

Public submission

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Dear members of the Forestry Industry Action Plan,

I would like to make a case for the immediate and permanent cessation of native forest logging in NSW. I have worked in environment for a number of years now including many field trips within NSW and have seen the destruction and devastation that the existing deforestation within NSW has caused for our biodiversity, ranging from the silence of so much of a once-vibrant landscape of birds, mammals and invertebrate lifeforms to a landscape that supports only exotic groundcovers and can barely support livestock or halt the erosion and further degradation.

Native forest logging is no longer sustainable and has not been for a long time, with tax payers subsidising an industry that is no longer profitable. Operational costs (labour, fuel etc) are increasing with longer haulage distances and harvesting of increasingly remote areas, and associated risks of the practices such as bushfires and higher regulatory and compliance risks are steadily getting worse. Further, the market for native logs has shrunk over time. The value in our timber industry is now solely in plantations and not within old-growth forests. Old growth forests have far more value as carbon sinks, critical habitat for so many native and threatened species within Australia (who are steadily becoming threatened and extinct through land clearing) and through their contribution to healthy ecosystems and waterways.

Native forests within NSW provide critical habitat for so many native flora and fauna including almost 1000 threatened species, many of which are currently hanging on the brink of extinction due to land clearing and clearing of their critical habitats. Old growth forests provide abundant resources including hollows, extensive live and dead branches, bark and deadwood accumulation, foliage and foraging resources which simply cannot be replaced through planting of saplings or seeding of trees that will take decades and often centuries to accumulate a similar habitat value. We are devastating a landscape that is older and more important than we can possibly comprehend at a pace and capacity that is irreversible and irrecoverable. The loss of a native flora or fauna species from the landscape which once was unthinkable has now become a regular and ongoing threat in NSW. This is completely unnecessary and can be halted through critical actions such as the cessation of old growth forest clearing.

Wood supply from logging of native forests in Australia has reduced by over 60% since the early 2000s and evidence from the past two decades suggests that the majority of substitute products for native forest logging are likely to be derived from plantations. This includes both solid wood products (with hardwood being substituted for plantation softwood) and woodchips (with native woodchip supply has largely been supplemented with plantation woodchips, either from Australian or Southeast Asia). Native forest logging is currently providing a financial loss and strong budgetary burden for the state and simply is not necessary, considering the much more productive industry of existing plantation operations.

Further, old growth native forests are critical for the ongoing storage of carbon and removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while logging old-growth forests continues to increase carbon emissions. Logged forests contain hugely reduced carbon stocks, even when accounting for storage in wood products and landfills. The cessation of logging and retention of old growth forests would consequently be an important form of carbon sequestration. Intact forests which are not logged are also more resilient to wildfires than logged forests and can provide critical refuges for the native biodiversity they support. Native forest retention is likely to be a critical tool in limiting NSW contribution to climate change and balancing against key threats from climate change (such as wildfires). It is crucial that more thought is allocated to the

harm that this practice is creating for our climate and ecosystems before these valuable resources are removed.

Personally, I want to highlight the intergenerational inequality that the decision to continue logging old-growth forests has created. I would dearly love to continue to learn and understand these amazingly diverse ecosystems and to show them to future generations for as long as possible. It's not too late to make some changes for the better and to move the state forward in a positive and meaningful way.

Thankyou for providing me with the opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely,



Alicia Palmer

References used:

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