# Mandates and drivers for Australia’s State of the Forests Report series and Montréal Process reporting

**Mandate for the production of Australia’s State of the Forests Reports**

In 1992, the Australian Government and state and territory governments issued a National Forest Policy Statement which set out a vision for Australia's forests and associated goals, objectives and policies.

The National Forest Policy Statement commits governments, among other things, to:

* publish a review of the state of the forests every five years:

*...forest management agencies' provision...of appropriate information from which to produce and publish a* ***'state of the forests'*** *review every five years. The review will summarise available information, including the basis of sustainable forest yield and other values, moves to achieve a comprehensive nature conservation reserve network, and the results of long term monitoring of the impacts of forest use.*

* and maintain the National Forest Inventory:

*Effective management and use of forests must be based on a sound understanding of forest ecosystems and their associated values. The Governments will cooperate to improve the scope and extent of forest databases so that decision making and management are based on the best available information. The National Forest Inventory will continue to be developed. It will be directed by a steering committee representing the Governments. This committee will jointly define information requirements and develop data exchange principles between the Governments and with other databases.*

The Commonwealth *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002* also commits the Commonwealth to creating a publicly available source of information on Australia’s forests:

*The Minister must cause to be established a comprehensive and publicly available source of information for national and regional monitoring and reporting in relation to all of Australia's forests; and to support decision-making in relation to all of Australia’s forests.*

The Australia's State of the Forests Report (SOFR) series gives effect to the reporting commitments of the National Forest Policy Statement and the *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002*. Data compiled into the National Forest Inventory underpin this reporting.

The National Forest Inventory and the SOFR series also underpin Australia’s international forest reporting requirements, including through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s Global Forest Resources Assessment, and the Montréal Process Working Group.

**Mandate for the use of the Montréal Process criteria and indicators framework for Australia’s State of the Forests reporting**

The seven criteria for sustainable forest management used in the Australia's State of the Forests Report (SOFR) series were developed by the international-level Montréal Process Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, of which Australia is a founding member. The Montréal Process framework is intended to promote consistency in reporting at all levels and to avoid duplication in data collection.

The Montréal Process framework was adopted by Australia in 1994, and subsequently formalised through a request of the former Ministerial Council on Forestry Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) in 1996. The MCFFA endorsed the use of the Montréal Process criteria and indicators as a basis for assessing progress towards sustainable forest management at the national level.

In August 1996, the Chairs of the Standing Committee on Forestry and the Standing Committee on Conservation agreed to establish a Commonwealth-State/Territory body, the Montréal Process Implementation Group for Australia (MIG), to develop the framework of national and regional criteria and indicators. This led to the initial set of international-level indicators being adapted to the current set of 44 national indicators that better suit the reporting of Australia's unique forests under the seven Montréal Process criteria.

The MCFFA also agreed to the development of a framework of indicators based on the Montréal Process for use at the regional level in the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process. Among other things, the parties to each RFA agreed to establish an appropriate set of sustainability indicators to monitor forest changes, with these indicators to be consistent with the Montréal Process criteria (as amended from time to time). The form of this framework is specified in an Attachment to each RFA, and takes into account the framework of indicators developed by the MIG. Indicators are to be practical, measurable, cost-effective and capable of being implemented at the regional level.

The Montréal Process framework is also used in a number of state-based forestry reporting processes, allowing direct and efficient aggregation of these data into national forest reporting and the SOFR series.

The Montréal Process framework also provides the structure for the Australian Forestry Standard program of certification.

These mandates underpin the following drivers for the production of Australia’s State of the Forests Reports:

* The sustainable management and conservation of Australia’s forests, whether on public or on private land, *requires* a sound understanding of their condition, use and management by governments, forest managers and stakeholders.
* Reporting on the state of Australia’s forests through SOFR *supports* progress towards the sustainable management of Australia’s forests.
* The role of SOFR is to *inform* the public about Australia’s forests, their management and use, and, where possible, to track changes or monitor trends over time.
* SOFR also assists Australia to *report* the state of its forests internationally.
* SOFR reporting is an efficient way to *reduce and coordinate reporting* of numerous domestic and international requirements that would otherwise need to be dispatched to the states and territories for completion.