

BRONWYN VOST

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

Logging native forest is not sustainable unless the harvesting is extremely delicate and selective, and the cycle is as long as the age of the oldest tree taken. This is so far from current practice in NSW that it is possible to say that forestry operations in NSW are completely unsustainable. Since a forest is an ecosystem, destruction of one element (removal of mature trees) affects every other element.

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

The environmental values of forests are literally endless since they produce the air that we breathe and the clean water that all life depends on.

Forests absorb carbon as they grow and store it safely. The safest carbon storage is a damp forest of big old trees, not a young forest which has regrown after logging. This type of forest is more susceptible to fire than old-growth forest, which typically resists bushfire.

Forests are ecosystems which provide habitat for many more species than we are aware of at the present time, not just those we know of as attractive to people or threatened with extinction. We must keep them intact to preserve the web of life, which includes fungi, insects and micro-organisms in the soil.

Forest ecosystems are cooler environments than cleared land, but the surrounding cleared land benefits from the cooling effect many kilometres away.

Humans evolved in forests, and we respond with better mental health when we have access to them. First Nations cultures in Australia, the oldest continuous cultures in the world, are attached to some forests which still exist, an almost unique situation on the planet. We must preserve the forests to preserve the culture.

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

There is no longer any need to log public native forests for building. Most of the timber used in housing construction is pine from softwood plantations. Hardwood plantations on disused grazing land can supply our high quality timber. There are existing mature eucalypt plantations in the Mid North Coast region ready to be sold to the construction sector at a fair price. Native forest logging has artificially cheapened the value of hardwood timber because it can be obtained "free" from state forests by Forestry Corporation.

Large solid logs can and should be replaced by composite timber beams. These are now used in high-rise buildings such as Sydney's Barangaroo Tower. Cement power poles are now increasingly being favoured over timber because of their resistance to bushfire.

Shifting to plantation timber reduces pressure on native forests, supporting sustainable industry practices

## **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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Hardwood and softwood plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production. Investment in hardwood plantations on already cleared land can and should supply high quality timber products. Logging of native forest on private land should be banned at the same time and for the same reasons as that on public land. Ending public forest subsidies would boost sustainable timber plantations on private land.

## **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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The Hardwood (native forest) Division of Forestry Corporation is currently financially unsustainable, relying on government support and yielding less timber compared to the Softwood (pine plantations) Division. It would therefore make sense to disband the native forest division and concentrate on providing more jobs and more timber from plantations. Protecting and restoring State Forests will create jobs and increase their economic value through tourism and recreational opportunities. This is additional to the unlimited environmental and cultural values listed above in Section 2.

## **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, contributing to climate change. Stopping logging allows forests to recover, helping them store more carbon and support climate goals. Keeping old-growth forests unlogged is the best and safest way to store carbon. Old forests are much less likely to catch fire than younger less intact forests which have been damaged by logging. Simply keeping the carbon in the trees by halting logging will allow NSW to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by the legislated 43 % by 2030 (unless other sources of emissions, such as new coal mines, cause them to increase). Healthy forests are essential for reducing the impacts of climate change like bushfires and drought.