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Topic 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Native forestry operations in NSW are not and never have been sustainable. Prior to sitting down and completing this submission I have just watched, on SBS on Demand, the second episode of Julia Zemiro's documentary on Australian walks, in which she visits Dorrigo in northern NSW, and Dorrigo National Park. Red Cedars were logged to such an extent during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that there are now very few left. This illustrates how we have exploited Australia's natural resources since colonisation, and there is no sign that anything has changed since then.

In her SBS Dorrigo episode Julia Zemiro also refers to plans (by the NSW Forestry Corporation) to log a previously unlogged area in the headwaters of the Bellingen River. As with the current logging of the planned NSW Great Koala National Park in northern NSW this appears to be a cynical attempt to log as much as possible before this Inquiry is completed. How does this fit in with NSW and Australian commitments to climate targets? As well as sustainability and obligations to protect endangered species? Clean water and pollution commitments? I would like to see a moratorium on logging native forest in NSW from now until the NSW Government makes a decision based on the report of the Forestry Panel.

While the NSW Forestry Commission claims that its operations are sustainable, it is clear that the Commission has exaggerated the financial viability of native forest logging and NSW has been subsidising native forestry operations for years, if not decades. The yield from the logging of native forests in NSW has declined by 40% since 2010, which I believe is evidence of the extent to which the state's forestry operations have decimated our forests.

In my opinion the benefits of ceasing NSW native forestry logging will be massive. At present native forestry logging constitutes a large scale threat to the state's endangered plant and wildlife species. Many species of birds such as owls and parrots of all kinds rely on old growth native trees for nesting sites and for raising their young. Mammals such as koalas and Greater Gliders cannot live without native food and nesting trees. Without these forests, endangered species are unable to reproduce and face extinction. I find this ongoing destruction of our NSW native forests immoral and unjustifiable.

Another aspect in which native forests logging is unsustainable is the fact that research (quoted by Dr David Lindenmeyer) has shown that logged forest is more susceptible to bushfire owing to the amount of rubbish which is left behind in the forests after logging operations. Regrowth is also more susceptible to bushfire than mature old-growth trees which are left in place along with the original bushland habitat.

The native forests of NSW belong to us, the people, rather than the state which has historically proven itself to be so negligent in its custodianship of our unique natural heritage.

Topic 2. Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values

As a fourth generation (post-colonial) Australian I can say that our NSW native forests play an important role in my sense of happiness, identity & heritage. I have visited, bushwalked & camped

in native forests in all parts of the state. It is emotionally draining to face the fact that so much of our environment is threatened with extinction and there appears to be little that we can do about it, either on a national or state basis. Healthy native forests play a restorative role for both physical and mental health in the human population, which is suffering from record levels of stress.

At present continental Australia's unique flora and fauna face an extinction crisis. This was well documented by the report of the federal Samuel Inquiry several years ago, and very little has been done since then on a federal level. Of 269 nationally listed threatened species found in NSW 150 of these are directly impacted by the logging of native forests which they rely on for habitat. We cannot rely on federal government action to save these threatened species on a state or national basis. Therefore we ourselves must carry out the urgent action which is required in this state. Native forest logging must cease now.

Healthy mature native forests also contribute to the health of the environment well outside of the forests. They contribute to the health of the waterways and water supply which our cities rely on, moderate the warming climate, contribute to air quality and counteract pollution, and contribute to the storage and reduction of carbon emissions.

These values are equally important to First Nations people. In particular, NSW forests and landscape contain a multitude of First Nations cultural sites, mostly kept secret from the outside world. Therefore members of First Nations tribes must suffer greatly from the ongoing degradation of the forests through logging and of course the general carelessness with which they are treated. Cessation of logging, combined with the preservation and restitution of the forests would, I believe, contribute greatly to the happiness and self-esteem of our state's First Nations people.

Our native forests should be cherished and loved for what they represent in themselves rather than their dubious economical value, as a unique ecosystem of interdependent medium to old-growth trees, plants, birds and wildlife. Reviving and caring for our forests could be an important way for our society to reach some kind of reconciliation with our destructive history, and with the original inhabitants who have lost so much.

Topic 3. Demand for timber products, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail

Not only is logging in native forests uneconomical and relies on state subsidies in order to survive, but it does not serve any essential purpose in the products which it supplies.

In my opinion, the most egregious factor in this sorry tale is the fact that so much, half of all the logs - produced from our precious native forest goes into woodchips which are exported for the production of packaging. To our shame, this has been the case for many decades.

I first became aware of the export of woodchips for packaging from NSW native forests in the mid 1980s when I joined and worked with the South East Forests Alliance for some months. I find it unbelievable that this is still happening! It is amazing that there is anything left of the forests, and I suspect there is indeed very little.

Along with this, only 9% of total log production in Australia during 2023 came from logging in native forests. Very little of the hardwood produced by native forests goes towards the uses specified in the heading of this section. Therefore softwoods from plantations can meet these needs.

However I would specify that softwood plantations should not replace native forests which have been cleared in order to accommodate them, as appears to have happened in parts of the state. There is no reason why plantations cannot be placed on farmland which has already been cleared. Hardwood plantations can also play an important role in the production of timber for the above uses.

Topic 4. The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs

The previous entry, on Point 3, shows that logging in publicly owned native forests produces little of real value and requires unjustifiable & uneconomic subsidies from the NSW taxpayers in order to survive. Already the vast majority of Australia's log production comes from either hardwood or softwood plantations, many privately owned. For the reasons covered in Points 1 & 2, wood production in NSW needs to shift from publicly owned native forests to plantations on previously cleared private land. This would be sufficient to provide timber products to meet our economy's timber needs.

I would also like to see that Privately owned native forests are documented prior to logging so that high value old growth forest on private land is assessed for its conservation value. Often areas of native forest on private land have high conservation value and must be conserved as wildlife refuges. Private landowners must not be penalised if this takes place. In fact they should be paid sufficiently so that conservation becomes worthwhile.

There is a great potential, in my opinion, for the sustainable use of wood today in similar uses that occurred in the past (but without the destruction of the forests.) If wood and paper products were to replace plastic which is so environmentally damaging there would be less pollution; hopefully wooden products would be prized and maintained rather than treated as disposable.

Topic 5. 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

The possibility of native forests playing an important part in local tourism has been underplayed for many years. There are many areas of NSW (such as the northwest and central west) which have few or no National Parks and tourism is limited through lack of natural venues for camping, bushwalking, leisure walking, swimming and sightseeing. I am sure that international as well as local tourists would welcome the opportunity to visit native forests outside of the coastal cities. Tasmania has made much greater use of natural scenery contained in reserves with developed bushwalks leading to waterfalls or views.

I would like to see as many areas of public native forest turned into conservation reserves and National Parks. It is time that expenditure on national parks and the environment is viewed as a debt that our economy has owed since European settlement and exploitation. Basically our economy has taken the continent's natural resources for nothing, and benefited without thinking about ecological sustainability.

Wildlife habitat such as Koala habitat is another aspect of native forests which could be 'developed' in an appropriate manner for the public to visit and enjoy but not by private enterprise, which I would strongly object to. Unfortunately it appears that the present emphasis by NSW Forestry is to demolish native forest habitat for wildlife.

I would strongly object to preserved native forests being 'developed' for private walking trails and resorts. In my opinion our society should pay, through the public purse, for the regeneration of native forests once logging has ceased. This would also be part of the debt which we owe to First Nations peoples having taken away their country and culture. I have heard that there is a problem in NSW regional towns with the demoralised First Nations (and Australian) young people, who have so few opportunities for employment and integration into local communities. First Nations Ranger programs and expanded tourism could play an important role in revitalising country towns.

The preservation and regeneration of native forests would have important benefits for the environment, ecology and sustainability of local areas as well as the state.

Topic 6. 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

Flora of all kinds and in particular minimally disturbed native forests are important carbon sinks. Therefore the greater the disturbance, destruction and clearing, the greater the loss of stored carbon into the atmosphere. In NSW this adds up to 3.6 million tonnes of carbon released every year as a result of native forest logging, and all for the sake of the production of packaging. This stored carbon would be retained once native forest logging ceases, and would make an important contribution to our state meeting its emissions reduction target.

Maintaining our NSW native forests and other native habitats (such as wetlands, arid lands, etc) in good, undisturbed condition would also contribute significantly to heat reduction on a local and global basis. The forests would be more resilient and resistant to wildfires, as well as providing high quality habitat for native wildlife.

I would like to see native forest logging ended not only because it makes no sense economically, but because our native forests have environmental and cultural value in themselves, and because all of us will be the losers if logging continues to the point where they are wiped out entirely. I would like to see the current state government develop a sense of urgency in making a decision on this matter, then following through with a moratorium on native forest logging brought in immediately while the Forestry Panel deliberates on its report.

I would also like to see the NSW Forestry 'Corporation' replaced by an independent body which is tasked with the assessment and protection of all our native forests which exist outside of National Parks. In short, the curation. So that the forests are considered and managed for their own protection, for the benefit of native species and the people of NSW, rather than as part of an 'Industry'. Let us move on from this laziness in exploiting our natural resources without taking any responsibility for their survival and flourishing.