

SCOTT HAWKES

Submission ID: 203096

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**Organisation:** N/A

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**Location:** New South Wales

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**Supporting materials uploaded:** N/A

Submission date: 10/7/2024 9:36:03 PM

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

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The habitats created by native forests take many decades to form (well over 30 years) and are complex in their structure. They are comprised of old trees (the targets of logging activity), young trees & shrub level plant life providing food and shelter for species adapted to forests. Logging native forests removes the older trees, removing hollows and all other habitat for forest wildlife. Current levels of logging are not sustainable and result in the total removal of key habitat. Patches of land previously logged are usually not allowed to recover to their prior states, either utilised for other purposes or slated for logging again once trees have become suitably large. The unsustainable nature of current and future native forestry logging is further undermined when the increased risk of severe fire is considered. We have seen how damaging such events can be in the 2019/2020 fires and do not know when or where the next severe fire events will happen. Continued logging will likely contribute greatly to the extinction of forest dependent wildlife as the habitats they depend on gradually disappear and random fire events strike the areas that are suppose to be protected.

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

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Forests are vital refuges for many threatened species that rely on mature, intact forests. Our environmental landscape needs to be diverse with changes to forest lands impacting surrounding areas as well. Forests provide important services for the environment landscape including habitat connectivity, supporting biodiversity and overall ecosystem health. Native forests also have great value for regional communities. Directly, native forests provide recreational values for locals and visitors, they also have cultural and spiritual significance especially for indigenous communities. Indirectly, native forests improve water quality and flow regulation, the benefits of which not only help regional towns with management of their water supplies but also improve fishing and tourism. The value of native forests is made so much greater from the benefits that extend well beyond the boundaries of the spaces slated for logging, yet this value is rarely if ever considered.

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

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The demand for timber products can be more sustainably managed through plantations which can supply the necessary high quality and composite timber products. Plantations are purpose built environments where trees can be selected for their timber qualities and growth rates making them a more reliable source of timber for businesses without further harming the environment. There is no longer any need to log public native forests to build houses. The timber demands from housing, construction, mining, transport and retail can all be well met by plantations and an expanding array of alternative and sustainable products that can be substitutes for timber. Hardwood and softwood plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production. Shifting to 100% will require some expansion of plantations, however will have an overall substantially smaller environmental impact than continuing to log native forests.

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

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Investment in hardwood and softwood plantations on already cleared land should be encouraged in order to supply timber products into the future. Additionally by placing a greater value on the use of plantations the logging industry can shift towards the creation of higher-value plantations that can better meet timber needs of consumers. The continuation of Private Native Forestry should not be necessary in the long term but could provide a buffer in the event of an immediate end to Public Native Forestry activities. Ideally for the sustainability of larger ecosystems Private Native Forestry activities would also one day cease and the hope is that one day, over the next 30 years, timber supply in NSW will be 100% sourced from softwood and hardwood plantations.

#### **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**

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Protecting and restoring State Forests will be vital to deliver benefits from environmental, economic and social perspectives. Protected State Forests increase the local and regional economic value of the area through tourism and recreational opportunities. This brings local jobs and encourages Australian's and people from across the world to choose regional Australia as a destination to visit and spend their money. Being able to protect and manage State Forests is a vital opportunity to deliver healthier native forests that will in turn provide essential habitats for recovering populations of endangered forest wildlife, such as the Koala and the Great Glider. State Forests give us a chance to not only prevent further harm to the wider ecosystem but to also attempt to rebuild it, changing the story from one of conservation to one of regeneration and enhancement. Vital to the achievement of these goals through State Forests is properly managing these spaces. Diverse forest management, including Aboriginal models, can enhance the cultural and social value of forests as well as achieve the economic and environmental outcomes we need. A key example of this is how changing our approach to fire management to better align with Aboriginal practices substantially reduces the risk that severe fires pose to native state forests and the surrounding landscape.

#### **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**

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Logging in native forests releases large amounts of carbon, not just from the logged trees but also from the rest of the forest plant life destroyed in the process. By simply stopping logging we avoid the bulk of the carbon release and allow forests to recover, helping them store more carbon. Combined with responsible fire management in line with Aboriginal practices native forests can be safe and effective carbon storage assets that can help us balance greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy native forests are essential for reducing the impacts of climate change like wildfires and drought. Biodiversity within native forests is both the strength it holds to survive climate change and the benefit of proper management instead of logging. The healthiest of native forests are often rich with biodiversity and the least vulnerable to climate change. One of the most direct actions that can be taken to manage the impact of climate change for ourselves is to strengthen our ecosystems, improving their resilience and boosting the roles they play in the natural cycles that form our climate.