

Responsible Wood

Annual Report of Activities
2023 - 2024



FRONT COVER

The Music Room... winner of the Residential Class 1 - Alterations or Addition award category at the 2023 Australian Timber Design Awards, is the first CLT Passive House project in Australia to use Australian sourced CLT (via XLam), invoking a strong Biophilic connection due to the abundance of timber. **Photographer:** Barton Taylor

Chairperson's Report

On behalf of the Directors, I am pleased to present the 2023-24 Responsible Wood Annual Report. This has been another successful year for Responsible Wood thanks to the dedication of the organisation's CEO and staff, who really put in an enormous effort to serve the members and maintain our position as the largest forest certification scheme operating in Australia and New Zealand.

In 2023, Christine Briggs was elected to the Board by Processor members and Mark Gauthier was re-elected by Grower members. The Board appointed Katie Fowden as an independent director for one year, thereby enabling her to continue to provide guidance to Responsible Wood's communications program and to contribute to PEFC's Market Engagement committee. In early 2024, Mark Gauthier resigned from the Board and David Bennett was elected by Grower members to fill the casual vacancy. I acknowledge the valuable contributions of former director Mark Gauthier, particularly his role in chairing the Governance subcommittee.

This has been a very busy year for the Board and I am very grateful for the efforts that all the directors have made to ensure we have good governance of Responsible Wood. This year, the Board also held a joint meeting with the Board of the New Zealand Forest Certification Association, to enhance collaboration and the effectiveness of its oversight representation of the PEFC scheme in New Zealand.

Careful financial management has long been a hallmark of Responsible Wood's operations, as evidenced by the organisation's strong balance sheet. For the 2023-24 financial year the Board had approved a budget with a planned deficit of about \$230,000. However, due to good financial management and greater than expected revenue the organisation achieved a small profit.

Over the past year, the Board has undertaken a review of the Constitution for the Australian Forestry Standard Pty Ltd, in order to ensure it is consistent with recent changes to Corporations law and remains fit for purpose. This work highlighted some areas where the Constitution was either unclear or deficient, so there will be a Special Resolution to approve an updated Constitution at the 2024 AGM.

Another issue that has and continues to receive attention from the Board is the development of PEFC's responses to the European Union's Deforestation Regulation, as this has implications for Responsible Wood's certification scheme. Our aim has been to try to ensure that any new requirements take account of Australian forestry circumstances and are practical to implement. Responsible Wood staff have participated in PEFC working groups, we have made submissions on proposed amendments to the PEFC meta-standards, and we have raised the most significant issues with the PEFC board. We have remained strongly engaged with PEFC throughout the year, including participating in the PEFC General Assembly held in Paris in May and continuing to support activities of the PEFC Asia-Pacific Regional Hub.

For the third year in a row, the Board has consciously approved an operating budget for 2024-25 with a planned deficit of about \$190,000. This enables the organisation to continue to employ four staff and also implement a substantial proactive marketing and communications program. The Board decided that this level of deficit could be funded from the organisation's strategic reserves, without compromising future activities.

As part of framing the current budget, the Board decided not to increase notification fees, in recognition of the current challenging circumstances for wood products markets. The three largest expense items for Responsible Wood are staff salaries, PEFC fees and the communications and marketing program. The costs of salaries and PEFC fees continue to rise, but both of these are seen as essential to maintaining the credibility of the Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management and the related Chain of Custody Standard. The Board will monitor this situation in 2024-25 and assess the sustainability of our income and expenditure streams.

The Board is grateful for the ongoing support of Responsible Wood's members and I thank our CEO and staff for their efforts in the supporting the governance and operation of Australian Forestry Standard Pty Ltd.



– **DR TONY BARTLETT**
AFSM, Chairperson,
Responsible Wood

Responsible Wood (The Australian Forestry Standard trading as Responsible Wood) is a not-for-profit public company that promotes the sustainable management of Australia's forests and traceability of wood products through its management of the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme (RWCS).

We are a Standards Development Organisation accredited by the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee of Standards Australia (SDAC) to develop and maintain Australian Standards® within our scope of accreditation.

We are the Australian member of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). The RWCS is one of 56 national members and 45 national and regional certification systems endorsed by the PEFC.

Each year, we publish our Annual Report of Activities to inform members, stakeholders, and the public of the progress made in administering the RWCS.

This review covers the period 2023–24 and was presented to members at the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Responsible Wood.

On the Board

Chairperson

Dr Tony Bartlett AFSM

Directors

Mark Thomson

Katie Fowden

Michael O'Connor

David Bennett (Appointed)

Stuart West

David Little

Dr Kerrie Catchpoole

Christine Briggs

Mark Gauthier (Departed)

Chief Executive Officer

Simon Dorries

The Music Room featuring Australian sourced CLT (Xlam).

Photographer: Barton Taylor.



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Responsible Wood Certification Scheme

The RWCS sets out the specifications and procedures that ensure the highest standards of management, transparency and accountability in Australia's forest sector.

Two Australian Standards sit at the heart of the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme — the Australia/New Zealand Standard® for Sustainable Forest Management (AS/NZS 4708:2021) and the Australian Standard® for Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products (AS 4707:2021).

Australia/New Zealand Standard® AS/NZS 4708:2021 provides reassurance to consumers of certified wood and paper products that the forests from which those products originated are independently audited and verified as well managed.

Obtaining certification demonstrates that management practices meet

the requirements for best practice in sustainable forest management, including:

- The biodiversity of forest ecosystems is maintained or enhanced
- The range of ecosystem services that forests provide is sustained because they:
 - provide food, fibre, biomass and wood
 - are a key part of the water cycle, act as sinks capturing and storing carbon, and prevent soil erosion
 - provide habitats and shelter for people and wildlife; and
 - offer spiritual and recreational benefits.
- Chemicals are substituted by natural alternatives or their use is minimised
- Workers' rights and welfare are protected
- Local employment is encouraged
- Indigenous peoples' rights are respected

- Communities have an opportunity to provide input into the process.

Chain of Custody Certification against Australian Standard® AS 4707:2021 ensures requirements for tracking certified material from the forest to the final product are met, and that the wood contained in the product or product line originates from certified forests and controlled sources.

The Responsible Wood Forest Certification Scheme is endorsed by PEFC, the world's largest sustainable forest certification scheme, which sets high standards for forest certification and sustainable forest management in line with society's ever evolving understanding and expectations.

The Standards are reviewed every five years to ensure they represent best management practices and reflect community expectations.

Responsible Wood Strategy 2023-2028

In 2023 the Responsible Wood Board released a comprehensive new five-year strategy for 2023 to 2028 (with a supporting one-pager), setting a clear direction for the organisation as it continues to champion sustainable forest management. This strategy is built around a vision that positions Australia and New Zealand's forests and the products sourced from them as among the most sustainable in the world. Central to this strategy are key underpinning values such as transparency, integrity, and delivering tangible benefits to members, communities, and the wider industry. The strategy focuses on ensuring world-leading standards, maintaining mutually beneficial strategic relationships, and fostering a platform for education, training, and communication of sustainable practices.

The new strategy outlines strategic pathways that aim

to strengthen Responsible Wood's governance, promote consistency and integrity in operations, and provide definitive advice on sustainable forest management. It highlights the importance of effective marketing, broad engagement with existing and potential participants in the certification scheme and ensuring that the positive

contributions of Responsible Wood standards are widely recognised. Importantly, the strategy also supports the PEFC system within the Asia Pacific region, underlining Responsible Wood's commitment to science-based, innovative practices that contribute to global sustainability goals



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Our scheme continues to grow from strength to strength, with an increasing number of members and scheme holders using the Responsible Wood brand in the marketplace. We thank our members and stakeholders for their ongoing support, feedback, and input during this extensive process. In the sections below, we highlight some of our activities in 2023-2024.

Community Grants Program

The Responsible Wood Community Grants Program plays an important role in supporting local communities and projects that align with and are connected to sustainable forest management certificate holders and the RWCS. The program is designed to foster collaboration between community groups, industry, and other stakeholders to promote education, community engagement and the sustainable use of forest resources. Each year, grants are awarded to initiatives that demonstrate a tangible benefit to the environment, biodiversity, or community engagement connected to a certified forest.

In 2023/24, the program continued to focus on projects that contribute to the broader goals of environmental responsibility and community

participation. Successful applicants included community groups, non-profit organisations, and local environmental groups working on projects that promote responsible forestry practices, biodiversity protection, and educational outreach. Through these grants, Responsible Wood is committed to ensuring that communities can actively participate in and benefit from sustainable forest management practices, enhancing both environmental outcomes and social well-being.

The Community Grants judging panel met and determined the successful applicants. Eight standout applications were under consideration by our judges, with a record 22 Community Grants applications, supported by an unprecedented number of Responsible Wood certified forest growers.

We would like to extend gratitude to our Community Grants Project Manager, Mr Jason Ross for administering another successful Responsible Wood Community Grants Program.

Japan Marketing Program

Responsible Wood continued to support PEFC International and Australian sponsors to provide a full-time marketing resource in Japan to provide marketing and communications in support of Australian Responsible

Wood/PEFC certified suppliers in the Japanese market. This program concluded in December 2023 at the end of a very successful three-year program.

The program had a special focus on the Japanese pulp and paper supply chains, building products and procurement for the 2025 Osaka World Expo, with commitments being made to build pavilions from PEFC-certified products.



Responsible Wood community grants recipient Traralgon Men's Shed & Woodworking Incorporated, makes furniture items for donating.

2023/24 Community Grants Winners

\$40,000 to
community groups
across five states

- A Stable Life Counselling Service, supported by ForestrySA
- Friends of St Valentines Peak Wildcare Group, supported by Sustainable Timber Tasmania
- Beerburum State School P&C, supported by HQPlantations
- Forestry Australia (WA branch), supported by Wespine
- Planting Seeds, supported by FCNSW

Responsible Wood community grants recipient A Stable Life Counselling Service certified timber obstacles.





NSW Field Trip

In partnership with Pentarch Forestry, Forestry Corporation of NSW, the Australian Forest Products Association of NSW, and Timber NSW, we organised a forestry field trip in Port Macquarie, New South Wales, providing an exclusive glimpse into the world of sustainable forest management.



NSW field trip attendees observe sustainable harvesting up close.



Matt de Jongh presents to NSW field trip attendees.

East Arnhem Land Project

Responsible Wood participated in the East Arnhem Land project, this project is part of the Indigenous Commercial Forestry Opportunities project, which is funded by FWPA, as well as Developing East Arnhem Limited, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Gumatj Corporation, the Northern Land Council, and the Northern Territory Government's Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. Responsible Wood provided presentations, which were accompanied by a poster to Traditional Owners about Responsible Wood certification, including the Responsible Wood Ecosystem Services guidance document. This project will assist the community with the identified potential to operate forestry enterprises to develop their forestry workforce and business opportunities, as well as potentially Responsible Wood certification, including for ecosystem services.

Forums & Events

Responsible Wood presented at

several forums and events throughout the last 12 months. These include the Sydney Build Expo, Sustainable Industrial Manufacturing Asia-Pacific Conference, University of Tasmania Centre for Sustainable Architecture with Wood School of Architecture and Design, Forestry Australia Conference, Impact X Climate Summit, University of Melbourne forestry students, and University of Queensland Architecture and Engineering students.

Our staff and directors also participated in a number of podcasts where they were able to discuss sustainable forest management and chain of custody certification.

Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award

In 2023, with the support of the Stanton family, Responsible Wood undertook a significant revision of the Richard Stanton Memorial Award for Excellence in Forest Management or Chain of Custody. The initiative, led by the marketing committee and approved by the Board, aimed to broaden the scope of the award to promote further engagement and better reflect Richard Stanton's enduring legacy and engage with emerging leaders in the forest products sector – extending to post-graduate university students. The award's criteria were revised to further highlight contributions that go beyond wood production, emphasising the environmental, social, and cultural dimensions of forest management.

In 2024, the award was relaunched as the Richard Stanton Memorial Leadership Award, a name change that underscores the emphasis on leadership in all aspects of the sustainable forest management supply chain. This shift ensures the award continues to honour individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership and promote the ethos of the RWCS.

Strategic PEFC APAC Partnerships

Responsible Wood participated in a

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strategic visit to Indonesia alongside PEFC and the Indonesian Forest Certification Cooperation (IFCC). The visit was aimed at strengthening collaboration among PEFC national governing bodies, bolstering the network of sustainable forest management across the Asia-Pacific region and potentially identifying export opportunities for Australian-grown

Responsible Wood certified products. During the visit, representatives from Responsible Wood, PEFC Asia Pacific, and IFCC held productive discussions with key importers and exporters of forest and wood products destined for Australia. These engagements were instrumental in deepening the understanding of the Indonesian market for Australian forest products. The meetings underscored the critical role of certified forest products in international trade and highlighted the significant benefits of sustainable forestry practices.

In addition, Responsible Wood has supported PEFC's work in the Solomon Islands, helping to establish pathways for continual improvement in forestry practices. This initiative is focused on guiding processors and exporters in the Solomon Islands toward achieving controlled source claims and, ultimately, full chain of custody certification. By assisting in capacity-building

and providing technical expertise, Responsible Wood and PEFC are playing a key role in helping local operators meet international expectations, ensuring that the Solomon Islands can access global markets while promoting the protection of their forest resources.

PEFC 25th Anniversary & Forest Forum

In May 2024, Responsible Wood sent a four-person delegation to Paris to attend the PEFC Forest Forum, which includes the annual face-face General Assembly of the 56 PEFC member countries, during which National Governing Bodies participate in PEFC governance decisions. The Forum, which was hosted by PEFC France, also enabled member countries and stakeholders to share information about innovative activities and to discuss important developments including application of the EUDR under PEFC and forest management

PEFC International Celebrates 25 years

PEFC International celebrated their 25-year journey in Paris by mirroring the global dialogue on climate resilience and managing forests sustainably.



PEFC International delegates attend the Group Certification Field Dialogue.

Our Impact

17.5 million

Hectares of certified forests in Australia and New Zealand

30+

Forest organisations

361

Individual sites operating chain of custody systems



Responsible Wood PEFC Forest Forum Delegation - Mr Jonathan Tibbits, Dr Tony Bartlett, Ms Suzette Weeding, Mr Simon Dorries, Mr Matt de Jongh.

under the climate crisis. The Forum coincided with the 25th anniversary of the formation of PEFC and provided an opportunity to celebrate to promote a quarter of a century of collaborative efforts to enhance sustainable forest management across the globe.

Representing our region's interests on a global stage allowed Responsible Wood to advocate for practical solutions that would help certified forest managers meet the EUDR's requirements. It also provided an opportunity to look for practical solutions, highlighting the robust frameworks already in place through PEFC and Responsible Wood certification, which ensure sustainable forest management does not contribute to forest degradation. Engaging in this dialogue ensures that our region remains consulted in international markets while continuing to uphold the highest environmental standards.

As part of the forum's key discussions, Responsible Wood actively contributed to the dialogue on group forest management certification, an approach that has been identified as critical to scaling sustainable forest management across smaller and private-owned forests in both Australia and New Zealand. The group certification dialogue highlighted the importance of making sustainable certification accessible to smaller landholders,

and Responsible Wood's participation underscored its commitment to fostering inclusivity and innovation in certification.

Engagement at the global level reflects Responsible Wood's ongoing commitment to supporting international collaboration and maintaining strong partnerships within the PEFC system.

Certification & Endorsement

Transitions & Minor Revisions

In late 2021 major reviews of AS4707:2021-Chain of Custody for Forest and Tree-Based Products and AS/NZS 4708:2021-Sustainable Forest Management were completed.

During the period, all certified forest managers successfully transitioned to the 2021 version of AS/NZS 4708, with all meeting the March 2024 transition date. This was a major accomplishment and a major collaboration between JAS-ANZ, certification bodies and certified organisations. The transition was accomplished without major disruption.

Likewise, organisations certified for chain of custody also transitioned to the latest versions of the chain of custody Standards. This was



Chain of Custody training: PEFC, Responsible Wood and Solomon Island Timber Processors & Exporters Association.

also a major exercise with over 200 individual chain of custody certificates, representing well over 300 individual sites transitioning. The transition was successful with only 4 certificates failing to meet the transition date of 31 December 2023, with the 4 outstanding completing corrective actions soon after and no certificates being permanently suspended.

During the period, Responsible Wood submitted informative Appendix A-Guidelines for the interpretation of requirements for trees outside forests (TOF) and farm forestry of AS/NZS 4708 for PEFC endorsement. This informative appendix was not part of the original PEFC endorsement of AS/NZS 4708. However, the Board considered that providing tools for small forest growers and agroforestry was increasingly relevant and agreed to seek PEFC endorsement. Responsible Wood was very pleased to have been informed by PEFC that the review was successful

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Our Standards

Sustainable Forest Management

AS/NZS 4708-2021

Chain of Custody

AS 4707-2021

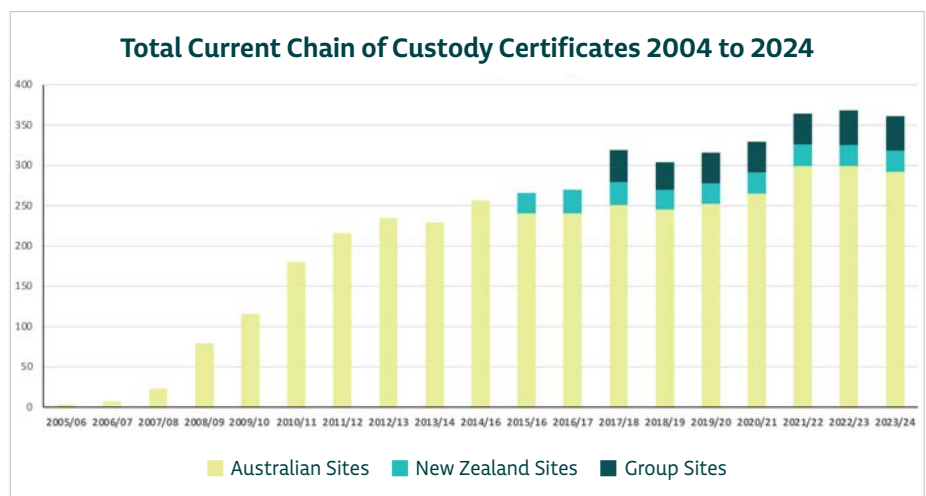
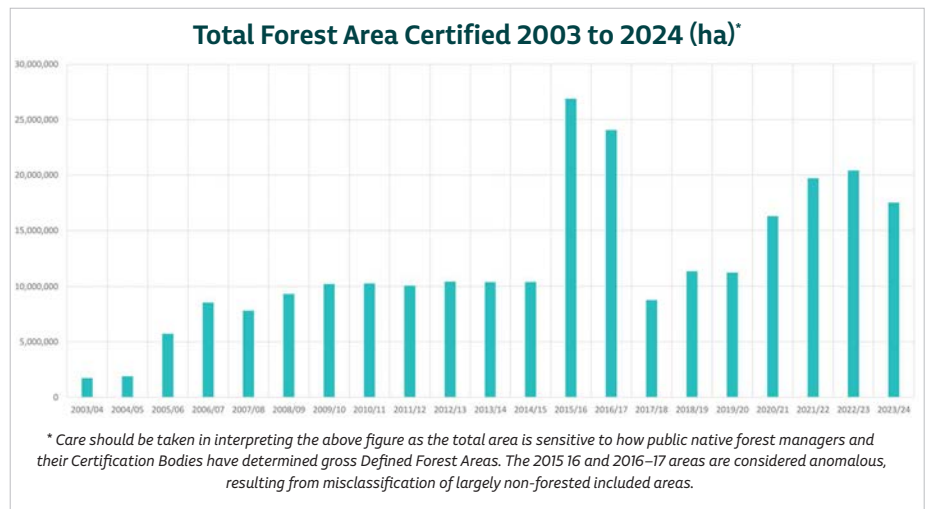
PEFC ST 2002-2020

and that PEFC has recognised the guidance provided by Appendix A. Appendix A does not provide alternative processes for certification but describes how the performance requirements of AS/NZS 4708 could be applied at a very small scale.

The PEFC re-endorsement provides international recognition to the Australian/New Zealand Standards and the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme.

Sustainable Forest Management Certification

The total area of certified forest in Australia, the sum of the individual Defined Forest Areas (DFA), has decreased from 20.4 million hectares to 17.5 million hectares. This represents a decrease of 14.2% compared to the 2022–23 period. This decrease in DFA was primarily due to the ceasing of native forest harvesting on publicly managed land in Victoria on 1 January 2024, which subsequently resulted in the closure of the state-owned forest management agency VicForests. The VicForest managed estate comprised about 3 million hectares of certified forest estate.



We continue to have 27 sustainable forest management certificate holders. In 2023-24, certificate holders Vic Forests & WA Sandalwood were withdrawn. However, we received two new sustainable forest management certificate holders for 2023/24 – Quintis and AWT Forest Management.

Note: The majority of Australia's commercial production forests (i.e., plantations and native forests) continued to be certified against the Australia/New Zealand Forestry

Standard (AS/NZS 4708-Sustainable Forest Management).

The Reliance Forest Fibre Group Scheme and the ForestSmart Group Certification Scheme administered by PF Olsen Australia Pty Ltd are currently registered for Group Certification under the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme. Group Certification is where small independent forest managers form a cooperative or group for the collective certification of the forests that they manage. Group Certification

Matt de Jongh and Katie Fowden with Materials & Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance (MECLA) field trip attendees.



EUDR Spotlight

At PEFC and Responsible Wood, we are committed to halting deforestation by promoting sustainable forest management certification and certified forest products that do not contribute to forest loss. Under the EUDR, certain products for export to the European Union (EU) will have to meet new rules relating to the land on which they were produced.

We are committed to continuing this work and representing our members and certificate holders in response to the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

defrays the certification and management costs over a larger number of participants, making forest certification more cost-effective and accessible to small forest growers.

Chain of Custody Certification

Responsible Wood recognises Chain of Custody certificates issued against the Australian Standard® (AS 4707 Chain of Custody of Forest Products) and the PEFC Standard (PEFC ST 2002:2020 Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products — Requirements).

In 2023-24, we were notified by certification bodies that ten chain of custody certificates had been withdrawn. However, we were delighted to receive eight new chain of custody certificates from organisations that attained certification. This leaves the total number of participating chain of custody certified sites at 361 as of 30 June 2024, down from 363 the previous year. During this period, the group chain of custody certification grew steadily, with several new organisations joining

the Wood Connect group certification schemes.

Accredited Certification Bodies

Four certification bodies are accredited to issue Forest Management certificates in Australia and/or New Zealand to AS/NZS 4708. In addition, fourteen certification bodies are accredited to provide Chain of Custody in Australia and New Zealand against the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard or AS 4707.

This is an increase of one since the previous year.

We have continued engagement with certification bodies by facilitating workshops. The 2023–24 workshop was delivered face to face and remotely in April and was attended by 19 staff representing all certification bodies operating in Australia and New Zealand. The workshops provide a forum where certification and accreditation requirements (including new provisions) are discussed, changes and updates to Standards are reviewed, the activities of Responsible Wood and PEFC are communicated, and feedback on the operation of the certification scheme is provided. This year, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee presented to remind certification bodies of their obligations to verify turnover and collect notification fees on behalf of Responsible Wood. Certification bodies were also presented to by Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests on the EU Deforestation Regulations and from ForestFit on updates to their forest contractor certification program.

Standards & Accreditation

SDAC

Responsible Wood is one of only five Australian entities accredited as a Standards Development Organisation (SDO) by the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC). SDAC sits under the Board of Standards Australia. Accordingly, we were subject to our yearly surveillance audit by an SDAC appointed auditor in November 2023. The result was excellent, and no non-conforming practices were identified. Resultantly, Responsible Wood's SDAC accreditation was maintained and we can continue as an SDO to develop Australian Standards® for forest management and Australian Standards® that support the Australian Forest Certification Scheme.



Jonathan Tibbits, Simon Dorries and Matt de Jongh at the ISO Annual Meeting in Brisbane.

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PEFC Engagement

In addition to operating and maintaining the RWCS, we continue to operate as the PEFC National Governing Body for Australia and provide administrative services for the New Zealand program on behalf of the New Zealand Forest Certification Association (NZFCA).

The Responsible Wood Certification Scheme (RWCS) is endorsed by the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), an international non-profit, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) through independent third-party certification. PEFC is recognised in 56 countries through National Governing Bodies and has 45 (this excludes Russia and Belarus who are currently suspended from PEFC) endorsed national certification systems and approximately 296 million hectares of certified forests. PEFC is the world's largest forest certification system, covering approximately 20,000

individual sites and representing over 750,000 individual forest owners. PEFC certifies approximately three-quarters of all certified forests globally.

PEFC is an umbrella organisation. It works by endorsing national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions. To ensure consistency across all PEFC-endorsed standards, all national systems wishing to be PEFC recognised undergo a rigorous independent assessment to ensure their compliance with the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark.

PEFC criteria, regulations and guidelines also include provisions for standards development and implementation, and define requirements for:

- stakeholder engagement in standard setting and scheme development
- regional and group certification
- certification and accreditation procedures

- Chain of Custody
- logo use
- the complaints and appeals mechanism.

We remain active within the PEFC organisation and are represented on the Standards committee developing the accreditation requirements for certification bodies who perform forest management audits.

We are an active member of the Temporary Task Force on Promotional Logo Use, the Construction Products Task Force, the PEFC ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) working group

Memorable Events of 2023/24

• ISO Conference

The 2023 ISO Annual Meeting in Brisbane looked at emerging trends and challenges related to International Standards and their role in achieving the global sustainable development agenda.

• ANZIF *

The 2023 ANZIF Conference highlighted the need for active and adaptive management of our natural capital using an evidence-based approach.

• AFPC *

Held in Sydney in 2023, AFPC was a key forum for advising and taking action on key forestry issues in a region of diversity and rapid change.

* (See P16 for more)



and the Asia-Pacific Hub — an initiative that is chaired by the Responsible Wood CEO. The Construction Products Task Force is responsible for advising PEFC on marketing and engagement strategies for construction products. Initiatives have included sponsorship of the World Architectural Forum (International award for excellent), new promotional materials for the construction sector and the development of an international database of procurement policies for major construction companies. The ESG working group is developing strategies to ensure that PEFC certification is recognised as meeting corporate ESG procurement and reporting obligations.

Responsible Wood Director, Ms Katie Fowden, has been an active member of the PEFC Marketing, Communications and Advocacy Working Group, representing Australia and New Zealand. This group is tasked to further develop consistent, global, strategic, and tactical approaches to deliver the overall PEFC strategy, vision, and mission.



PEFC in New Zealand

We have continued to administer the PEFC scheme in New Zealand on behalf of the New Zealand Forest Certification Association (NZFCA). NZFCA is the PEFC Governing Body for New Zealand. There are five Forest Management certificates in New Zealand, with a slight increase of less than 1 per cent in the DFA to 639,250 hectares of PEFC-certified forests. The number of Chain of Custody certificates remains relatively unchanged. Under the agreement with NZFCA, we maintain all registrations and notifications, take enquiries and applications from New Zealand, liaise with certification bodies, and ensure that the scheme rules administered by JAS-ANZ are applied in New Zealand, as they are in Australia.

Responsible Wood has made it a priority to communicate with New Zealand, recognising the crucial role of in-person engagement in advancing sustainable forest management and chain of custody certification. The Responsible Wood visit in June 2024 was instrumental in strengthening relationships with both existing certificate holders and potential new partners. The workshop in Rotorua, which provided an update on not only Responsible Wood activities but also items such as the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and

the PEFC alignment with the EUDR, were met with great enthusiasm and were well-received by participants. Additionally, the outreach visits to Gisborne, Auckland and Wellington provided valuable opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, underscoring the importance of Responsible Wood's presence in New Zealand.

Standards and Guides Review — PEFC Standards

PEFC maintains a suite of Standards and Guides. Standards and guides currently under review or recently published include:

- New and updated guidance materials for chain of custody.
- Accreditation requirements for certification bodies providing forest management audits- published mid-2024.
- A voluntary module under the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard for undertaking due diligence against the EU Deforestation Regulation.
- Updates to the PEFC International Sustainable Forest Management Standard to align this document with the EU Deforestation Regulation- expected in late 2024.

Standards and Guides Review — other Australian and ISO Standards

Responsible Wood, through our SDO accreditation, represents the Australian industry and Standards Australia on other Australian and ISO Standards Committees. These include:

- Standards Australia Committee TM-011 Engineered Wood Products
- Standards Australia Committee MS-64 Chain of Custody
- ISO TC 287 Sustainable Processes for Wood and Wood-Based Products
- ISO TC 308 Chain of Custody
- ISO/WS ESG/WG 1 Framework for implementing environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles.



Attendees of the Responsible Wood New Zealand Certification Workshop gather at the front of Scion Research Institute.

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The labels
you can
trust



Recognised Training

Responsible Wood is recognised by PEFC through the “pool of experts” program to provide the mandatory training to certification bodies to ensure they meet the training provisions and competencies required by PEFC, JAS-ANZ and other accreditation bodies. During the period, several training packages were delivered with recognised training provided to auditors, certification body decision makers and system developers.

Responsible Wood has also provided general chain of custody training to the staff of several chain of custody certificate holders.

Marketing & Communications

In 2023/24, Responsible Wood continued expanding our marketing and communications efforts, leveraging a multi-channel approach to increase engagement, visibility, and awareness of certified sustainable forest management, chain of custody and the Responsible Wood and PEFC labels. Central to this effort was our focus on a variety of communication platforms, such as responsiblewood.org.au, LinkedIn, our email newsletter, webinars, events, and high-quality articles and content distributed through both paid and free media channels. Across

these channels, we delivered targeted messaging to diverse audiences, ranging from industry stakeholders to designers, specifiers and consumers of forest products. Collaboration with PEFC at both the Asia Pacific and International levels has played an important role in amplifying our reach, as we worked closely to ensure alignment with global messaging while addressing regional needs.

One of the standout initiatives was the “Sustainable Source” campaign, developed in collaboration with the Arc Agency. This campaign was aimed at promoting the Responsible Wood and PEFC certification marks to a targeted architectural audience, showcasing the importance of choosing certified products to support sustainable forestry practices. Throughout the year, our content was also supported by a series of webinars, articles, and social media engagements that educated the public on how certified products contribute to forest health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Matt de Jongh visits the team at Platinum Timbers.



PEFC Asia Pacific and national governing bodies from Australia, Vietnam and Malaysia unite at the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission.





2023 Australian Timber Design Awards Winner

Australian Certified Timber

As a key marketing activity, Responsible Wood continues to be a proud sponsor of this award. By sponsoring this award category, we promote excellence in timber design and encourage the specification and use of certified timber products in the built environment.

GovHub, Galkangu, is more than a building; it's a well-deserving Australian Timber Design Awards winner of the Australian Certified Timber Award. The project's emphasis on chain of custody certified fabricators, with CLT from Xlam and GLT from Australian Sustainable Hardwoods, underscores its commitment to sustainability.

We also strengthened our presence at key events such as the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission and the joint ANZIF conference, where we participated in discussions about the future of forestry in the region and the role of certification in promoting sustainable practices. Additionally, our field trips provided a hands-on opportunity for stakeholders to experience certified forest management in action, reinforcing our message of sustainability through immersive, real-world examples.

On the digital front, key metrics such as open rates for our email newsletter, time on site, impressions, and website visitors have remained strong, with notable improvements in several areas. Our active social media engagement, particularly through LinkedIn, has also seen growth, enabling us to connect with industry professionals and specifiers and procurers of forest products. Website traffic remained steadily increasing, and our efforts to deliver high-quality, SEO-rich, informative content ensured visitors spent more time on key pages.

In addition to these successes, we consistently reviewed our performance against the KPIs outlined in our marketing plan, which is structured around four strategic marketing pillars:

- Increased Brand Visibility
- Effective market interaction
- Broad recognition and endorsement
- Increased demand for certification

These pillars guide our activities and ensure that we are making measurable progress toward our long-term goals.



TDA Winner 2023, The Barker Maths Hub...
winner of the Commercial Buildings Award.
Photographer: Brett Boardman

Annual Report of Activities 2023 - 2024

Finance & Administration

Membership

We are a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee. Membership of Responsible Wood is open to all organisations and individuals who support the Objectives of the company as set out in the Constitution. As of 30 June 2024, we have 38 members, an increase of one from 2023–24.

Governance

The Directors Report and Audited Financial Reports for 2023–24 were prepared and provided to our Members prior to the 2024 AGM in accordance with the *Corporations Act 2001* requirements.

Ms Christine Briggs was appointed to the Board, replacing Ms Katie Fowden, nominated by Primary Processing members.

Ms Fowden was appointed by the Board as an Independent Director until the 2024 AGM.

Mr Mark Gauthier resigned as a Director nominated by Forest Grower members and was replaced by Mr David Bennett.

Dr Tony Bartlett, Mr Stuart West, Mr Mark Thomson, Mr Michael O'Connor, Dr Kerrie Catchpoole and Mr. David Little continued to serve through 2023–24 as Directors.

Responsible Wood's Directors' commitments to, and investment in, good governance and the RWCS extends to involvement in several key sub-committees that meet regularly throughout the year. The committees as of June 2024 were as follows:



Responsible Wood Directors Mr David Little, Mr Simon Dorries, Dr Tony Bartlett, Mr Mark Thomson, Ms Katie Fowden, Mr Stuart West visit New Zealand's Scion Research Institute for a joint NZFCA and Responsible Wood Board meeting - September 2023.

Audit & Risk Committee

Mr Stuart West (Committee Chair),
Dr Kerrie Catchpoole,
Mr David Bennett,
Dr Tony Bartlett (ex-officio)

Governance Committee

Mr David Little (Committee Chair),
Ms Christine Briggs,
Mr Michael O'Connor
Dr Tony Bartlett (ex-officio)

Marketing Committee

Ms Katie Fowden (Committee Chair),
Mr Mark Thomson,
Ms Christine Briggs,
Dr Tony Bartlett (ex-officio)

Management & Staff

- Simon Dorries, *Chief Executive Officer*
- Jonathan Tibbits, *Marketing & Communications Officer*
- Matt de Jongh, *Sustainability Manager*
- Tracey Schoemaker, *Administration*

On-going contract services were provided by:

- Alan Snow of Alan Snow Consulting *Standards development and SDO accreditation advice*
- Jason Ross, *Project Manager — Responsible Wood Community Grants Program*
- Meike Gates, *Accounts*

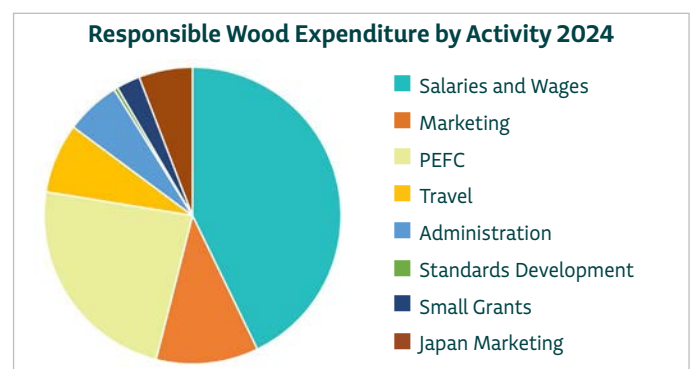
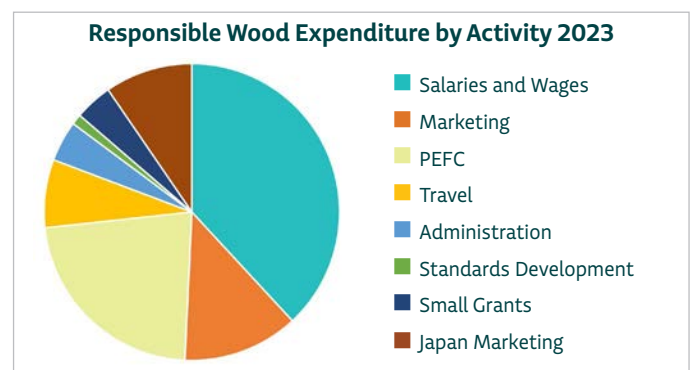
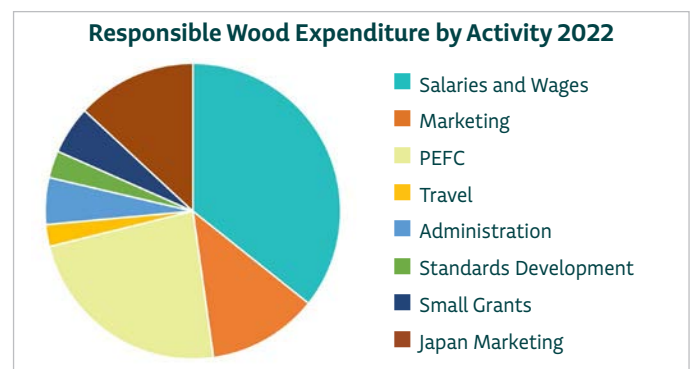
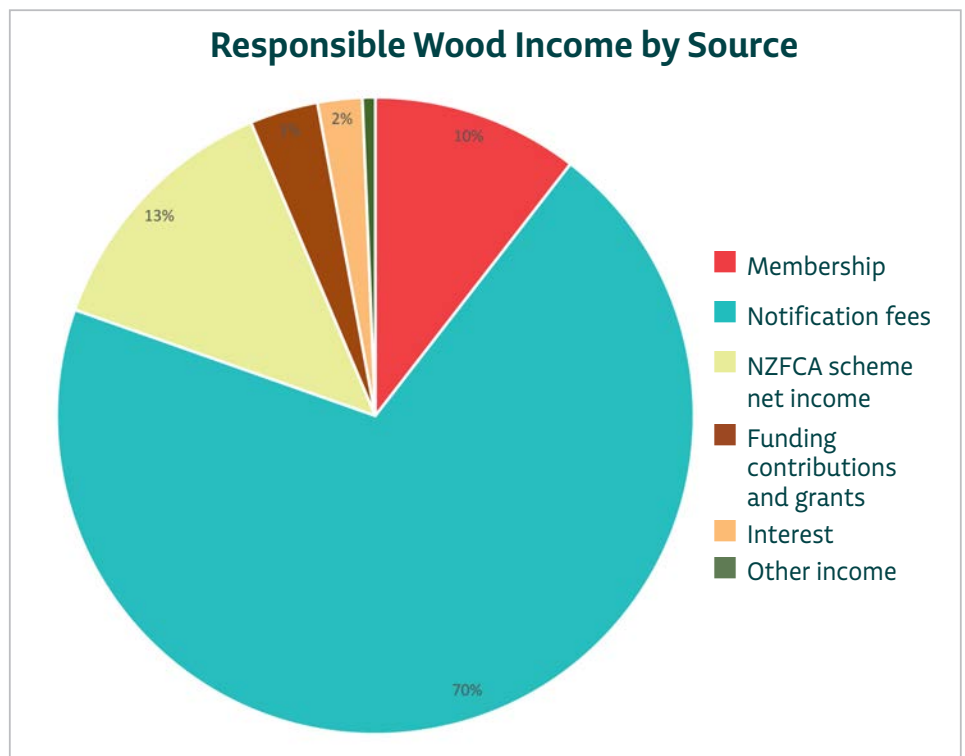
Finance

The audited accounts show the financial outcome for Responsible Wood for 2023–24 was a surplus of \$66,603 (2022–23 — deficit \$163,773) increasing Net Assets (Total Equity) to \$1,620,815 (2022–23 — \$1,554,212). The surplus was achieved despite a budgeted deficit due to an increase in notification fees from chain of custody certification, responsible and careful management, reduced expenditure on marketing through bringing some contracted activities back in-house and the conclusion of the Japan marketing program. Cash decreased from \$1,526,065 to \$1,377,998 over the year as at 30 June 2024.

A review of expenditure shows that salaries and wages, PEFC expenses and marketing (including Japan) comprise approximately 80% of our expenditure. The increase in salaries and wages since 2022 represents an investment in new staff and resources to further promote Responsible Wood across supply chains and the specification sector to deliver greater benefit and opportunity to members and scheme participants. The investment in PEFC is the second largest expense, which represents its critical importance to our industry through ensuring recognition, credibility and providing market access. Marketing continues to consume a significant proportion of Responsible Wood focus and resources. This reflects the Boards commitment to maximise the exposure and market acceptance of the Responsible Wood Scheme as a “gold standard” and to ensure that our brand and PEFC deliver increasing tangible benefits to those organisations who invest in certification. We are a not-for-profit company. Through all of our efforts, the Board has continued to increase funding in the development and promotion of the Responsible Wood scheme, the Responsible Wood brand and market development in support of sustainable forest management.

In addition, income was received from New Zealand for administering the PEFC Scheme on behalf of the NZFCA. Other income such as notification fees, subscription fees paid by members and interest increased proportionately.

The three pie charts to the right show Responsible Wood Expenditure by Activity 2022 to 2024.





Responsible Wood - RW/1-10-1

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**Responsible
Wood**
RW/1-10-1



PEFC
PEFC/21-1-1

Victorian Forest // *Photographer: Pat Whelan.*