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## Structural Pine Grades and Grading Systems

Mr Neil Fisher CEO, A3P announced, in December 2006, that A3P would not be pursuing the introduction of SP grades of structural pine as previously planned. "Since then, the industry through A3P has continued to assess how it might utilise the SP grade project outcomes to improve the current grading systems."

A3P Manager, Mr Peter Juniper says there has been background work undertaken by the industry in the areas of quality assurance and structural property compliance and that this work has now positioned the softwood sawmilling sector at the forefront of contemporary structural timber production technology.

"Significant advances have been made to the benefit of consumers and our judgement is that the industry's customers will have noticed an improvement in consistency of product grading over the past couple of years".

"And there is more to come" says Mr Juniper. "Many producer companies are considering introducing new grading technologies and work is progressing on the development of standards to cater for this need. The production of a guide for verifying structural properties is underway and it is expected that this will also help address recent concerns about the reliability of visually stress graded products".

Most structural pine produced in Australia is machine stress graded and it is in this area that the major gains have been made in recent years. A "Generic Manufacturing Specification for Mechanically Stress Graded Products" was recently produced via the FWPRDC to assist producers in adopting these grading system improvements.

"A3P producer members have all adopted the latest technology and they all also subscribe to a rigorous, independent third party audited product certification program called Plantation Timber Certification (PTC). This program is accredited by the Joint Accreditation System – Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ)." According to Mr Juniper further work is in hand to ensure this program is responsive to new developments as they arise.

As part of this work A3P member companies, recently considered the introduction of an MGP grade lower than MGP10.

Mr John Hayden, Chairman of the A3P Solid Wood Forum says that this initiative will now not be pursued. "After detailed assessment of the various resource, production and market considerations a decision was recently taken to remain with the current three grade MGP system."

"We recognise that other stress graded products will continue to play a support role at this end of the structural product range", said Mr Hayden.

Concurrent with this ongoing work, A3P member companies will be concentrating on ensuring that all structural products are adequately assessed with respect to structural property compliance and that such products will be supplied to the market certified fit for purpose under the PTC program – as indicated by the PTC logo on these products.

A3P member companies can be located via the A3P web-site at [www.a3p.asn.au](http://www.a3p.asn.au).

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### Further information

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