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

- Each operation may only eliminate a small amount of habitat, but each endorsement increases the region's susceptibility to more climate change effects and damage to the immediate natural environment.
- The notion that forest can be replaced with organised plantations is lacking in intelligent recognition of the complexity of habitats. We are not capable of re-creating organic, functioning forest as we are not yet that well informed and we have not developed that level of intricate care on a wide scale.
- All ecological communities or habitat are threatened by planning that lacks scientific insight into environmental needs. '8 million hectares of forest and bushland has no protection from Deforestation' (Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the Wilderness Society, WWF-Australia and the National Parks Association of NSW, 2018, Exec. Sum. para. 3).
- The logging of native forest increases erosion, causes the spread of weeds and non-native plants, disrupts water cycles, increases siltation and water pollution, raises temperatures and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Clearing also facilitates feral animals such as rabbits, foxes, wild cats and dogs leading to local extinctions of native animals.
- Clearly, the current forestry operations in NSW are not sustainable.

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

- If Australians want to have a country in the future that is inherently Australian, the inherited, natural landscape must prevail. Politicians, buildings, roads, schools, and many other cultural constructs come and go, they are short-term - but the natural landscape is our one and only constant.
- I consider my values for the Australian bush to be of my highest values and akin to the current perception of Aboriginal cultural heritage values. I believe that the destruction of the Australian bush has been one of the most depressing ongoing occurrences of my life, and I wish it would stop. I know of many who express similar sentiment and sciences provide support for human need of natural habitat. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) states that 'in 2022, just over 1 in 6 (16%) Australians were experiencing loneliness' (Mental Health, Loneliness). Loneliness can be diminished through green spaces, as scientific research validates - bushland is revitalising, not just physically, but mentally: Feng, Toms & Astell-Burt (2022) state that 'mental health benefits may be induced through physical, visual and/or olfactory means of contact with green space, which often interact with social connection, physical activity and mitigation of ambient hazards (e.g., heatwaves) for stress relief and renewal of depleted cognitive capacities'. 'Health benefits come not just from being active in nature, but from seeing nature' (Astell-Burt et al. 2021, as cited in Midcoast Council, Midcoast Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2023-2035, 2023).
- Nature is now and has always been valued in many ways. It is a source of medicine, of food, of covering, of security, and of peace of mind. Australians are entitled to inherit the natural

landscape of fauna and flora that exists and not to have it continually destroyed and threatened further with more destruction.

- In terms of threatened and endangered species, many are documented. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW 2024 Threatened species under the EPBC Act, para. 2) states 'Australia's biodiversity is currently in decline; in Australia, more than 1,700 species and ecological communities are known to be threatened and at risk of extinction'. These include: the brush-tailed phascogale, koalas, squirrel glider, greater glider, mountain pygmy possum, black-flanked rock wallaby, northern hairy-nosed wombat, eastern quoll, eastern curfew, the regent honeyeater, and the orange-bellied parrot. It is devastating.

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

- Plantation timbers can provide all of Australia's needed timbers. The plantation industry would be fully sustainable and would prevent further destruction of the natural Australian landscape and biodiversity.

- Currently, much of the logged timber is converted to minor items such as woodchip, disregarding the value that native forests have as long-term carbon stores.

- The Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN) states that already 90% of Australian timber comes from plantations (cited in The Guardian, July 26, 2023) and that according to LEAN's co-convenor, 'the evidence suggested expanding plantations could create 1,800 regional jobs, compared with 1,100 employed in the native forest industry nationally' (para. 5).

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

- Since plantation timbers are already providing 90% of needed timbers, there appears to be no need to continue forest logging. Hardwood and softwood plantations can provide for housing and industry needs.

- Felicity Wade, LEAN's co-convenor, notes that expanding plantations could create 1,800 regional jobs, compared with 1,100 employed in the native forest industry nationally (cited in The Guardian, July 26, 2023).

- Finances should be spent on extending plantations and their harvesting potential.

- LEAN suggests 'a government-owned national natural capital corporation to manage the national plantation estate' (cited in The Guardian, July 26, 2023).

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

- State forests hold environmental value. They are carbon stores. They produce clean air, assist in preventing soil erosion and siltation, support waterways, and provide habitat for fauna.

- State forests hold economic value. The Blueprint Institute found that it was more cost effective to maintain native forests than to log-harvest them:

ending native forest logging in 2023,24 instead of 2039-40 (the date that the North East Regional Forestry Agreement is currently scheduled to expire), and instead utilising the land for carbon sequestration and tourism will deliver a net benefit valued at \$45 million in present-day dollars.

This includes the estimated cost of providing transitional packages to the industry as it shuts down, as well as the cost of breaking wood supply agreements that extend to 2028. (para. 3, 2023)

Such profits far outweigh those of forest logging, which, in contrast, requires government subsidies with tax payer contribution because it is not a viable, sustainable industry. It continues

to work at an economic loss, simultaneously destroying our Australian natural heritage. Protecting State Forests will enhance their economic value through carbon markets, and provide valuable resources for tourism, recreation and job creation.

- Public funds that are used to pay for the removal of state forests would be able to be more intelligently spent on the plantation industry.
- State forests hold social value. They are valuable for recreational purposes, for providing a sense of connection to the land, a sense of belonging, and psychological support for living. They are a source of pleasure and utilised in recreational pastimes. They are a source of interest, as we continue to study and learn more and more of the complexities of plant and animal functions, behaviours, and interactive roles in ecosystems.

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

- Acknowledging that they are carbon stores, state forests can reduce climate change causes such as carbon emissions.
- Native or old growth forests are moist and are less effected by fire than regrowth. Lindenmeyer (cited in Threatened Species Recovery Hub, para. 2, 2020) states: ‘fire severity is influenced by forest age. Fires in old growth forests tend to be less severe. Young forests such as those regenerating after logging are more likely to burn more severely and for the fire to burn or scorch the tree canopy’.
- Forests can provide protection for wildlife and prevent further species loss.
- Extending the plantation industry is another means of reducing carbon emissions.
- The Forestry Corporation of NSW has been found breaching environmental laws (Slezak, ABC, 2024), failing to adequately assess habitat for native wildlife. The value of our natural heritage is often not recognised. Education occurs predominantly within classrooms, removed from the experience of native fauna and flora. Knowledge occurs through video and texts, which diminishes our personal development in valuing the natural world. For this reason, it is perhaps not difficult for those involved in the logging industry to place their own financial circumstances above the worth of biodiversity, but Australia’s laws should be so strong that breach of such laws would prevent wrongdoing. This is necessary because fines or imprisonment do not bring any plant or any animal back to life. When a government fails to adequately protect forest and all its biodiversity, and simultaneously promotes logging, the outcome is diabolic.

Kind regards,
Dr Suzanne Allen

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