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

Living within the southern forests region of NSW, I'm acutely aware of the risks and hazards the FCNSW native forest logging sectors exposes our communities and our state to; environmental, economic and social.

I'm approaching 'sustainability' here in a broad sense rather than only ecologically. In communities like mine where people are calling for an end to native forest logging and a just transition to 100% plantations, I am aware of the lament of job losses when this part of the hardwood sector closes. However numerous industries in transition (see WA native forest logging transition) have shown that many jobs are transferable and in this instance more jobs will be created when our forests are instead managed for their carbon reserves, biodiversity, cultural and recreational features.

We've seen other states act on this because of the damning economic case against the NFL sector. Former WA Premier Mark McGowan put it simply, whilst acknowledging also that our public forest estate is critical in the fight against climate change:

“By transitioning more of the forestry industry to sustainable timber products like softwood, we are investing in WA's future, supporting the construction and forestry industries, and our regional communities. Protecting this vital asset is critical in the fight against climate change.”
Guardian 8th Sept 2021

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/08/western-australia-to-ban-native-forest-logging-from-2024-in-move-that-blindsides-industry?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other&fbclid=IwAR0lR9-f-YmJEOW6XYP1q342YayY5_mdb6kekJLwezI1_kA1FF8XKuijo

While the NSW government continues to prop up the FCNSW loss-making hardwood sector as our forests are exported as low value woodchips, this impedes the growth and productivity of the plantation sector of our forestry industry, where our resources should be concentrated for sustainable supply of higher value timber products. I've read that in 2014 ANU forest economist Dr. Judith Ajani's work showed that the FCNSW's profits could have been 70% to 80% higher without the 'albatross' of the native forest sector.

The costs and losses here are both unsustainable and unacceptable. NSW residents are wearing the cost for this logging many times over; first through the environmental damage, then through the economic hit to public finances, again by funding (albeit insufficiently) and EPA to monitor logging practices and penalise FCNSW with fines where breaches occur. We also bear the devastating loss of biodiversity and our key mitigation asset in climate change - carbon sequestration in intact forest communities.

I refer again to Dr. Judith Ajani, in papers referenced in their 2011 Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry : Australia's forestry industry.

“In 'forestry', so called win-win outcomes require rethinking 'balance'. We should abandon the 'multiple use' approach to native forests (more recently rebranded 'ecologically sustainable forest management') and replace it with a policy frame of allocating land to the job it does best. Native

forests do biodiversity conservation/carbon storage like no other biological land use and plantations generate high quality wood for scale economy processing better than native forests. There in lies the 'win-win' (Papers A&B).â€œ

https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=arff/forestry/subs/sub1.pdf

The only responsible thing for the Government to do is to plot an urgent way out of native forest logging that supports workers to transition to the financially rewarding plantation industry as well as jobs to come in forest protection, recreation and tourism, including cultural tourism.

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

Current levels of logging are not sustainable, particularly in light of the human-induced extinction and biodiversity crises we are living in. Native forest logging poses an unacceptable threat to the maintenance of key habitats for forest dependent wildlife, especially those requiring mature hollow-bearing trees for their survival. This includes the critically endangered Swift Parrot, the endangered Greater Glider.

Continued logging of native forests in NSW will be recorded as one of the primary contributors to the extinction of these species.

In what should be the last year of native forest logging in NSW, we must see the provisions of the federal EPBC Act applied to logging operations ie. the exemptions currently applied to the Regional Forest Agreements currently in place must be removed.

As was recommended in the Henry Review of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, strong biodiversity conservation and repair laws and policies must take primacy over planning, development and land use laws and policies.

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

On the NSW south coast we see our public forest estate logged for low value products like woodchips for export, briquettes and pallets. We know that the construction industry relies on the softwood timber products from the plantation sector, so calls for continued native forest logging for construction to build us out of the housing crisis are baseless.

The transition to a plantation-based industry is well underway, with around 90% of our timber needs already being met by current plantations. We must hasten the end of native forest logging - let's meet our housing needs with an efficient plantation sector and leave forests containing hollow-bearing trees as habitat (aka housing) for our native fauna.

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

Our forests industry should move away from native forest logging as soon as possible, as both WA and Victoria have done this decade, and instead seek commercial viability in the plantation sector where plantation products are processed domestically to maximise the economic benefits for regional communities.

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

There is a solid body of peer-reviewed papers by forest ecologist Professor David Lindenmayer, fire ecologist Dr. Phil Zylstra and others showing how logged native forests are susceptible to higher severity bushfires. This then compounds the existing threat to the maintenance of key

habitats for forest dependent wildlife and one of our best resources for climate change mitigation - intact forest communities. Our forest estate needs to be managed for fire mitigation based on the evidence we have for managing landscapes under the changing regimes of climate change. To my understanding, that does not include the native forest logging schedule as undertaken by FCNSW in recent decades.

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

We must consider within the context of ongoing and intensifying environmental challenges including declining biodiversity and climate change that our best future management of native forests will be for mitigation of those converging crises.

When our public forest estate is truly managed for its immense worth in environmental services, our communities will gain from intact forest systems conferring benefits in carbon sequestration and storage, better resilience to bushfires and drought, and the provision of secure habitat for our flora and fauna. Repeating my quoted point in the Sustainability section of this submission:

‘Native forests do biodiversity conservation/carbon storage like no other biological land use.’
The role intact native forests can play in mitigating climate risks and providing opportunities in global carbon markets should not be underestimated.