

## AFRDI Sustainability Standard now in the final stages

Drafting standards can be a long-term task, and preparing our new standard on sustainability has been no exception. Almost three (3) years have so far been devoted to giving consideration to feedback received from a broad cross-section of the industry, composing appropriate general performance and specific evidence requirements, and trialing the standard with different clients and test products to iron-out the inevitable problems that arise when a project of this magnitude is attempted.

While the broad definitions of sustainability remain the same, a practical interpretation of them changes in the light of growing experience. Due to an increase in our knowledge base, developments overseas, the time elapsed since our draft was first prepared and an increased focus by world governments, we have continued to refine our draft – broadening and improving it by gaining greater practical details.

At present, we have a working group fine-tuning the final phase of the new standard. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) is also finalising a process for third party certifiers and we anticipate applying to the GBCA for recognition under their scheme when they call for submissions in late May this year. Once we receive the approval from GBCA our Green Tick certification will have equal recognition with other existing certification labels.

Translated to the furnishing sector, compliance with the new standard means we have to:

- Examine ways of more responsibly and ethically sourcing materials;
- Manufacture and assemble goods in an environmentally acceptable manner to promote longer useful life;
- Not to be wasteful in packaging and transport; and
- Actively prepare for re-manufacturing or recycling.

In a de facto sense, we already meet some of the requirements of sustainability, because certifying products to the various AFRDI standards is in itself a guarantee that a chair or other furnishing is the best of its type, and therefore should offer a long, trouble-free life.

When the sustainability standard is available, it will mean that Furntech-AFRDI will be able to offer our clients a one-stop shop. Clients will not only be able to have their products AFRDI Blue Tick certified for durability, stability, flammability and ergonomics (a prerequisite for our sustainability standard), but also have the same product assessed against the sustainability standard for commercial furniture at the same time.

It all translates into economies for our clients, and further enhances the **commercial advantages** that certification brings in a marketplace flooded with look-alike products that may in reality have greatly differing qualities. **In short, goods carrying the AFRDI and Furntech Ticks will have a strong, marketable pedigree.**

There is no doubt that as the world economy contracts and money becomes more scarce, consumers, the business sector, and governments, all increasingly seek the security of knowing that a chair or other office furniture is certified for its performance, and for its ultimate impact on the planet's resources – indeed, that it is the best buy for the long term.

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