

Public submission

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Organisation: *Campbell Sawmills*

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Campbells Sawmill Submission South Grafton

Topic 1 Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Hardwood forestry is a sustainable and important industry in NSW.

Forest workers care about forests. We'd argue more than any greens political party member. Not only are forests important natural resources, but they are also the lifeblood of our communities and families.

The forestry industry has been managing forests around here for the last 150 years and there is still an abundance of native fauna and flora in every forest you visit in this area. With ongoing care, sustainable harvesting and forest & bushfire management there will still be great forests in the Clarence Valley 150 years into the future.

Our forestry community sees beauty in the forest. They are the true tree lovers. They care for the continued health of the environment they work in, the ongoing regeneration of the areas that are harvested and the defense of protected areas and sites marked as culturally significant. The preservation of environment and culture are not in opposition with responsible forestry.

People should come to visit the Clarence Valley where you can see areas that have been responsibly logged. There has been logging round here for more than a century, but you would never know it driving around. There are so many big trees, old trees, healthy trees. The bush is thriving but city people don't know that, They see politically driven campaigns with incorrect inferences alongside pictures that **do not** demonstrate sustainably harvested areas in NSW and develop a false idea of the work of the industry is doing.

Timber as a resource is a valuable commodity, this is even more reason for the industry to do well by the forests. No forests in the future means no food on the table for our families. Unfortunately, timber workers are not generally Facebook forward. They are not regularly developing widespread campaigns or petitions, they are highly skilled blue collar workers, going to work making a living for their families, they do not have time to tell their stories and get their message out.

We are open to people from the inquiry panel visiting our business and encourage them to visit with as many mills and loggers as possible to get real time, hands on information about the industry.

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

NSW state forests are extensively mapped for threatened species and protected fauna and flora. Similarly in private native forestry, there is tight regulation before the government gives permission to harvest. Most of the forestry families are respectful of aboriginal heritage and cultural sites.

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

Our company, Campbell Sawmills, is located in South Grafton. We're a second generation family business that has been working in the NSW hardwood timber industry for 40 years.

We process timber harvested on private land and from State Forests. Approx 70% of the logs we mill come from private land.

Campbell Sawmills produce timbers for the flooring of new homes, structural building and construction timbers in all shapes and sizes, large end timbers including for bridge-building, railway sleepers and garden timbers. Our construction, flooring, & building timbers mostly go to Sydney & Brisbane. Landscape timber goes to Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Melbourne and our railway timbers are used all along the NSW coast, throughout rural QLD and Victoria.

We maximise the use of every log delivered to our site. After milling for the best sawn timber output, we process into a variety of biproducts to ensure that none of the resource goes unused, including mill residue, sawdust, wood chip and high-quality mixed species firewood.

We have paused plans to expand Campbell Sawmills. Even though sales of timber for house building is really increasing, we are not putting more money in to grow the business or employing more people because there is so much uncertainty. We are just waiting to see what happens. We have noticed that the demand for housing timbers, flooring and structural timbers has increased in recent years so it is essential that we continue to improve our mill to manufacture these high need timbers and support the building industry with local timber products as they continue to build homes for NSW residents.

We have been looking at what would happen if hardwood harvesting ended and can't see a way our business would survive. Our machinery is very specialised and can't be used to do other things. It would not be a good outcome for us.

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

We don't do harvesting work, we rely on trusted harvesting contractors and FCNSW. However, we do know that unless there is a huge investment into plantations over the next 50-60 years, the land is made available to purchase and develop into well planned hardwood plantations with guarantees that logging those plantations in the future will not be challenged, there is no way the hardwood supply can be anything other than state forests and private forestry.

The plantation forestry infrastructure in 2024 does not exist at a workable level. The actual number of plantations are just not there for plantation forestry to take over. You could start working on developing the required plantation infrastructure now and in a few decades maybe then you could have a mixture of plantations and native forests supplying the hardwood needed for building houses and construction.

If a premature jump is made to plantations now, skilled operators and workers will be pushed out of the industry, valuable knowledge and passionate people will be lost. By the time there is enough plantation timber to use, or the industry is reinstated in some other way there will be a huge shortfall in quality operators. Making room for less qualified, less knowledgeable people to come in at that time and attempt to harvest the resource and manage the forests. This is not the best outcome.

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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

Economically forestry is huge in regional towns like Grafton. A lot of the money in these areas is coming from the forestry industry. I don't know how you measure the impact that closure would have but it would be terrible for the Clarence Valley and the parts of rural NSW where the hardwood forestry industry is. The loss of fire management volunteers would also be felt by the community in times of need.

We have 18 full-time workers and 1 part-time. Some of our mill staff have experience of working at other mills or we train inexperienced people, new to the job onsite.

Many of our staff have young families and at least 50% of our staff have mortgages. They are all locals. Most are living in and around Grafton and a few are living on the coast. They are a great group of people who make our company what it is today, and we are very grateful for that. As a small family business, we are concerned about the future of our family and theirs.

If native forestry harvesting was ended by the government, nothing good would happen to our staff and their families or our community. A lot of our staff are low social economic status - they are skilled and extremely hard working - but locally there are not many other industries where they could get another job so they would probably end up relying on the government for assistance or leaving the area to look for work.

We purchase everything we can locally. Around 70% of our operating expenses are going to local businesses, plus all our staff salaries. Last financial year, our payroll was approx. \$1.4 million and general operating expenses another approx. \$1.7 million and the cost of purchasing timber was another approx. \$3.8 million. We are a close community and know our fellow mills and harvesters in the area also prioritise sourcing materials and services locally. If the spending from the whole industry was to leave the community it would be a significant blow to many local businesses.

We sponsor clubs and events to give back to the community like most of our fellow timber business in the area do, recently we've sponsored The South Grafton Rebels rugby league teams, adults and juniors. The local AFL team. A special children's Christmas Party in Coffs Harbou, local camp drafts and rodeos, wood chops at the show and timber exhibitions and that Jacaranda festival. As well as sponsoring young athletes in the past to help them in reaching their potential at sports academies etc.

Topic 6. Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity benefits, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risk to forests

Professional forest scientists will make comment on this.