

VAUGHAN JENNER

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**Organisation:** *Albert Johnson Pty Ltd*

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**Location:** *New South Wales*

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

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Sustainable forestry is needed to support the significant economic benefits of the industry. There are improvements that can be made to current practices to make the industry more sustainable. Over the past few years there have been weather and disaster events (flood and bushfire) that have limited timber supply with flow on effects for local employment and industries that rely on a consistent supply (construction, mining). A more sustainable industry would include more diverse geographical locations where there are State forests and private native forests that could provide alternate sources of supply. Selective harvesting is one of the more sustainable methods of forestry. There is a place for plantations, but it would not be economically feasible to wholly transition to this source of timber supply. Also I think there are many benefits to consistently renewing our forests.

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

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Our timber mill has been operating for over 100 years in the coastal town of Karuah and it is an important part of the cultural and heritage fabric of the place. We have employed generations of families in this town and surrounds and my family has operated the mill for 3 generations. When the community of Karuah was asked by Port Stephens Council to describe the local character of the town, the majority of submissions referred to 'timber'. Each year, the community hold the Karuah Oyster and Timber Festival, where the contribution of the industry to the town and our community is celebrated. This year, the Timber Festival will be held on 19 October and the Panel would be welcome to attend and hear from our community.

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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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Our mill almost exclusively provides timber to mining and heavy industries. The demand for timber from these industries has grown exponentially. These industries need Australian hardwood timber because of the specific anisotropic properties of the material. There are few other materials in the world that would be applicable for these applications. Hardwood timber is used in our engineered products because it can withstand heavy loading through the plastic deformation stage while still maintaining structural integrity. It is used in our products engineered for underground mine roof supports, heavy vehicle or other load supports, crane and heavy lift supports. We have an onsite research and development lab where we test the load bearing properties of our hardwood products and the Panel would be very welcome to visit to understand the nature of our mill and the unique hardwood products we supply NSW industries with. This research has led to a new product that is patented in over 30 countries and has large export potential. The federal government has awarded Albert Johnson Pty Ltd with a grant to build a commercial sized production facility of this new product. Without a sustainable supply of NSW hardwood, the impacts on the mining industry, transport industry and other industries would be devastating.

#### **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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A diverse range of sources of timber are needed to sustain the supply of timber in NSW. Recent flood and bushfire events have shown that private native forestry is needed as well as more diverse geographic locations of timber sources to guarantee a sustainable supply. Hardwood plantations will have a role in future forestry however they are not feasible as a replacement for private native forestry or selective harvesting of State forests. Hardwood plantations have less desirable economic, social and environmental impacts than selective harvesting of State forests or private native forests. Plantations cannot offer sustainable habitat for threatened species and other flora and fauna and have significant detrimental impact on biodiversity. Plantations have significant economic impacts as they require significant investment without return for a number of years. Plantations also have negative social impacts as they require complete destruction of a place. Sustainable harvesting retains the forest and the forest remains useable for other uses and enjoyment when harvesting is not being undertaken.

#### **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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State forests have significant potential to better contribute to social, environmental and economic outcomes. Management of State forests through sustainable harvesting contributes to the economy, but also significant social and environmental benefits. Bushfire risks are reduced by maintaining State forest roads and sustainable harvesting. The role of state forests provides the community with a valuable material, reduces the net present value of managing and protecting the estate from fires, pests and other threats and provides for forest renewal. There is also an opportunity to work with local Aboriginal Land Councils to incorporate cultural burning practices in the management of State forests ('cool burns'). State forests are a significant asset for NSW and any plan for their future should consider the economic, social and environmental benefits proper management of these assets can create.

#### **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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I think there is a great opportunity for State Forest to work on a forest renewal program. This program would entail working to enable harvesting and regenerating with a view to modify or improve the forest in the outcomes that are being sought. In relation to carbon the production of wood fibre once the transport and processing is being powered by renewable energy will be a net carbon sink. The harvesting will contribute to an increase in the carbon absorption from the atmosphere. The harvesting will also allow a renewal component where the areas harvested can be replanted with a new mix of species that can potentially increase the biodiversity benefits of that part of the forest. This renewal could over time potentially also yield benefits that can be capitalised through biodiversity markets. Without a renewal aspect to the forest management it would be almost impossible to modify the forest to engineer new outcomes or to deal with new challenges such as the risk of climate change.