

All test reports are not created equal, and there may be risks in quoting them, and relying on them to promote sales

Product certification, the process under which a manufacturer makes a legal agreement with AFRDI to maintain the standard of a freshly tested item for a period of three years, is at the heart of the AFRDI product quality assurance offer.

For some time, AFRDI has had a policy of examining (at a cost to the client) reports from other laboratories when considering products for certification. A number of testing laboratories exist in other countries producing reports which may partly satisfy AFRDI's Blue Tick requirements under AS/NZS 4438, the standard covering variable height office chairs.

Lately, however, AFRDI has become aware of some distributors selling chairs which purport to have been tested to the 4438 Standard, quoting testing done by overseas laboratories. Our investigations show the chairs may have only been partially tested to the durability, strength and stability sections of the standard, and often with no flammability tests or labeling assessment.

The potential problem goes deeper. Testing can only be considered as truly valid if carried out by a laboratory which has been accredited to do those tests. In our experience, this is not always the case with overseas establishments, meaning that testing may have little scientific validity.

AFRDI is not saying don't trust all overseas test reports, but:

- Do make sure they offer an appropriate service (*refer to the ACCC link on the next page*)
- Wording commonly seen, such as "in our opinion the submitted samples comply with AS/NZS 4438 as shown..." are not adequate as we see it when



the list of tests is only part of the standard or the tests are not in the scope of accreditation

- Also seen frequently is the phrase “selected tests” which refers to only parts of the full standard (in some cases no durability/fatigue testing has been performed, just static loading)
- As well, sometimes, no test results are shown, just the tests performed. Some reports we have been provided with are drafts and are unsigned

Accreditation bodies such as Australia’s National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA – www.nata.com.au or call 1800 621 666) together with its international counterparts, provide independent assessments of, and accreditation for, competence in testing against specific standards. You should also consult the ACCC’s Guide to Product Testing, online [here](#).

Pages 8 and 9 of the above guide give comprehensive details of points to consider when reading product reports, and checking their validity. Always remember that, in the case of a liability claim arising for personal injury, claims that a product was certified will be rigorously checked.

To return to our opening point, testing alone isn’t the whole story - it is an important additional component to the assurance of quality through certification, the legal agreement entered into between AFRDI and a manufacturer committing to maintain the original testing sample’s quality for three years. Not only does certification embody notions of durability and fitness for purpose – it also underpins concepts of duty of care to consumers through a commitment to upholding manufacturing standards.

For more details on what is acceptable to AFRDI in reports from other laboratories, please read our “Kit for test reports from other laboratories”, online [here](#).

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