

Public submission

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Dunstone Design Global Pty Ltd
*Trading as **Dunstone Design***



09/10/2024

Submission to the NSW Independent Forestry Panel

I am a 2001 Churchill Fellow (Chair Design), a 2022 Gottstein Fellow (Woodcraft Education), a master furniture maker, an employer of other master furniture makers, a teacher of woodwork and design and an author on the use of native timbers in furniture.

There is no question that the use of native timbers in high quality Australian made furniture is sustainable. Such furniture is designed to last the life cycle of the tree from which it was made. Timber is the only renewable material from which we can sustainably make furniture. The alternatives of plastic, metal or composite materials are in no way comparable to the sustainability of timber. Locking up NSW's native forests is a short-sighted way of treating a precious resource.

There are many pressures on Australian forests; land development for housing, land clearing for agriculture, land clearing for monoculture timber plantations (native and introduced species), zoning for national parks and, of course, logging. Of all these activities, only national parks and logging preserves the forest as a long-term project/priority. No responsible modern forester or timber miller wants to see a native forest logged to the point of depletion.

It is vital that the woodworking community and the fine furniture industry has access to modest quantities of native timbers from well managed state forests. The sort of high-quality timbers that businesses like ours use are the premium boards from a wider logging and milling operation. Businesses like ours might use relatively small quantities when compared to the broader construction industry, but we ride off the back of those operations. Shutting down the native forest industry in NSW would remove a whole level of experienced foresters, millers, sawyers and handlers, severely diminishing our sector's access to quality timber. It could cripple our industry's ability to make culturally responsive work from local materials.





The ANU's School of Business and Economics' NSW red gum and QLD silver ash boardroom table. Image by Lisa Mc Kelvie

In 2010, Dunstone Design made the world's largest solid timber NSW river red gum boardroom table for the School of Business and Economics, ANU. The timber was sourced from Gulpa Sawmills, an intergenerational mill with unparalleled expertise. The boardroom table is a registered work of art with the ANU's Drill Hall Gallery registry. Since the cessation of red gum forestry in NSW, Gulpa Sawmills has closed, and we can no longer make culturally significant pieces like this from NSW red gum. The expert millers who cut, milled, dried and stored this high-quality timber with their specialist saws and kilns are no longer available. Trees that have reached the end of their life, or have been removed for agriculture or other construction, are inexpertly milled by part-timers with an inadequate portable mill and the timber is ruined for high-quality work.

Wood artists/designers require access to native timbers to make culturally relevant work. Art and design is a delicate dance. Fine furniture responds to the materials, the lifestyle, the landscape, the human form, our housing and our climate. Trees can be revered and thoughtfully harvested without contradiction. Cutting an old forest with a mining mentality is clearly foolish. Locking up every tree is similarly foolish. A forest can be managed, harvested and still have its core elements preserved. Furniture comes from the forest, and the answer is to respect the resource by building-to-last and respecting the built object. This is an education problem, not a forest management problem.

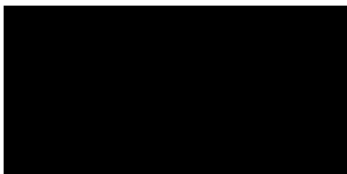


Mutawintji 6 by Dunstone Design in Tasmanian blackwood, NSW yarran and Tasmanian Huon pine. Photographed in Molonglo Gorge, NSW, to show the relationship between material, design and country. Image by William Bayliss and Aditi Sargeant.

Australia has extraordinary timbers with a wide range of colours, textures and properties. As designer/makers, we take the whole chain of the process into consideration. This is not a marketing ploy or green washing, it is born of our desire to have many generations able to enjoy the craft, or live with work made by the craft. Timber is a truly renewable resource, but only if we manage and respect the forests.

We would welcome a visit by interested parties to our Queanbeyan, NSW, workshop and showroom.

Sincerely,



Evan Dunstone

