

Public submission

COURTNEY BRIGHT

Submission ID: 205111

Organisation: *N/A*

Location: *Redacted*

Supporting materials uploaded: *Attached overleaf*

Submission date: 10/13/2024 7:25:28 PM

Dr Courtney Bright



Dear Independent Forestry Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to the Forestry Industry Action Plan.

I want to see an immediate end to native forest logging in NSW with a transition to sustainable plantation forestry. To ensure this transition is truly sustainable, I also want to see effective policies introduced to restrict new plantations to previously cleared land, and financial incentives for private land-owners to conserve and restore native vegetation on their properties.

I love nature; being outside in the forest or the mountains or the sea makes me happy. It turns out this isn't just me: studies have shown that being in "direct contact with natural environments" is good for our mood, mental health, and cognition [1]. But our natural world is being lost and degraded, with 75% of Earth's land surface significantly altered by human use [2]. We've lost 32% of the world's forests since pre-industrial times [2], 35% of wetlands since 1970 [3], and 14% of coral reefs since 2009 [4]. Globally, wildlife populations have declined by 69% since 1970 [5] and species extinction rates are accelerating [2]. Australia is not doing well on this metric—we rank 1st in the world for mammal extinctions [6]. There are currently 2,061 Australian species listed as threatened under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, with 103 of these already extinct [7].

In early 2023, I learned that native forests in NSW are still routinely logged. I was shocked—surely these practices are a thing of the past? How can we still be chopping down native forests during a climate and biodiversity crisis? Curious, I decided to start doing some research.

Through the Forestry Corporation of NSW's publicly available plan portal, I found that the closest native forest logging to home was happening in Tallaganda State Forest, only an hours' drive from Canberra. The Forestry Corporation of NSW's website describes their operations as sustainable. For example:

"We manage forests sustainably, so they remain healthy and productive today and continue to regrow and thrive for the future." [8]

"Forestry Corporation is certified to the Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management, Responsible Wood." [8]

"We are passionate about the forest environment and before we harvest a single tree, professional ecologists survey the wildlife, birdlife and vegetation in the area to identify threatened species and ensure the forest retains the conditions they need to thrive." [9]

So with an open mind, I mapped out a route in Tallaganda State Forest and invited some interested friends to join me for a hike.

We started our hike on South Forest Way, a few kilometres north of the logging compartment. The forest was beautiful and we were immediately greeted with lyrebird calls. Approaching the logging compartment, we eventually caught glimpses of cleared forest and logging machinery through the trees. This story is best told with photos (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Tallaganda State Forest, photo taken near where we started our hike.



Figure 2: Looking across a logging compartment in Tallaganda State Forest, photo taken in September 2023.

It's hard to describe how I felt seeing this destruction in person for the first time. It was confronting. I remember feeling as though I had a big lump in my chest. The logged sections were noticeably hot, dry, and sunny compared to the dense forest we'd walked through. You could still hear birds calling but it was much quieter. Robins flitted through piles of stripped bark. The bulldozed paths seemed to extend in all directions.

According to the Forestry Corporation of NSW, this is "selective harvesting" [11]. When I imagined what "selective harvesting" might look like before this hike, this isn't what I pictured. 7,500 cubic metres of timber were approved for removal from this compartment, with 47% as "high quality

sawlog”, 13% “low quality sawlog”, 27% pulp, and 13% firewood [10] (Figure 3). These numbers don’t account for the biomass left on the ground.

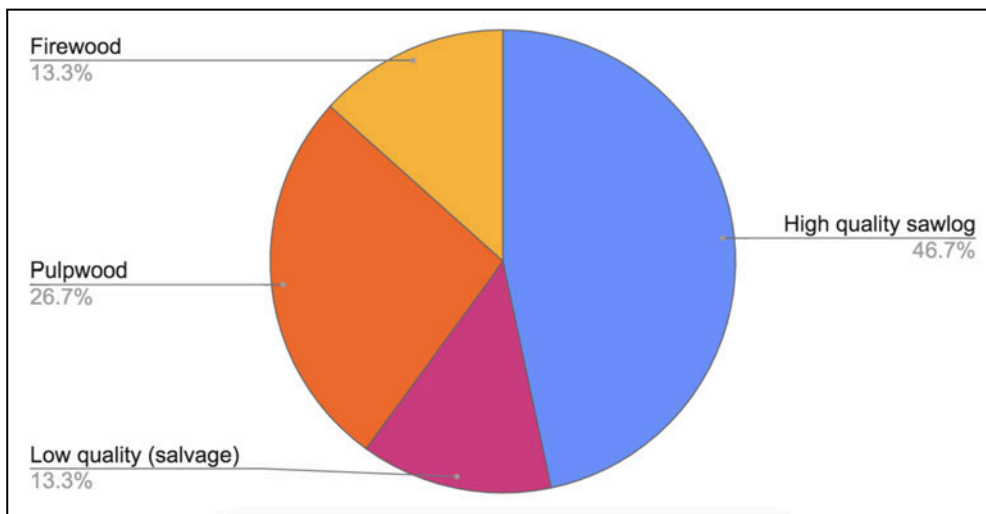


Figure 3: Expected yield from this logging compartment in Tallaganda State Forest. Graph produced with data from the Forestry Corporation’s harvest plan for this compartment [3]. These numbers don’t account for waste.

The Forestry Corporation of NSW identified this compartment as known or potential habitat for eight threatened species, three of which are endangered nationally—greater gliders, spotted-tailed quolls, and gang-gang cockatoos (Figure 4). Let’s recall the description of this process published on their website:

“We ... survey the wildlife, birdlife and vegetation in the area to identify threatened species and ensure the forest retains the conditions they need to thrive.” [9]

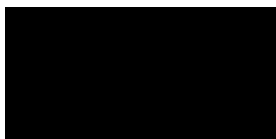
The following subject species have known or potential habitat in this operational area:	
Flora	
No species found	
Fauna	
<i>Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Flame Robin (<i>Petroica phoenicea</i>) – Nests
<i>Endangered (National), Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Gang-gang Cockatoo (<i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i>) – Nests
<i>Endangered (National), Endangered (NSW)</i>	→ Greater Glider (<i>Petauroides volans</i>) – Den
<i>Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Masked Owl (<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>) – Nest /Roost
<i>Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Powerful Owl (<i>Ninox strenua</i>) – Nest /Roost
<i>Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Scarlet Robin (<i>Petroica boodang</i>) – Nests
<i>Endangered (National), Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Spotted-tailed Quoll (<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>) – Dens/Latrine sites
<i>Vulnerable (NSW)</i>	→ Varied Sittella (<i>Daphoenositta chrysoptera</i>) – Nests
	Wedge-tailed Eagle (<i>Aquila audax</i>) – Stick nests

Figure 4: Species with known or potential habitat in this logging compartment, identified in the Forestry Corporation’s harvest plan [3]. This is a screenshot from the plan, with the current conservation status of each species added by me in blue.

We can do better than this. I know that humans need timber and paper, and people rely on this industry for their jobs. But these are not unsolvable problems. As a species we’ve developed a COVID-19 vaccine in less than a year, sequenced the human genome, and landed rovers on Mars. Call me an optimist, but I’m confident we can find a way to meet our resource needs without sacrificing critical habitats, and compassionately transition the affected workforce to plantation forestry or forest restoration.

I urge the members of the Independent Forestry Panel to think of our future generations when deciding whether or not to allow this destruction to continue in NSW.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Courtney Bright.

References

- [1] Parmesan, C., M.D. Morecroft, Y. Trisurat, R. Adrian, G.Z. Anshari, A. Arneth, Q. Gao, P. Gonzalez, R. Harris, J. Price, N. Stevens, and G.H. Talukdarr, 2022: Terrestrial and Freshwater Ecosystems and their Services. In: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 197–377, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.004.
- [2] IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) (2019) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [Brondizio ES, Settele J, Díaz S & Ngo HT (eds.)]. IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany.
- [3] Convention on Wetlands (2021) Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021. Gland, Switzerland: Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands.
- [4] Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) (2021) Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020 Report. [Souter, D., Planes, S., Wicquart, J., Logan, M., Obura, D., Staub, F. (eds.)]. doi:10.59387/WOTJ9184
- [5] WWF (2022) Living Planet Report 2022: Building a Nature Positive Society. [Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. & Petersen, T. (eds.)]. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.
- [6] IUCN (2022) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2022-2. Table 6a and 6b. Available at: <https://www.iucnredlist.org> (Accessed: 5 Nov 2023).
- [7] Department of the Environment (2023) In: Species Profile and Threats Database, Department of the Environment, Canberra. Available at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/sprat> (Accessed: 5 Nov 2023).
- [8] Forestry Corporation of NSW (2024) Sustainability. Available at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/sustainability> (Accessed 28 April 2024).
- [9] Forestry Corporation of NSW (2024) Ecology. Available at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/sustainability/forest-research> (Accessed 28 April 2024).

[10] Forestry Corporation of NSW (2022) Tallaganda SF Cpts 2447A to 2450A Harvesting & Rooding Plan Public Version 2. Available at:
<https://planportal.fcnsw.net/plan/13df2e3c-1b9e-42d2-8b2a-146cbe7ca7a7>.

[11] NSW Environment Protection Authority (2018) Timber Harvesting Limits. Available at:
<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/-/media/epa/corporate-site/resources/forestagreements/factsheet-proposed-changes-to-timber-harvesting.pdf> (Accessed 28 April 2024).