and sawn timber to stands managed primarily for pulp production.

Softwood Plantations

Softwood plantations in Australia are generally managed with the aim of producing high quality sawlogs. Planting, thinning and pruning regimes will vary depending on local markets, species selection and site conditions.

Pinus radiata plantations in the southern states of Australia that are located on good quality sites, close to high value markets are normally thinned twice before a clearfall, sometime after age 25, aimed at producing a high percentage of sawlogs. On lower quality sites and where there is limited access to high value markets stands may be left un-thinned and grown primarily for a lower value pulpwood market. Operational constraints such as terrain may also constrain silvicultural options.

Hardwood Plantations

The silvicultural systems used for most hardwood plantations on private property are designed to produce a crop of pulpwood quality trees somewhere between age 12 – 20 years depending on site quality. The Scheme supports silvicultural systems that aim to produce solid wood products but understand that markets are limited and as such investment in stand improvement is highly speculative.

The gene pollution risk associated with gene flow between eucalypt species, such as *Eucalyptus ovata* and *E. nitens*, will be considered in the planning stage of new plantations as per the advice and technical note issued by the Forest Practices Authority.

Site Preparation

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) aims to promote long-term site productivity in a cost-effective manner. Site preparation should not result in unacceptable erosion, compaction, rutting or mixing of soils or water quality degradation. Site preparation operations involve the use of fuels and oils, which have the potential to cause environmental damage if spillages occur.

Stand Growth Rate

Baseline inventory data is gathered when a property first enters long term management. For older stands, there may be historical data that can be obtained from a previous forest manager. Where required, Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) conducts its own inventory designed to capture information about various product groups present within a stand. Group Participants may also conduct such assessments or commission their own advisors to conduct such tasks. Actual and assessed harvest volumes may be compared post-harvest to analyse and improve the accuracy of inventory methods and yield analysis.

Monitoring Establishment

Group Participants are required to have a plantation monitoring program, carried out to ensure acceptable stocking, performance, and quality, of the plantation. The program should include surveying and assessment of the recently established planted area up until age 3 to ensure successful reforestation has been achieved at these critical early stages of the plantation life cycle. Monitoring should address:

- Site preparation quality control
- Planting quality control
- Regular post planting browsing surveys
- A survival assessment no more than 18 months post establishment to ensure adequate stocking levels have been achieved and
- Annual plantation health assessments.

Remedial Treatments

Within plantations, underperforming areas may develop on waterlogged patches or rocky knolls. These areas need to be evaluated for their potential to be converted to native vegetation, and remedial treatments such as scarification, light burning and/or sowing may be applied. The control of wildlings or coppice in these areas may also be employed by Group Participants.

For plantations established before native vegetation riparian buffers were required, the appropriate buffers will be left unplanted in the next rotation, with an aim to convert that riparian area to native vegetation cover over time. As above, various remedial treatments could be evaluated by Group Participants to expedite this process.

At re-establishment of plantation after harvesting the gene pollution risk associated with gene flow between eucalypt species, such as *Eucalyptus ovata* and *E. nitens*, will be considered as per the advice and technical note issued by the Forest Practices Authority.

For existing eucalypt plantations that become part of the DFA which support a species that has a high risk of gene flow contamination to native species (eg flow from plantation *E. nitens* and *E. globulus* and associated native species in the surrounding area, such as *E. ovata*, *E. globulus* and *E. viminalis*) the Group Participant will monitor for wildling establishment and remove/spray these as they are detected.

4.1.3 Damage to Growing Stock

“Growing stock” includes trees within the harvest boundary of an operational area. Potential causes of damage to growing stock during forest operations include mechanical damage, windthrow and unplanned fire. Mechanical damage to retained growing stock is minimised using directional felling, and the cutting of logs to shorter lengths before snigging where necessary.

An awareness of predominant wind directions and the potential for windthrow following harvest is to be into consideration when planning the placement of harvest boundaries and patches of reserved forest. Assessments of damage to retained growing stock are to be conducted as part of normal harvest monitoring and reviewed during annual management reviews.

4.1.4 Product Segregation

Correct segregation of wood products to their highest-value end use is central to the Scheme’s forest management strategy. Group Participants will be requested to provide evidence that products are

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being appropriately segregated and there may be random audits of forest operations to ensure correct segregation.

4.1.5 Non-wood Products and Values

Since forestry operations included in the Scheme are conducted on private land, scope for the procurement of other non-wood resources (e.g. honey, flowers and foodstuffs) is largely in the hands of the individual Group Participants. Provisions for grazing and stock shelter within harvested areas after regeneration has been established can often be accommodated by management strategies.

4.1.6 Clearance and conversion of plantation to agricultural use

The clearance and conversion of plantation estate to agricultural land may occur from time to time as land management objectives change.

The existence of plantation on private freehold land should be considered a transitory land use because its location and extent fluctuate with commercial markets and factors often out of the control of a Group Participant. The Scheme allows for the clearance and conversion of plantation to an agricultural land use noting that the Group Participant may instigate plantation establishment on other parts of the property or other Group participants may concurrently be expanding their plantation estate.

4.1.7 Pests and Diseases

Activities and risks which could impact the future capacity of an area to produce wood and non-wood products are evaluated during the planning process. Examples of risks include browsing, fire, weeds and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (root-rot fungus).

The control of weeds, pests and diseases is essential in the management of forests prior to, and following, harvesting activities. The requirement for disinfection of machinery prior to entering or leaving a coupe is specified in Operational Plans where susceptible communities are present. Declared weeds have the potential to not only invade properties managed by Group Participants, but also adjoining properties. Any observations of declared weeds are to be identified to the landowner, who is legally responsible for their control.

The presence of some agents which are potentially damaging to forest health may be identifiable from visible symptoms. Indicators of stand health such as crown vigour or unusually high numbers of epicormic shoots are noted. If areas of poor stand health are identified, the Group Participant is informed, and the areas would most likely be excluded from operations based on the poor chance of regeneration success.

The management of forest pests and diseases is supported by information contained in the *Weed, Pest and Disease Strategy* developed for the Scheme.

4.2 Goal: Environmental Management and Protection

Objective: The Scheme aims to have forestry operations conducted in a manner which will maintain and enhance the integrity of natural and cultural values.

4.2.1 Conservation Land Management Principles

The identification of significant natural and cultural values is an essential component of Tasmania's forest practices system. Together with the protection of threatened species, communities and habitat, water quality, soils and geology of significance, visual issues and cultural values the system ascribes a high level of specialist input through development of expert systems and conservation management prescriptions. The net effect is a considerable reservation area set aside in any given FPP to protect natural and cultural values.

The Scheme subscribes to the planning process of the Forest Practices system which requires identification of natural and cultural values through interrogating available data bases, site assessment and specialist input. This involves initial search of data bases to identify threatened vegetation communities, known existing threatened flora and fauna communities and species, likely habitat and known cultural heritage sites and potential aboriginal sites, geologic, soil water and landscape values and visual management. Site assessment further refines this and expert advice may be required to develop a management prescription within the FPP.

The planning prescriptions of the Forest Practices System; use of expert systems, specialist site visits

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and prescriptions cover several criteria of the Responsible Wood Standard including: Biodiversity, Forest Ecosystem Health, Soil and Water Resources and Cultural Values.

4.2.2 Biodiversity Monitoring

Tasmania's Forest Practices system provides a comprehensive mechanism for managing the biodiversity values found in forest operations. FPOs use biodiversity evaluation sheets and interrogate various databases and property history documents as part of the preparation process for drawing up an FPP to cover an area to be harvested. Databases for known sites and predicted zones include the Conserve Database administered through STT and the FPA's Biodiversity Values Database updated through the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) Natural Values Atlas. Any information gained from the desktop analysis is always verified in the field by the FPO as part of the field inspection process.

One of the aims of the Group scheme is to protect and where possible enhance biodiversity values. Information from the FPP process is used to identify, protect and enhance biodiversity in the DFA. The

The monitoring biodiversity objectives are:

- Establish baseline understanding of significant biodiversity values in DFA
- Examine changes in biodiversity over time
- Identify invasive species for potential management

Biodiversity will be managed by:

1. Actively protecting and managing all biodiversity values identified in FPPs in line with FPP requirements.
2. Desk audit to identify threatened and endangered species and ecosystems which could potentially occur across the DFA.
3. Assess areas of native vegetation in the DFA using information from the desk audit and establish permanent plots to identify condition of forest over time.
4. Adding extra measures where appropriate to protect high value areas from fire, weeds, pests and diseases.

When these actions have been completed the biodiversity monitoring strategy will be reviewed by an appropriate expert. The monitoring results will be used to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the biodiversity management.

Appendix B contains a list of at-risk species identified within 5km of the DFA.

4.2.3 Flora

Tasmania's forests contain a wide diversity of native plant communities reflecting the variety of environments found in the state. Forest communities range from the dry eucalypt forests and woodlands in the east of the state to the tall wet forests found in the higher rainfall areas in the west of the state. Native non-forest vegetation (e.g. moorland, heath, wetland and native grassland) may be associated with native forests (and sometimes plantations).

The FPA has developed a comprehensive Forest Botany Manual that assists planners identify species and communities at risk. Legislation has been enacted at the Commonwealth and State level to provide protection. The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* lists vulnerable, endangered, and critically endangered flora species that are protected by that Act.

Threatened native vegetation communities include plant communities that are naturally rare and communities that were once more widespread but are now significantly depleted because of clearing over the last two hundred years. Threatened communities, both forest and non-forest, are listed on the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002* and their protection is achieved through the Tasmanian Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy, the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* and the *Forest Practices Act 1985*.

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4.2.4 Fauna

The management of threatened fauna species in Tasmania is covered by legislation and processes that include the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*, and the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement 1997. These recognise that a variety of mechanisms are needed to achieve ecologically sustainable forest management with respect to fauna species of high conservation significance.

Fauna evaluation is undertaken as part of the biodiversity assessment of harvesting units. If known localities or suspected habitat of priority species is identified the Threatened Fauna Adviser, an expert systems tool is consulted for recommended action. Examples of where fauna species will need to be managed include wedge tailed eagles nest identification and management prescriptions - a minimum of 10ha reservation and no-activity times during the nesting season.

4.2.4 Soil and Water Values

Soil, water quality and flow and geomorphology special values are considered to prevent unacceptable erosion rates; maintain water quality and stream flow for ecological, social and economic reasons and to prevent damage to sites of special scientific interest.

As part of this assessment process, the location and catchment areas of all watercourses within and adjacent to the proposed operational area are mapped. Streams are to be assessed for erosion features which may require enlargement of the standard unharvested streamside reserves. Water quality is protected by several planning and operational measures including the identification of stream class and the marking of the appropriate width stream side reserves. These reserves can make up the most extensive reserve area in our proposed DFA. Water quality monitoring may be undertaken where operations exist near (<2km) to town water catchments.

The FPA earth sciences process for evaluation of special values provides for protection of soils by identification of the geology and soil erodibility class. This triggers management prescriptions to minimize the risk and protect the soil, for example, soil of high erodibility class, landslip hazards and or karst will require specific prescriptions in the FPP. Parent rock materials, soil types, erodibility characteristics and slopes are all taken into consideration and contribute to the placement of harvest boundaries, and the types of machinery permitted in the coupe.

Wet weather provisions should be applied to minimise the runoff of turbid water and include operational shutdowns, gripping of snig tracks and firebreaks, road construction and drainage to appropriate standards.

4.2.5 Reserves

Areas reserved from harvest are chosen by considering the issues identified in the natural and cultural values evaluation. Where present, informal, or formal reserves on adjacent properties should be linked to wildlife habitat corridors, providing a continuity of habitat across tenure.

Group Participants should be aware of their responsibilities to manage areas that have been set aside under an FPP – it is vulnerable land within the meaning of the *Forest Practices Act 1985*.

4.2.6 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage refers to those places and sites that have been passed down to us from the actions of people in the past, both Aboriginal and European. Historic use of the forests will

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be considered during all stages of forest management.

The Forest Practices Authority has developed a comprehensive cultural heritage management system that provides practical guides on how to implement this framework.

It highlights the need to assess the heritage values within the area covered by the operation in the planning phase. It also provides tools to be used by Forest Practices Officers including instructions on how to:

- record the sites located
- assess potential impacts
- apply planning tools for management options
- incorporate heritage management into forest practices plans (FPPs)
- ensure forest operators understand their responsibility in individual coupes
- monitor, evaluate and assess compliance with stated management prescriptions.

For each operational area covered by the DFA, there will need to be an assessment of its cultural heritage. Areas identified as important are accorded reservation based on prescriptive measures.

4.2.7 Visual Assessment

Application of the visual management system developed by the FPA should be undertaken where visual sensitivity is important. The purpose of the analysis and prescriptions is; firstly, to ensure that forestry activities, where visible, are well integrated into the landscape scene; secondly to ensure that the degree of visual change is appropriate to the character of the scenery and the public viewing circumstances; and thirdly, to try to limit or avoid visual exposure and impact.

4.3 Goal: Social Responsibility

Objective: The Scheme aims to have forestry operations conducted in a manner which is in harmony with local and indigenous communities.

Community concerns about the social impacts of the forest industry have been expressed to varying degrees over several decades. Issues include the long-term viability of the industry, its impacts on the environment and its impacts on regional populations, community facilities and service provision. Most of these concerns relate to clearfelling and the conversion of native forest to plantation. This conversion no longer happens but the perception remains.

Supporting Regional Communities

The Scheme aims to indirectly provide employment opportunities for regional contractors where their employment may be via Group Participants to harvest and regenerate/replant forests. The Scheme will promote the use of local carting contractors and services to those contractors to keep employment and economic activity local.

Truck movements may be suspended during hours of school bus operation on regional roads, in consultation with local government and individual schools. The recovery and value adding of otherwise wasted products will be encouraged wherever possible.

In carrying out operations associated with the Scheme, Group participants should aim to protect and enhance the social framework in which it operates by informing the community of our operations and responding appropriately to community concerns. Examples of proactive community engagement include field days at a forestry operation, the hosting of a work experience program for students at a regional high school, etc.

Stakeholder Engagement

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) in implementing the Scheme is committed to

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constructive engagement with stakeholders to communicate the Scheme's activities, consider their views and enhance our ability to contribute to local communities and economies.

The concerns and priorities of the owner of the land on which operations are proposed may influence the flexibility with which Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) is able to respond to the concerns of affect stakeholders, including neighbours, and other interested stakeholders. Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) is committed to balancing the economic, environmental, social and cultural objectives of all interested and affected parties in the context of relevant legislation and contractual obligations.

Stakeholders have been divided into 12 groups.

Stakeholder	Needs and expectations
State & Local Government & Regulatory Bodies	Understand where operations impact government regulations and infrastructure.
Non-Government Environmental Group	Advise of general policies and approaches to meeting certification standards.
Community Forest User Groups	Advise of individual operations which could impact their forest use.
Contractors & suppliers	Advise of safety requirements and risks
Regional & Local Tourism Associations	Advise of operations which could impact scheduled events.
Accreditation Bodies	Understand changes to the group participants and DFA
Customers	Advise of standards being adhered to an provide appropriate information on sales documentation.
Industry	Advise of general policies and approaches to meeting certification standards.
Indigenous Groups	Ongoing liaison about all identified sites within the DFA and all operations in the impacted forests.
Neighbours & Locals impacted by forest operations	Advise of individual operations which could impact the environment or the amenity of their residence
Media	Advise of events which could interest the general public
Education and research	Work with institutions to enable research to happen and understand and value research.

A register of interested and affected stakeholders for the Scheme is maintained and updated on a regular basis, with stakeholder feedback and areas of interest being regularly reviewed by Scheme management. Comments may be made to the company at any time via the 'Contact' section of the website.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) recognises the importance of informing landowners on neighbouring properties of the nature and timing of any proposed operations.

The Scheme encourages Group Participants to

- identify individuals near the operation whose routine activities may be affected by their proposed operations; and
- to contact and liaise with neighbours and local stakeholders whom may be interested in or

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concerned by their forest management practices.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as Group Entity) is open to meeting with stakeholders and neighbour representatives to provide information in relation to local concerns and negotiating a mutually acceptable outcome.

External Dispute and Issue Resolution

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) has a Dispute and Issues Resolution Procedure designed to find consensus between the parties.

Indigenous and Traditional Uses

A desktop or field assessment for Aboriginal cultural heritage is made for each operational area, according to the accepted procedures of the Forest Practices Authority. Where artifacts are discovered, or previously known to exist, their locations are identified in the relevant operational plan and map and reserved from harvesting operations.

Reasonable requests made to Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) for access to the property of a Group Participant for participating in traditional pursuits will be referred to the landowner for consideration on a case-by- case basis. Due consideration of unplanned fire, safety and other environmental risks will need to be considered. Similarly, reasonable requests by community groups or individual for uses of the forest (e.g. recreational) within the DFA which are compatible with the Scheme's forest management aims will be considered on their individual merits and risks.

Work Health and Safety

Industry standards of health and safety are to be established and maintained by each Group Participant and enforced among its sub-contractors, in accordance with Commonwealth and State legislation. All operations that occur within the DFA of the Scheme are to comply with the Tasmanian Forest Safety code. Compliance is as verified by Coupe Safety Audits of contractors, recorded on the Scheme's Forest Operation Compliance Monitoring Form or similar. Any safety issues identified are managed using Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd 's (as Group Entity) Corrective Action Procedure. As part of the 5-yearly of the FMP management review process Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) will publish a summary of results of its WHS performance for the period.

Group Participants are expected to -

1. establish and maintain industry standards of health and safety to that required by law
2. provide a safe working environment where risks and hazards have been identified and mitigated to reasonable levels
3. provide where relevant the necessary PPE and training to perform allocated tasks
4. correct safety non-compliances through education and training.

Employment and Skills Development

The importance of maintaining staff skill levels, which meet current industry challenges and requirements, is essential for sustainable forest management.

Records of each Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) employee accreditations and qualifications are held by Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd. These records and those of Group Participants are to be reviewed at the annual Management Review against the evolving needs of the company. Similarly, Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) requires proof of proper accreditation from all its directly engaged contractors for their individual employees and the tasks they perform. Workers and contractors are kept up to date with their skills and knowledge as Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) management becomes aware of developments in the industry.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) can assist Group Participants to

1. recognise the training needs of their staff and contractors
2. provide assistance to employees to increase their skill base
3. establish and maintain records of employee accreditations and qualifications.

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Workers' Rights

All staff at Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) are engaged and promoted based on qualifications, skills and experience. Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) is an equal-opportunity employer, which acknowledges the rights of employees and contractors to participate in labour organisations and collective bargaining, and to associate freely. Negotiations with workers are carried out in good faith and with best efforts to reach agreement. A suite of company policies covering employee rights and responsibilities has been established and is available to all employees.

Group Participants are expected to recognise the rights of employees and contractors to

1. participate in labour organisations and collective bargaining, and to associate freely; and
2. conduct negotiations with workers in good faith and with best efforts to reach agreement.

4.3 Goal: Risk Identification and Management

Objective: The Scheme aims to identify risks to the ongoing successful sustainable forest management of those forests within the DFA and to (i) manage those risks to lessen their likelihood of occurrence or impact of they were to occur or (ii) mitigate the risk through control measures.

Risk assessment processes occur at two levels. The first level is an activity based risk assessment where Scheme staff identify the aspects of each activity, and rate the level of severity based on the potential consequences of the impacts on various attributes that could be on site.

The second level is the site-specific assessment which identifies the presence of attributes on site when the operation is occurring, and evaluates the potential consequences of the operation on the attributes. Controls are put in place and monitored throughout the operation.

The second level is to be managed by the Group Participant with guidance from Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) and advice/input from appropriately trained and experienced person who may include contractors, scientists and Government staff. Documentation is through operational plans such as Forest Practices Plans and Burn Plans, etc.

4.3.1 Adjacent Land and Landscape-Level Impact

The lands adjoining most forestry operations conducted by Group Participants will typically consist of cleared or bush grazing runs, other agricultural uses, native grasslands, and native forests. Impacts on adjacent land are considered in the evaluation of natural and cultural values, specifically regarding formal and informal reserves and special management zones on either private or Crown land. Fuel loads on adjoining lands are also to be considered when preparing burn plans.

At the scale and intensity that most Group Participants would operate, and given the non- contiguous nature of the estate covered by the DFA, the impact on landscape-level values is likely to be very limited. Consideration of issues such as whether remnant patches of forest are involved, the impacts of harvesting on skyline vegetation, and limiting annual harvesting levels in town water supply catchments are all formally addressed during the planning process.

The harvesting of large areas of plantation should be afforded special consideration in relation to water catchments and visual amenity – planning should be done in consultation with water catchment management authorities and local government. Mapping layers which predict the extent of endemism, refugia and other landscape-level indicators of biodiversity, where available, are used to give a landscape context to the proposed operational area.

Established plantations need to be managed in such a way as to maintain or enhance any adjacent native forest areas or other natural ecosystems.

4.3.2 Operational Monitoring

Non-compliance at an operational level by a Group Participant is a risk faced by the Scheme. Consequently, the Scheme has procedures that require Group Participants actively manage operations to ensure compliance with relevant environmental regulations.

Group Participants are to undertake progressive forest operation assessments on active operations

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within the Group Scheme DFA. The aim should be for monthly audits except for where operations are on a short-term basis or are of low volume and/or have low potential impact. For such instances audits may be carried out less frequently.

During thinning harvest, and shortly thereafter, progressive harvesting assessments are to be employed by Group Participants. These assessments should determine the levels of standing wood remaining and quantify any damage to retained stems which may have occurred because of the harvesting. These figures are compared to the prescriptions in the operational planning documents and are also used to provide feedback to the contractor and provide a baseline for the planning of future harvests.

Non-compliance with Scheme requirements and those operational matters as prescribed in a FPP are monitored by random audits conducted by the Scheme. These audits may be conducted by the Manager or a representative engaged to conduct them on behalf of the Manager.

4.3.3 Use of Chemicals

The Scheme is committed to minimising the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers in operations conducted by its Group Participants. The use of chlorinated hydrocarbons is not allowed. Pesticides classified as highly hazardous pesticides will not be used unless conditions indicate there is no practical alternative.

In native forest management, Group Participants should avoid chemical use other than where necessary for management of declared weeds. No chemicals should be used for vertebrate or invertebrate pest control within native forest areas. Browsing by native animals may be controlled by licensed shooters.

When managing plantations, a small suite of chemicals may be used to address specific threats to the tree crop. All chemicals should be applied by licensed operators and according to label conditions or off-label permits. Legislation covering chemical use is governed by State laws.

The *Weed, Pest and Disease Strategy* maintained by the Scheme is used to assist Group Participants with the management of forest pests and diseases.

4.3.4 Pollution Prevention

Every operational management plan covering areas in the Defined Forest Area contains prescriptions for the management of fuels, oils, rubbish and emissions. This includes a requirement for the reporting of any fuel or oil spills that cause or threaten to cause environmental harm.

4.3.5 Genetic pollution of native eucalypt species

At re-establishment of plantation after harvesting the gene pollution risk associated with gene flow between eucalypt species, such as *Eucalyptus ovata* and *E. nitens*, will be considered as per the advice and technical note issued by the Forest Practices Authority.

For existing eucalypt plantations that become part of the DFA which support a species that has a high risk of gene flow contamination to native species (e.g. flow from plantation *E. nitens* and *E. globulus* and associated native species in the surrounding area, such as *E. ovata*, *E. globulus* and *E. viminalis*) the Group Participant will monitor for wildling establishment and remove/spray these as they are detected.

4.3.6 Carbon

A long-term goal of the forest industry is the sustainable harvesting of timber so that the carbon removed by harvesting is less than or equal to that stored in new growth, including recognising standing timber and solid wood products play important roles in carbon storage.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, (as the Manager) encourages Group Participants to consider long term sustainable forest practices such as selective harvesting, product optimization, re-planting after harvest and natural regeneration, which acknowledges this intrinsic value.

Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd (as Group Entity) in operating the Scheme strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by minimising cartage distances and regularly servicing equipment to maintain fuel efficiency.

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The carbon stock of plantation areas is more easily quantified than that of native forest, using generally accepted carbon accounting methodologies. Carbon accounting for the Scheme as a whole has been addressed and includes an estimation of the carbon stock in the forest and any changes on an annual basis.

RFF manage carbon accounting for all forests in the DFA.

Fossil Fuels

The operations conducted through the Scheme use fossil fuels and emit greenhouse gasses. The Scheme is committed to minimising those emissions created by the activities of our staff, contractors and Group Participants.

While there are no targets for fossil fuels, but we do have strategies in place which include:

- Use fuel efficient and fit for purpose vehicles and equipment.
- Service and maintain vehicles and equipment regularly for optimal efficiency.
- Optimise cartage routes and consolidate and schedule works programs.
- Consider fuel efficient vehicles and machinery in tendered works.

Active carbon management

Our management of native forests aims to maintain forest vigour through the application of appropriate silviculture that includes selective harvesting and thinning.

When engaged in plantation management our aim is to maintain the health and vigour of the plantation through active management that may include thinning and other silvicultural treatments.

Use of fire

Promote the use of methods other than burning for the management of residues in a plantation setting.

Promote the burning of properly constructed bark heaps at optimal moisture content to ensure fire safety and minimise nuisance emissions.

4.3.7 Unplanned Fire

Unplanned fires have the potential to be significant threats to the areas within the DFA and to adjacent properties. Fuel loads on surrounding areas are assessed during the planning process, and any requirement for post-harvest fuel management identified. All forest operations are required to have a trained fire weather observer on site during the fire season, who must take fire weather readings throughout the day during the fire season. Shutdown Requirements for fire prevention are

distributed to contractors at the start of each operation. All contractors must have adequate firefighting equipment on site throughout the fire season, and be prepared to demonstrate that it is in good working order at the start of the fire season.

The Scheme maintains a Fire Plan, which is updated annually to reflect the properties within the DFA and Scheme area, areas of responsibility, and emergency contact details.

Operating Targets: ZERO fire escapes

Management actions:

- Undertake appropriate fire prevention, detection and suppression activities to minimise spread of wildfire.
- Cooperate in fire management activities with other firefighting agencies, industry and the community.
- Investigate and review the outcomes of significant fire incidents.
- Promote inter-agency fire protection activities by contributing to local and state fire forums.

4.3.8 Pests and Diseases

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An effective management strategy is required to ensure that a plantation/native forest health is not compromised, and the values in the surrounding natural habitat in the landscape is maintained. Effective control of native and introduced weeds, native browsing animals, insects and fungal, bacterial and viruses often requires monitoring and an integrated approach using pesticides, fertilisers and potentially biological agents.

Any technique must adhere to several legislative and regulatory obligations, including coverage:

- *Forest Practices Act 1985*;
- *Forest Practices Code 2020*;
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (to ensure the judicious use of chemicals);
- *Nature Conservation Act 2002, Animal Welfare Act 1993* (lethal and non-lethal game management techniques).

Phytophthora cinnamomii

Specific precautions are to be taken in planning, management and machinery movements in areas known or suspected to be infected with *Phytophthora cinnamomii*, cinnamon fungus or root rot fungus. This root rot fungus devastates susceptible vegetation communities. *Phytophthora* is impossible to eradicate once established and can spread rapidly in surface run-off and groundwater percolation. The risk of spreading *Phytophthora* can be reduced by machinery hygiene, use of *Phytophthora*-free material in road construction and by avoiding known areas of infection by attention to infrastructure planning.

Myrtle Rust

Biosecurity Tasmania has detected myrtle rust, *Puccinia psidii* in Tasmania, while it appeared isolated to importation of domestic plants this is a most serious threat to many of our native species, particularly those in the Myrtaceae. This includes all our *Eucalyptus*, *Leptospermum* and *Melaleuca* species. At temperatures of 15-25 °C fresh active infections are readily identified by the pustules of bright yellow spores on the leaves, petioles, buds and soft fruit of Myrtaceae species. The Scheme will provide information to Group participants are fully informed and any suspicious infections observed will be notified to Biosecurity immediately.

Targets: MINIMISE impact of pests, weeds and disease in and from plantations and native forest.

Management actions:

- Undertake forest health surveillance.
- Integrate weed and pest control programs with regional and interagency ones.
- Encourage Group Participants to work with neighbours to control pests.
- Encourage Group Participants to adopt practices to minimise the risk of outbreaks and spread of weeds, pests and diseases.
- Encourage Group Participants to manage high risk activities that have the potential to introduce or spread weeds, pests and diseases.

4.3.9 Soil Loss

The protection of soil as a growing medium for native forest and plantation is of paramount importance to the principle of sustainable forest management.

Management actions to be adopted by Group Participants may include:

- Match machine and silviculture regime to the site and weather conditions.
- Manage potential drainage and erosion issues.
- Maximise debris retention and distribution across sites.
- Minimise debris burning.
- Design forest roads to minimise disturbance.

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- Replenish nutrients in plantation settings through fertilisation.

4.3.10 Illegal Activities

Illegal activities include:

Arson

This activity has an economic impact on our estate as a cause of wildfire, and serious safety impacts for staff, fire fighters and neighbours.

Illegal firewood collection

This activity has an environmental impact by the removal, disturbance and degradation of habitats. It can also have a cultural impact by causing disturbance of Aboriginal heritage sites. There are also social impacts for participants of the community who lawfully collect and sell firewood.

Drug growing

This activity can have serious safety impacts for our staff and participants of the public generally.

Rubbish dumping

Generally, this activity impacts the forest aesthetically for participants of the public, and leads to increase costs to remove the rubbish.

There are real safety impacts on workers depending on the type of rubbish to be removed.

- Household and industrial rubbish: Aesthetic impacts and potential safety impacts for workers removing the rubbish.
- Green waste rubbish: Significant impacts from the spread of pest and disease across the estate.
- Vehicles: Illegally dumped vehicles have aesthetic impacts on the forest, as well as economic impacts on the costs to remove. Significantly the dumping and torching of vehicles leads to increased likelihood of wildfire.

Reckless driving

This activity can have an environmental impact from damage to species, waterways and pollution. It can also damage roads and other infrastructure. It has a cultural impact by the damage or disturbance of Aboriginal heritage values. It increases the risk of wildfire in summer and has serious safety impacts for people in the forest.

We ask people to respect the forest environment which is being managed within the Scheme. Group Participants may act to limit the extent or occurrence of illegal activities through the following actions:

- Report all instances to the Police
- Work with relevant authorities to prevent, control and prosecute illegal activities
- Overt and covert surveillance at sites by staff, landowners (Group Participants), the Police and other relevant authorities
- Restrict access to sites when appropriate, including the use of warning signs and physical barriers.

4.4 Monitoring Compliance and Continual Improvement

Objective: The Scheme aims apply an audit program to monitor conformity with standard requirements by Group Participants and to define a procedure for ensuring that non-conformances are properly identified and that follow-up action is taken to correct any non-conformity.

Comprehensive systems are required to ensure that forest management supports continual improvement that contributes to sustainable forest management. This includes the use of effective stakeholder participation and strong management performance. It also enables and encourages improvement to forest management practices and outcomes based on learning and experience.

The Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme is committed to:

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1. building a culture of 'best practice' forest management
2. continually identifying ways for improving practices²¹ and
3. reducing weaknesses specific to compliance with the Standard criteria and requirements.

The Scheme's Continuous Improvement Policy is in place to ensure the quality of adherence to the Standard is the best that the Scheme as a Group Organisation can do. Working through the corrective action process provides the foundation for the development of more creative and practical ways to improve the quality of compliance, as well as sustainable forest management practices of Group Participants. Continuous improvement is therefore fundamentally linked to environmental, economic, social and cultural outcomes related to sustainable forest management.

The Scheme is committed to the following areas of continuous improvement:

- Conducting annual reviews to evaluate continuous improvement in relation to adherence of the Standard criteria and requirements.
- Identifying and acting on areas of weakness in relation to compliance under the Standard, formulating plans and timeframes to improve upon those weaknesses.
- Learning from success in implementing actions to address weaknesses in complying with the Standard criteria and requirements.
- Engaging community stakeholders to provide peer review of forest and Group management.
- Identifying and exploring new means for practical methods for improvement in forest management.
- Learning from the experiences of another Group Organisations with conformance to the Standard.
- Participating in relevant fora which focus on the application of the Standard to the scale and size of the Group Organisation.

4.4.1 Auditing

The Scheme's operations are audited internally and externally.

Internal Audits

The internal audit system routinely monitors all aspects of the Scheme, including operational, forest management system and safety audits.

The group entity is responsible for regularly monitoring and auditing the operations of Group organization. The Manager is responsible for maintaining the internal monitoring schedule. An audit will be conducted annually for the activities of each active Group Participant. Audits may occur more frequently if the Group Participant has outstanding non-compliances that need to be closed-out or at the discretion of the Manager.

The Scheme's internal monitoring and audit system is based on check lists of compliance against the FPP and other legislative requirements. It also includes corrective actions, agreed to by the principal contractor's representative and area forester to repair or make good. The results of audits are recorded and entered into a system to track trends that may be occurring with the management unit, by a Group Participant and/or contractor engaged by several Group Participants. The analysis of results is reported at annual review meetings.

The internal audit also includes an annual audit on the group management system and relevant records. This audit will be completed by the Certification manager unless another RFF employee with suitable skills is available. As a streamlined and elegantly sized organization, alternatives may not be available. Objectivity and impartiality will be maintained by awareness of issue and review of outcomes.

External Audits

Forest practices compliance audits are undertaken at the end of each discrete operation and a certificate of compliance lodged if compliant or following appropriate remedial action.

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External audits are undertaken by the Forest Practices Authority as an annual audit program of 15% (minimum) of all operations in the State.

The Certification Body in relation to the Responsible Wood Standard may also seek to audit specific sites or properties within the DFA as part of the certification or re-certification process. They may also choose to investigate complaints or allegations about non-compliance with the Standard.

4.4.2 Review of Forest Management Plan

Our Forest Management Plan and system is reviewed at our annual review meeting. This takes note of any trends, negative and positive that will lead to improvement in our systems. Our FMP is externally reviewed through the certification process and the plan itself will be subject to a stakeholder review every 5 years or at an earlier time if there are substantive changes to the Standard or the way we conduct forest practices.

4.4.3 Reporting and Re-certification

At the end of each financial year, the Manager shall submit a report to Responsible Wood that includes an up-to-date version of the Register of Participants indicating the Defined Forest Area for the Group. When the Group Entity's Defined Forest Area changes by greater than 25% before the end of the financial year, the Manager shall promptly advise Responsible Wood of the change.

After two years of ongoing forest management and continual improvement, the Manager shall begin preparations for the re-certification audit that should be conducted no later than the third year as all certificates have a three-year validity period.

4.4.4 Monitoring

Group participants are each responsible for regular monitoring through a process of informal observation and/or formal checking of operations, activities, and potential threats.

Any request for assistance with monitoring and/or management advice can be requested through the Manager.

Appendix A: Legal & Compliance

Legislation	Relevance (I, International, C Commonwealth, S, State)	Means of Compliance
<i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	C, Legal framework to protect and manage flora, fauna, ecological communities and cultural heritage of a national significance.	Through enabling legislation and operational prescriptions through the Forest Practices System.
National Strategy on Ecological Sustainable Development	C, Outlines key objectives for the management of Australia's native forests.	This is a strategic policy framework for governments to ensure ESD principles and objectives are incorporated in policy.
National Forest Policy Statement 1992	C, Outlines agreed objectives and policies for the future of Australia's public and private forests.	Embedded at the national level, directly affecting forest policy development at Federal and State levels.
<i>Regional Forest Agreement (Land Classification) Act 1998</i> RFA Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement 2017	C & S, an intergovernmental agreement to provide long term sustainable forest management, an enhanced reserve system across tenure and security to industry.	Incorporated in State legislation.
<i>Aboriginal Relics Act 1975</i>	S, Provide for the protection of all Aboriginal relics	Provisions in the FPP
<i>Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1995</i>	S, Prevents restricted chemicals being used without a permit, registered under AgVet Code with approved labelling	Chemical Management Branch within the Biosecurity and Product Integrity Division of Department of Primary
<i>Boundary Fences Act 1908</i>	S, Regulated the erection & repair of boundary fences	Liaison between neighbours
<i>Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994</i>	S, Establishes duty of care on everyone to prevent or min. environmental harm. Defines potential harmful activities and notification requirements.	Environment Protection Authority is a statutory authority independent of Government supported by the EPA Division of the Department of Primary Industries, Park Water and Environment.
<i>Forestry (Fair Contract Codes) Act 2001</i>	S, Provides for the approval of codes developed by forestry industry to improve fairness of contracts or services within the forest industry.	Forestry (Fair Contract Codes) Act 2001
<i>Fire Services Act 1979</i>	S, Provides for the controlled use of fire in urban and rural environments	Fire permits, forest fire operations equipment, provision in the FPP
<i>Forest Practices Act 1985</i>	S, Establishes the framework for regulating forest practices across all tenures; requires development and implementation of the <i>Forest Practices Code</i>	Certified Forest Practices Plan

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Forest Practice Code 2020 (FPC)	S, The FPC is a practical system for the off reserve management of environmental, cultural, geological/soils, water and visual values. The FPC includes expert systems and procedures for the management of these values.	Certified Forest Practices Plan
<i>Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995</i>	S, Promote the identification, assessment and protection of places having significant historical cultural heritage.	Certified Forest Practices Plan
<i>Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993</i>	S, Implements the Resource Planning and Management System to achieve sustainable outcomes from the use and development of the state's natural and physical resources	Development Application outside a PTR
<i>Local Government (Highways) Act 1982</i>	S & L, Establishes Municipal authority over road establishment, use, management and maintenance.	Individual Local Governments issue permits to use
Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy	S, Maintains a permanent forest estate that comprises areas of native forest managed on a sustainable basis both within formal reserves	Broad acre land clearing on private land to cease in 2015.
Education Act 2016, plus Education Regulations 2017	S, Legal framework for provision of education services and to ensure RFF compliance with the act.	Incorporated in State legislation

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Appendix B – at risk species

Species to be considered in establishing biodiversity strategy.

Flora	
SPECIES_NAME	COMMON_NAMES
Amphibromus neesii	southern swampgrass
Aphelia pumilio	dwarf fanwort
Ardena grisea	sooty shearwater
Arenaria interpres	ruddy turnstone
Argyrotegium poliochlosum	greengreen cottonleaf
Asperula scoparia subsp. scoparia	prickly woodruff
Asperula subsimplex	water woodruff
Barbarea australis	riverbed wintercress
Baumea gunnii	slender twigsedge
Brunonia australis	blue pincushion
Caladenia congesta	blacktongue finger-orchid
Calocephalus lacteus	milky beautyheads
Carex gunniana	mountain sedge
Carex longibrachiat	drooping sedge
Centropappus brunonis	tasmanian daisytree
Colobanthus curtisiae	grassland cupflower
Coronidium gunnianum	swamp everlasting
Corunastylis firthii	firths midge-orchid
Craspedia paludicola	swamp billybuttons
Cyathea cunninghamii	slender treefern
Discaria pubescens	spiky anchorplant
Eryngium ovium	blue devil
Eucalyptus gunnii subsp. divaricata	miena cider gum
Eucalyptus risdonii	risdon peppermint
Gratiola pubescens	hairy brooklime
Gynatrix pulchella	fragrant hempbush
Haloragis heterophylla	variable raspwort
Hovea montana	mountain purplepea
Juncus vaginatus	clustered rush
Lycopus australis	australian gypsywort
Lythrum salicaria	purple loosestrife
Monotoca submutica var. autumnalis	roundleaf broomheath
Muehlenbeckia axillaris	matted lignum
Odixia achlaena	golden everlastingbush
Orthoceras strictum	horned orchid
Persicaria decipiens	slender waterpepper
Persicaria subsessilis	bristly waterpepper
Pherosphaera hookeriana	mount mawson pine
Pimelea curviflora	curved riceflower

Fauna	
SPECIES_NAME	COMMON_NAMES
Accipiter novaehollandiae	grey goshawk
Aquila audax subsp. fleayi	tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle
Ardena grisea	sooty shearwater
Arenaria interpres	ruddy turnstone
Astacopsis gouldi	lutaralipina or giant freshwater crayfish
Castiarina insculpta	miena jewel beetle
Ceyx azureus subsp. diemenensis	Tasmanian azure kingfisher
Charopidae sp. "Skemps"	skemps snail
Dasyurus maculatus subsp. maculatus	spotted-tailed quoll
Dasyurus viverrinus	eastern quoll
Galaxias auratus	golden galaxias
Galaxias fontanus	swan galaxias
Galaxias tanycephalus	saddled galaxias
Gallinago hardwickii	latham's snipe
Haliaeetus leucogaster	white-bellied sea-eagle
Hirundapus caudacutus	white-throated needletail
Lathamus discolor	swift parrot
Litoria raniformis	green and gold frog
Neophema chrysostoma	blue-winged parrot
Oreixenica ptunarra	ptunarra brown butterfly
Paragalaxias mesotes	arthurs galaxias
Perameles gunnii subsp. gunnii	eastern barred bandicoot
Prototroctes maraena	australian grayling
Pseudemoia pagenstecheri	tussock skink
Sarcophilus harrisii	tasmanian devil
Thalassarche cauta	shy albatross
Thalassarche melanophris	black-browed albatross
Thinornis cucullatus	hooded plover
Tyto novaehollandiae subsp. castanops	masked owl (Tasmanian)

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<i>Pimelea curviflora</i> var. <i>gracilis</i>	slender curved riceflower
<i>Pimelea flava</i> subsp. <i>flava</i>	yellow riceflower
<i>Pterostylis atriola</i>	snug greenhood
<i>Pterostylis grandiflora</i>	superb greenhood
<i>Pterostylis ziegeleri</i>	grassland greenhood
<i>Ranunculus pumilio</i> var. <i>pumilio</i>	ferny buttercup
<i>Rhodanthe anthemoides</i>	chamomile sunray
<i>Rhytidosporum inconspicuum</i>	alpine appleberry
<i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani</i>	river clubsedge
<i>Scleranthus fasciculatus</i>	spreading knawel
<i>Taraxacum aristum</i>	mountain dandelion
<i>Uncinia elegans</i>	handsome hooksedge
<i>Vallisneria australis</i>	river ribbons
<i>Viola curtisiae</i>	montane ivyleaf violet
<i>Westringia angustifolia</i>	narrowleaf westringia
<i>Xanthorrhoea bracteata</i>	shiny grasstree
<i>Xerochrysum palustre</i>	swamp paperdaisy

- List from Nature Values Atlas with species identified within 5km of the Group DFA. There may be no occurrence of them in the DFA.

Appendix C - Responsibilities

Group Entity Responsibilities	Manager Responsibilities	Group Organization Responsibilities
<p>Ensure Group Entity has legal status.</p> <p>Business plan preparation, including a summary of forest resource, area of influence (geographic), targeted membership, markets, etc.</p> <p>Develop rules for joining the Group.</p> <p>Interpret and apply the Scheme in the context of the Group Organisation.</p> <p>Determine how the Scheme relates to individual Group Participants.</p> <p>Develop and endorse the Scheme Group Certification process.</p>	<p>Administer the group to ensure that the requirements of the Responsible Wood are being implemented and achieved.</p> <p>Assist Business plan preparation, including a summary of forest resource, area of influence (geographic), targeted membership, markets, etc.</p> <p>Implement rules for joining the Group including the acceptance of new Group Participants into the Scheme, guiding the group and its Participants through the Responsible Wood Certification Process.</p> <p>Interpret and apply the Scheme in the context of the Group Organisation.</p> <p>Determine how the Scheme relates to individual Group Participants.</p> <p>Implement the Scheme Group Certification process.</p>	<p>Enter into a written agreement with Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd, which includes a commitment to comply with the Responsible Wood and other applicable requirements of the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme.</p> <p>Implement all applicable policies rules and procedures specified by the Group Organisation.</p> <p>Comply with the Responsible Wood and other applicable requirements of the Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme.</p> <p>Prepare plans (with assistance from Group Managers if needed) consistent with the requirements of the Scheme.</p> <p>Manage forests in accordance with the Group Forest Management Plan and specific FPP requirements.</p> <p>Ensure on-site coordination of logging and silviculture contractors (with assistance from Group Manager if needed).</p>
Document Control – Administration Role		
<p>Provide all Group Participants with information and guidance required for the effective implementation of the Responsible Wood and other applicable requirements.</p> <p>Prepare, revise and manage Group documents, procedures, policies and templates.</p> <p>Establish and maintain written procedures for the management of the Scheme including recommended</p>	<p>Prepare, revise and manage Group documents, procedures, policies and templates.</p> <p>Maintain familiarity with relevant Commonwealth and State laws and associated regulations.</p> <p>Collect, collate, file and maintain Group Participants' records.</p> <p>Establish and maintain effective communication within the Group.</p> <p>Assist the Group Entity with the</p>	<p>Contribute to the revision of Group rules, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the Group Entity, the Group Manager or Certification Body for relevant data, documentation or other information.</p>

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Group Entity Responsibilities	Manager Responsibilities	Group Organization Responsibilities
<p>practices for forest management (silvicultural systems).</p> <p>Maintain familiarity with relevant Commonwealth and State laws and associated regulations.</p> <p>Establish framework for effective communication within the Group.</p> <p>Prepare and submit reports to Certification Bodies.</p> <p>Schedule reviews and audits for documents and processes.</p>	<p>preparation of reports for Certification Bodies.</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate records are maintained, both for administering the Group and for use in Certification audits and surveillance audits.</p> <p>Ensure documents are held in secure location and backed up.</p>	
Applications		
<p>Establish a written agreement with all Group Participants that includes the Group Member's commitment to comply with the Responsible Wood certification requirements.</p> <p>Develop the application and joining process for new Group Participants as per Policy (POL-01).</p> <p>Provide Group Participants with a Document Confirming Participation upon acceptance into the Scheme.</p> <p>Establish procedures for the expulsion and voluntary departure of Group Participants from the Group.</p>	<p>Provide information to applicants for Group Membership.</p> <p>Receive applications submitted by Group Participants.</p> <p>Manage joining process for new Group Participants as per Policy (POL-01).</p> <p>Conduct field inspection using the Pre-inspection Checklist.</p> <p>Ensure that Group Participants are added to membership and mailing lists, are invoiced for any applicable fees, and take care of any other administrative details.</p> <p>Assist voluntary departure of Group Participants.</p> <p>Facilitate the expulsion of Group Participants when required.</p> <p>Document each step in the Group Member expulsion process to clearly outline the problem, allow time to correct the problem, check to ensure that corrective action has taken place, or notify the Group Member of their removal from the Group Entity.</p>	<p>Complete the application forms as required by the Group Manager.</p> <p>Provide all required information to support the application.</p>
Corrective Actions		

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Group Entity Responsibilities	Manager Responsibilities	Group Organization Responsibilities
<p>Conducting field inspections using the CAR Form.</p> <p>Identify issues of non-compliance.</p> <p>Prepare corrective action plans (in conjunction with Group Participants).</p>	<p>Conduct field inspections using the CAR Form.</p> <p>Identify issues of non-compliance for Group Participants.</p> <p>Prepare corrective action plans (in conjunction with Group Participants).</p>	<p>Implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the Group Manager</p> <p>Respond in a timely manner to CAR Forms provided by the Group Manager.</p>
Monitoring and Evaluation		
<p>To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the Group Participants' conformity with the Responsible Wood and other applicable requirements, noting preventive and/or corrective actions taken.</p> <p>Ensure Group Participants are in conformance with the Scheme criteria, whilst accepting ultimate responsibility for maintenance of the Group's Certification</p> <p>Maintain records of training provided to staff or Group Participants, relevant to the Group Forest Certification Scheme.</p> <p>Record annual production of forest products from the Certified Area.</p> <p>Initiate and develop the terms of reference for internal reviews of the Group Forest Certification Scheme</p>	<p>Periodically monitor the forest management plans and activities of the Group Participants to ensure that they continue to conform to the Responsible Wood.</p> <p>Establish and apply a procedure and schedule for conducting ongoing monitoring of the Group Member's conformance with the Responsible Wood.</p> <p>Work with the lead auditor who will select field sites for inspection, as well as Group Participants and other personnel that may serve as interviewees.</p>	<p>Allow access to the Group Manager or Certification Body to the Certified Area, whether relating to formal audits or reviews or otherwise.</p> <p>Conduct on-site Scheme compliance checks using the Monitoring Checklist (DOC-10) when required.</p> <p>Participate in CAR audits and meetings.</p>
Certification Body		
<p>Be the primary contact point for the Certification Body.</p> <p>Represent the Scheme in the certification process, including in communications and relationships with the Certification Body, submission of an application for</p>	<p>Be the secondary contact point for the Certification Body.</p> <p>Engage, liaise with and assist the Certification Body, whilst representing the Group Organisation throughout auditing processes.</p>	<p>Use the Forest Management Certificate and logos and other intellectual property belonging to Australian Forestry Standard Limited in accordance with the rules of the Group Forest Certification Scheme.</p> <p>Allow access to the Group</p>

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Group Entity Responsibilities	Manager Responsibilities	Group Organization Responsibilities
<p>certification, and contractual relationship with the Certification Body</p> <p>Engage, liaise with and assist the Certification Body, whilst representing the Group Organisation throughout auditing processes.</p> <p>Establish and enforce rules to ensure the correct use of the Forest Management Certificate, logos and other intellectual property belonging to Australian Forestry Standard Limited by Group Participants.</p> <p>Liaise with Responsible Wood on Defined Forest Area status on a regular basis (at least annual).</p> <p>Ensure timely payment of Responsible Wood fees.</p>	<p>Apply and enforce rules developed by the Group Entity to ensure the correct use of the Forest Management Certificate, logos and other intellectual property belonging to Australian Forestry Standard Limited by Group Participants.</p> <p>Liaise with Responsible Wood Limited on Defined Forest Area status on a regular basis (at least annual).</p> <p>Advise Group Participants on their unique registration number, which will also include the Group Entity unique number, for the two logos and on the claims which can be made because of Responsible Wood Certification.</p>	<p>Manager or Certification Body to the Certified Area, whether relating to formal audits or reviews or otherwise.</p>
Training		
<p>Provide funding to conduct training where appropriate for Group Organisation staff and Group Participants.</p> <p>Develop and implement a general training schedule in the requirements of the Scheme and Responsible Wood.</p>	<p>Understand and interpret the Responsible Wood in the context of the Scheme which includes interpreting and appropriately applying the Responsible Wood in the context of the group and to clearly explain the criteria and requirements to the Group Participants.</p> <p>Evaluate training needs (within the Group structure and for Group Participants) and conduct training where appropriate for Group Organisation staff and Group Participants.</p> <p>Facilitate induction of visitors and contractors engaged by the Group Entity.</p>	<p>Request training of the Group Manager in matters needed to ensure compliance with Responsible Wood and the Scheme.</p> <p>Provide guidance and training to workers, contractors and associated forest operators as required.</p>
Communication		
<p>Facilitate sharing of knowledge between Group Participants, such as 'best practice' forest management.</p>	<p>Facilitate sharing of knowledge between Group Participants, such as 'best practice' forest management.</p>	<p>Participate in information sharing with other Group Participants, such as 'best practice' forest management.</p>

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Group Entity Responsibilities	Manager Responsibilities	Group Organization Responsibilities
<p>Keep Group Participants informed of their responsibilities under the Scheme.</p> <p>Conduct stakeholder consultations and community engagement.</p> <p>Represent the Group Organisation.</p> <p>Control and manage public claims regarding Responsible Wood Certification status.</p> <p>Establish dispute resolution processes.</p> <p>Facilitate complaints response.</p> <p>Appeals coordination.</p> <p>Facilitate complaints response.</p>	<p>Keep Group Participants informed of their responsibilities under the Scheme.</p> <p>Conduct stakeholder consultations and community engagement.</p> <p>Represent the Group Organisation.</p> <p>Controls public claims regarding Responsible Wood Certification status</p> <p>Manage and report on dispute resolution processes.</p> <p>Investigate and recommend a complaints response.</p>	<p>Participate in community stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Initiate and conduct direct stakeholder engagement with affected neighbours etc as required by a FPP.</p>
Market Access		
<p>Promote the Group Scheme and the certified products it produces/sells.</p> <p>Locate and secure access to markets.</p>	<p>Implement promotion of certified products.</p> <p>Locate and secure available resources by promoting membership to forest owners.</p>	<p>Participate in the promotion of Responsible Wood certified products.</p>
Engage Service Providers		
<p>Coordinates logging and silviculture contractors (in conjunction with Group Participants)</p> <p>Identify assisting consultants</p> <p>Facilitates induction of service providers</p> <p>Preparing OH&S Plans.</p>	<p>Assist Group Participants to coordinate logging and silviculture contractors if required.</p> <p>Identify consultants to assist with audits and compliance with Responsible Wood requirements.</p> <p>Facilitate induction of Group Entity commissioned service providers.</p> <p>Assist with the preparation of OH&S Plans.</p>	<p>Engage and coordinate logging and silviculture contractors.</p> <p>Identify consultants to assist with forest management, harvesting and reporting requirements.</p> <p>Preparing OH&S Plans.</p>

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Version History and Revision

This document will be reviewed at least every 5 years.

Minor updates may occur in the interim with revised versions posted on the Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd website.

Version	Description	Date	Authorised Release
V1	Original	30 July 2017	Heath Blair, Manager
V1	Original – Draft for stakeholder consultation	5 August 2017	Heath Blair, Manager
V2	Original – Issued for Scheme use	12 September 2017	Heath Blair, Manager
V3	Original – updated to reflect new ownership and 2017 audit finding No's 5, 6, 14, 15, & 17	1 November 2018	Heath Blair, Manager
V4	Original – updated to reflect new website URL	15 Apr 2019	Heath Blair, Manager
V4.1	Change AFS Ltd Responsible Wood	21 Nov 2019	Heath Blair, Manager
V4.2	Change certificate holder address details and company contact information. Add (as Group Entity) after Reliance Forest Fibre Pty Ltd to make it clear who is the entity for managing the Group Scheme	21 July 2020	Heath Blair, Manager
V4.3	Minor amended reference change to Forest Practices Code 2020.	21 May 2020	Heath Blair, Manager
V4.4	Change certificate holder address details	29/11/2022	Heath Blair, Manager
V5.0	Update for AS/NZS4708:2021	22/12/2023	Heath Blair, Manager
V5.1	Minor updates	15/10/2024	Heath Blair, Manager
V5.2	Update for AS/NZS4708:2021	31/07/2025	Heath Blair, Manager

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