

# Public submission

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**Supporting materials uploaded:** *Attached overleaf*

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## **Response: Independent Forestry Panel**

**Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW**

**Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values**

**Demand for timber products, particularly as it relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail**

**The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs**

**The role of state forests in maximising the delivery of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes and options for diverse management, including Aboriginal forest management models**

**Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity markets, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risks to forests**

Native Forest logging as it is currently carried out is demonstrably unsustainable, economically and environmentally. Past technologies and a semblance of environmental responsibility have been supplanted by an industrial-scale devastation of native forests and the removal of protections for mature native trees (those which enclose nesting hollows and are valuable food sources) in 2018. The following comments pertain to the Styx River Native Forest, east of Armidale in northern NSW.

In March 2020, just weeks after fires ripped through many NSW forest, the Nature Conservation Council obtained evidence of unburnt forest being logged in the Styx River Forest east of Armidale — [see Nature NSW](#)

The region around Styx River State Forest was heavily burned in catastrophic bushfires. The few healthy patches left are some of the most important unburnt habitat in the region for the Spotted-tail Quoll, Greater Glider and the Hastings River Mouse. In the period from late 2019 to March 2020, over 100 hectares of Styx River State Forest was logged destroying critical unburnt habitat and pushing threatened species closer to the brink of extinction.

We have long been aware that native forest logging increases fire threat and intensity. Locally, areas of World Heritage Gondwana Rainforest ‘protected’ in National Parks have been exposed to the increases in heat, drought and fire from adjacent State Forests. The current unsustainable practices should be replaced by active management to protect and enhance these rainforests with their vital functions of sequestering carbon, creating a cool/wet environment and providing habitat.

[Breaches, profiling the recent history of logging breaches by Forestry Corps of NSW](#) by Miriam Pepper with Jason John for the Forest Advocacy Ministry provides compelling evidence of the adverse impact of logging on vital waterways (reducing the health of the river) and habitat (especially pp.18-19 and appendix p.35) in the Styx

An ongoing concern in the Styx River Native Forest is the plight of the Greater Glider and logging of den trees. Logging was halted temporarily some months ago but has recommenced. The public have recently been banned from entering two more extensive sections of our own public forest because intensive logging is planned to commence there sometime soon; the community good reason to believe protections for Greater Gliders and

their den trees are **not being heeded**. There is widespread local support for the Nature Conservation Council's petition requesting that the Minns Government

- End logging in NSW state native forest with high densities of, or otherwise of critical importance to, listed endangered species, particularly koalas and greater gliders.
- Accept and use community pre-logging forest survey findings to institute buffer zones
- Institute a 100m exclusion zone around any greater glider sighted within a state forest that is due to be logged.
- Direct the EPA to issue stop-work orders as soon as evidence emerges of gliders living within forests that are being logged.
- Increase the penalties for illegal logging activity, including the loss of licensing to repeat offenders.
- Update survey methods to include drone technology to accurately reflect density of endangered species

There is simply no need to log in our State's Native Forests in the future. As long ago as 2016 the Australia Institute noted, in its report [\*Money doesn't grow on trees\*](#) that *Native forest logging by the Forestry Corporation of NSW generated losses of \$79m over the last seven years - discontinuing the practice could deliver significant benefits to the state of NSW*. Logging of native forests reduces biomass and carbon storage, and removing mature trees takes away valuable food sources and hollow bearing trees.

Generations of locals and visitors have sought recreation and refuge in Styx Native Forest (Wattle Flat in particular). Genuine distress, a form of solastalgia, is occasioned by the destruction caused by logging. This distress is compounded by the knowledge that half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported and that sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods can substitute for all current uses for native forest and plantation hardwoods. Much post logging waste is left in the forest- ready fuel in the event of future fires. In the face of the climate catastrophe alternatives to timber poles are actively being introduced: see *Political fight sparks as electricity network axes timber power poles*, [\*Sydney Morning Herald, 27 June 2024\*](#). In 2022-3 of Styx RSF operations only 400m<sup>3</sup> out of 7,800m<sup>3</sup> was used for quality timber products – the remainder was quota pulp, salvage and firewood

First Nations communities, including The Thunghutti/Dunghutti people who have known the river valley from the saltwater coastal areas to the freshwater country of the Styx for aeons, have enduring connections to this area which must be respected; community should be empowered to exercise cultural authority to engage in protection and regeneration.

Recovering and protecting our forests is

- a way of ensuring water security guaranteeing for agriculture, fisheries, municipalities and tourism-in the case of The Styx contributing to the health of The Macleay River, [\*a river older than the hills\*](#) and one of the oldest rivers in the world;
- a way of saving invaluable resources until they can be better understood (particularly pharmaceutical) and
- an important tool in mitigating the climate catastrophe by removing the equivalent of 840 thousand cars from the roads per year and releasing 3,6 million tonnes of carbon every year and creating a resilient carbon sink and bushfire barrier.