Independent Forestry Panel

# Public submission

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DAVE WOOD** | | **Submission ID:** 200903 |
| **Organisation:** | *N/A* | |
| **Location:** | *New South Wales* | |
| **Supporting materials uploaded:** | *Attached overleaf* | |

Submission date: 9/27/2024 9:34:42 AM

**Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW; specifically in relation to environmental sustainability.**

I speak of my experience observing and researching both historic and recent native forestry operations in the Coffs Harbour hinterland.
In relation to State Forests, I have personally spent many hours traversing and ground truthing historic and recent logging coupes in Pine Creek, Boambee, Lower Bucca and Orara East State forests. I have also researched historic harvest plans, aerial maps and more recent satellite imagery. I have also spoken to ex-forestry workers, anti-logging activists and local residents living adjacent to these State Forests.

When it comes to native forest logging, sustainability is a meaningless term unless you qualify it with a baseline of what you are prepared to tolerate in terms of biodiversity impacts, resource recovery, asset management and obvious economic factors.

I spent many years teaching carpentry and cabinetmaking, starting at a time in the late 70's when fine Australian cabinet making timbers were in rapid decline, initially due to depleted natural availability and then to the locking up of overcut forests for conservation. A softwood plantation industry was coming on stream and pine was overtaking native hardwood for residential house framing as the preferred supply.

My personal interest now is particularly in the sustainability of local biodiversity. Sadly, in my view, our native forests have been trashed – long ago. What remains is largely a shadow of its original species content and floristic structure. This concern is not exceptional or new. I also refer the panel to the 1912 Report on 'The Forests of the Bellinger' by E.H. Swain.

Our original local native forests contained valuable sought after commercial timbers. Many of these species have long since been depleted eg: Red cedar (Toona australis), White cedar (Melia azedarach), White beech (Gmelina leichardtii), Blue quondong (Elaeocarpus grandis), Rosewood (Dysoxylon fraseranium), Coachwood (Ceratopetalum apetalum), Red mahogany (E. resinifera), along with a plethora of other useful understorey species. Gully rainforests were deliberately trashed in historic logging operations and used as a dumping ground for unwanted timber and discarded log heads. They do not, and have not, regenerated in their original form.

Timbers once valuable but now regarded as non-commercial due to density, difficulty converting, or simply loss of demand/out of fashion (eg: Grey gum (E. propinqua). Bloodwood (Corymbia intermedia), Forest oak (Allocasuarina torulosa), have for many years been systematically 'removed' (ie: cut and left to rot) from our local native forests, so three commercially favourable species – Blackbutt (E. pilularis), Flooded gum (E. grandis) and Blue gum (E. saligna) now dominate native forest regrowth. The long term effect of this has been a gradual conversion of our local native forests to 'quasi-plantations' with a loss of species diversity and habitat opportunities.

Under current harvesting protocols, threatened species continue to be wiped out by limited and inadequate surveys and/ or protocols designed to expedite logging rather than preserve and promote species survival. There is no better example than the protocol for determination of protection for 2 critically endangered plant species – Scrub turpentine (Rhodamnia rubescens) and Native guava ( Rhodomyrtus psidiodes). These species require examples of a significant size to be found in order for a protection area to be instigated. This poses at least 2 anomalies which should ring alarm bells. Firstly, ground surveys rely on leaf analysis for easy and accurate species confirmation. This is commonly done at ground level meaning taller 'protected' trees are less likely to be identified and are at risk of being missed; particularly given the time constraints allocated to pre-harvest surveys (I kilometre /hour.)
Secondly; what serious attempt at conservation of a critical endangered species encourages the destruction of all young and immature examples? I have personally witnessed small groves of Scrub turpentine bulldozed in harvesting operations in Orara East in 2023.

The more recent use of song meter studies to justify logging of koala habitat shows an extraordinary lack of scientific integrity by NSW Forestry Corp. and an industry hell bent on

maximising timber production over genuine conservation efforts. Common sense and a basic understanding of our iconic koala tells one that a bellowing male in a post logging coup does not make a viable breeding population. Furthermore; what may be true for one region eg: Northern tablelands forests of predominantly spotted gum (E. maculata), does not mean it is true for koala populations in species diverse hinterland forests. I refer the panel to the 2023 work by Andrew Smith and John Piles which adds significant scientific rigour to this area and raises serious concerns.

Disfigured and in many cases suitable habitat trees have for decades also been removed by TSI (timber stand improvement) strategies which have decimated populations of hollow dependent arboreal species. Modern requirements to retain hollow bearing 'habitat' trees with no surrounding buffer requirements is the illogical equivalent of saying to the dependent wildlife "You can keep your home but the supermarket has to go". Recent local examples of large habitat trees falling over in windstorms because they are left exposed on ridges without any surrounding vegetation is a classic case of inadequate conservation strategies which only confirm current logging practices as unable to guarantee biodiversity sustainability.

My personal observations, following harvesting in native forest adjacent to mature plantation in Orara East in 2023 recount a small harvest area on a maximium 30 degree slope. I counted no more than a dozen cut stumps of 400 to 600mm diameter in an area of approx. 2 Ha. Many of the required retained trees and immature saplings were damaged with several de-limbed and disfigured and in some cases entire crowns smashed. Adjacent gully rainforest species, including Bangalow palms (Archontophoenix cunninghamiana), White bollygum (Neolitsea dealbata), and a listed threatened Rusty plum (Niemeyera whitei) were bulldozed in the operation and what ground wasn't ripped up and disturbed by dozer tracks was littered with crown heads over a smashed understorey. This is the image one doesn't see on the FOC promotional videos justifying misnamed 'Selective' logging practices. One wonders how the damage to this particular representative patch could be considered 'sustainable', in any way shape or form. Even as I attempted to contemplate what potential sawlog would be available here in 15 or 20 years time.

Added to this conversion to favoured commercial species is the increased spread of exotic species / invasive weeds to the extent that in many coupes past logging history can be determined by the increased presence of lantana and in many drainage lines, highly invasive small leaved privet and camphor. Plantations growing adjacent to native forests have in many areas become a breeding ground for these invaders which permeate edges when plantations are harvested and increased light provides the opportunity.

I have long advocated for a sustainable native hardwood industry in NSW as we have wonderful species and world class advantages in space, climate and technology, but I no longer believe that current harvesting practice in our native forests is environmentally sustainable and/or the best use of the resource. I have furthermore lost faith in the public administration of the industry and its ability to transparently protect and conserve our significant natural resource.

Thankyou for the opportunity to participate. - Dave Wood 27-09-2024