Vision and objectives

1. What should the vision be for the forest products sector in the coming decades?

2. What specific objectives should underpin this vision?

Issue 1: Market trends and pressures

3. What forest products does Australia have a local and/or international competitive advantage in producing?

   a. Appearance grade native hardwoods for furniture and flooring

   b. High quality native eucalypt regrowth, which is comparable to plantation eucalypt in terms of fibre yield and shipping compaction, but far more environmentally benign due to negligible management inputs (site preparation, herbicides, fertiliser, pesticides)

   c. High density biomass from native forest processing, and perhaps harvesting, residues.

4. What is the potential demand for forest products in the coming decades?

   a. Demand for appearance grade Australian hardwoods should increase as environmental pressures and illegal logging legislation restricts supply from SE Asian countries.

   b. As pulpwood supply from failed MIS schemes inevitably shrinks in future decades, and SE Asian woodchip exporters move to domestic value adding, demand for regrowth pulpwood from sustainably managed Australian native forests will grow.

   c. As SE Asian countries such as Korea and Japan, mandate renewable energy targets woody biomass export economics will firm. Australian demand will continue to be compromised by the threat of hung parliaments stifling investment.

5. How can Australia best position itself for this demand, both nationally and internationally?

   a. Adopt tenure neutral land management policies and practices

   b. Stop placing working forests in the reserve system

   c. Reduce the financial burden of environmental and WHS compliance

   d. Stiffen penalties for workplace invasion, remove charitable status of eco-facist NGOs and

      introduce measures to penalise NGOs that practice market sabotage on the grounds of concern for nature. The Competition and Consumer Act 2010 with respect to secondary boycotts needs to be applied more strictly.

6. What are the other drivers or disruptions that will potentially affect supply and/or demand?

   a. The failure to recognise the true cost of changing forest tenure from productive to reserve status. The community service obligations provided by State Forest management with respect to fire mitigation, roading access, weed and feral animal control etc are adequately recognised. Not to mention the social cost associated with regional employment

   b. The practice of desperate political parties trying to gain inner city preferences by promising to create a larger reserve system prior to elections.

   c. The lack of investor confidence created by a lack of robust, durable forest and renewable energy policy.

d. Harvest and haulage contractor capacity due to the economic hardship suffered by this sector through past political decisions affecting resource availability.

Issue 2: Emerging uses and markets

7. Which emerging forest products have the greatest potential for Australia?
8. What are some of the barriers to the development and/or uptake of these emerging forest products in Australia?
9. What opportunities exist to better utilise wood resources?

a. Allow the creation of Renewable Energy Credits for heat created from burning wood (as it displaces fossil fuel)

b. Harmonise high mass limit opportunities for truck transport

c. Divert more of the funds collected in diesel fuel taxes back into better roads.

Issue 3: Forest resources

10. What is required to ensure the plantation estate is able to meet future demand for forest products?

a. Ensure any scheme that encourages plantation development has an in-built safeguard that prevents development of unsuitable sites ie a technical review mechanism that minimises poor land use decisions that are potentially locked in for a whole rotation.

11. What is required to ensure the native forest estate is able to meet future demand for forest products?

a. Tenure neutral landscape. For example the multiple Alpine Fires presented an ideal opportunity to allow the salvage of a huge alpine ash resource from national parks. Some of the royalty could have been directed to re-seeding, but due to the lack of flexibility created by tenure overlays, we now see a huge loss of this forest type in reserve.

b. Maintain the level of resource security provided by the current RFAs through a virtual roll-over in their renewal.

12. What opportunities are there to increase wood supply from farm forestry, private native forestry and Indigenous owned and managed lands?

a. Create resources to facilitate joint marketing schemes, especially with respect to access to certification.

Issue 4: Innovation, research and development

13. What are the future research and development needs for Australia's forest products sector, and which of these needs are specific to strengths and opportunities in the Australian context?
14. What are the current inhibitors to private sector investment in research, development and extension and what role, if any, does the Australian Government potentially have in addressing these?
15. How can the framework for coordinating Australian forestry research and development be strengthened?

Issue 5: Consumer and community engagement

16. How can domestic and international consumers be better engaged on the environmental, economic and social credentials of Australian forest products?
17. How important are consumer awareness programs to the future prosperity of the sector?
18. Can forest certification be better leveraged to achieve stronger demand and better prices for Australian forest products and, if so, how?
    a. Certification can support inherent demand and prices, rather than strengthen them. Government can assist by assuring customers that AFS is in every respect a world class standard with a logical emphasis on stakeholder engagement, rather than allowing standards such as FSC to rely too heavily on the bias of NGOs, whose principles are consistent with the best interests of the timber industry.

Issue 6: Strengthened regional approaches

19. How could forestry hubs better utilise resources and promote greater efficiencies and innovation?
20. What have been the barriers to the establishment and efficient operation of forestry hubs to date, and what might be the role of the Australian Government in addressing these?
21. If additional forestry hubs are to be established, where would they best be located?

Issue 7: Infrastructure

22. What infrastructure will be required to respond to future demand for Australian forest products?

a. Divert more of the funds collected in diesel fuel taxes back into regional arterial roads that serve timber facilities.

23. What can be done to ensure better recognition and understanding of the sector's infrastructure needs?

Issue 8: Industry skills and training

24. What are the skills and training needs of the sector over the coming decades, and where are the current gaps?
25. Are Vocational Education and Training and university training providers well-positioned to meet the future skills and training needs of the sector?
26. What improvements are required at an enterprise level to support the recruitment, development and retention of the sector's current and future workforce?