

## VicForests to postpone FSC audit

VicForests has announced it is postponing its upcoming Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Controlled Wood audit.

VicForests' CEO, Robert Green, said the audit will be deferred until later in the year.

"Following the recent listing of the Leadbeater's Possum as critically endangered, we believe it would be premature to go ahead with an FSC audit in June as originally planned," Mr Green said.

"There have been a range of views put forward regarding the best way to manage the forest within the species range and the Federal Government has indicated work will be done to update the National Recovery Plan for the Leadbeater's Possum.

"Postponing the audit gives us more time to understand the important role VicForests and the timber industry will continue to play in supporting the recovery of the Possum and protecting its habitat.

"Leadbeater's Possum is one of the key High Conservation Values found in the forests we manage and VicForests continues to invest significant time and resources into ensuring we protect the Possum and its habitat in areas available for timber production.

"A range of projects are already well underway at a State level to improve outcomes for the Leadbeater's Possum and these recent initiatives not yet been incorporated into the Federal Plan.

"We remain committed to seeking FSC certification to complement our existing Australian Forestry Standard certification and expect to undergo an audit against the FSC standards later in 2015.

"We will keep the community updated regarding the timing of a future audit," he said.

Mr Green said VicForests' draft Forest Management Plan and draft High Conservation Value Strategy documents remain available for public comment.

"Certification provides assurance that Victoria's forests are managed in a responsible and sustainable way, encouraging people to continue to choose local timber products," he said.

"We have been through two rounds of public consultation to seek input from stakeholders about our forest management including holding Open House events earlier this year.

"Both our draft Forest Management Plan and draft High Conservation Value Strategy are on our website.

"We welcome feedback from the community on these documents and our forest management practices at any time," Mr Green said.

For more information please go to [www.vicforests.com.au](http://www.vicforests.com.au)