

Public submission

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Submission ID: 203844

Organisation: *N/A*

Location: *New South Wales*

Supporting materials uploaded: *Attached overleaf*

Submission date: 10/10/2024 3:28:06 PM

Submission to the Independent Forestry Panel: The Devastation of Native Forest Logging in NSW

To the members of the Independent Forestry Panel,

I am writing to express my profound concerns regarding the senseless destruction of New South Wales' native forests through ongoing logging operations. As a passionate advocate for environmental conservation, I urge the Panel to recognise that the current approach to forestry in NSW is both unsustainable and irreversibly harmful to our state's unique ecosystems, biodiversity, and future generations.

For far too long, native forests in NSW have been treated as mere resources to be exploited for short-term economic gain, ignoring the deep environmental value these forests hold. The notion that we can continue logging native forests in a "sustainable" manner is misguided when we consider the irreversible damage being done to our wildlife, water catchments, carbon stores, and local communities. The time has come for a complete reassessment of this destructive practice, particularly when we have viable alternatives, such as plantation forestry and eco-tourism, that offer long-term benefits without the tragic loss of our irreplaceable native forests.

Unsustainable Logging and the Loss of Biodiversity

Our native forests are home to countless species that depend on the delicate balance of these ecosystems. The Greater Glider, for example, once thrived in the canopies of forests like Bulga State Forest, but its habitat is rapidly disappearing due to logging. This is not just a tragedy for the Greater Glider—it is a warning sign of the larger collapse of biodiversity in our forests.

Logging not only destroys habitats but also fragments them, leaving isolated patches of forest that cannot support viable populations of endangered species. What we are seeing is the slow, painful extinction of species that have existed for millions of years, and no amount of replanting or "offsetting" can bring back the rich, complex ecosystems we are losing. Once these species are gone, they are gone forever. This is not sustainability; it is environmental devastation.

Economic Myths and the Promise of Eco-tourism

It is often argued that logging is essential to provide timber and jobs for local communities, but the truth is that the timber extracted from native forests is of low value, often ending up as wood chips or paper pulp. Plantation forests can easily provide the timber we need without sacrificing our priceless native ecosystems. In fact, the economic contribution of native forest logging is a fraction of what could be generated through sustainable alternatives like eco-tourism.

NSW has an incredible opportunity to embrace eco-tourism as a major industry, one that would create jobs, support local communities, and protect our natural heritage. People come from around the world to experience Australia's unique wildlife, ancient forests, and pristine landscapes. Imagine the economic potential of preserving these forests, promoting them as destinations for hiking, wildlife tours, and education, rather than chopping them down for short-term profits. By transitioning to plantation forestry and investing in eco-tourism, we can create sustainable, long-lasting economic benefits while also fulfilling our environmental commitments.

Carbon Storage and Climate Resilience

Our native forests are some of the most effective carbon stores on the planet. Every tree felled releases carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change at a time when we should be

doing everything in our power to reduce emissions. Forests also play a crucial role in regulating our water systems, protecting soils, and providing resilience against the worsening impacts of droughts, floods, and bushfires.

Logging these forests is not just a blow to biodiversity—it is a blow to our climate resilience and our ability to meet our international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. How can we claim to be serious about addressing climate change while allowing the destruction of these vital carbon sinks?

A Call for an Immediate End to Native Forest Logging

I strongly urge the Panel to recommend an immediate cessation of all logging in native forests in NSW. The destruction of our forests cannot be justified on environmental, economic, or moral grounds. We must transition to a future where we protect our forests, nurture biodiversity, and support industries that are truly sustainable.

The world is watching. Our children are watching. The decisions made by this Panel will have consequences that last far beyond our lifetimes. It is time for NSW to lead by example, to choose a path that prioritises the environment, the well-being of our communities, and the future of our planet.

I implore you to act boldly and decisively. The forests need you. The wildlife needs you. Future generations need you. Stop the senseless destruction of our native forests—before it is too late.

Sincerely,
Belinda Somers