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

At COP26 over one hundred world leaders promised to end and reverse deforestation by 2030. Logging native forests is unsustainable. From a product perspective, plantations are much more profitable and employ more people. All of the sawn timber in Australia already comes from plantations (ABARES 2021). The native forestry industry runs at a financial loss and is subsidised by millions of taxpayer's dollars. Illegal activity is constantly reported, and actions challenged in court, which the taxpayer funds. The work is largely mechanised with expensive equipment and no longer provides for significant numbers of employees. A recent paper by Ward et al (2024) looked at deforestation and degradation in NSW from 1788 to 2021 and found that 'possibly over half (29 million ha) of pre-1788 native forest and woodland vegetation in NSW has been lost. Of the remaining 25 million ha, 9 million ha is estimated to be degraded.' What are we doing to our country? What legacy are we leaving for future generations? Native forest logging reduces soil health, increases erosion, damages and contaminates waterways, reduces biodiversity, increases carbon emissions, increases temperature, increases fire risk, increases weeds and feral animals, increases extinction risk, takes tax payer money that could be benefiting communities via health and education and makes no economic, environmental or ethical sense. Cross et al (2023) estimate that 45 million dollars of tax payer money could be saved by shutting down the NSW native forest industry. It is also obscenely wasteful and equates to terrestrial industrial bycatch. Forests are opened up for access and select trees are felled with understorey and other vegetation damaged and removed in the process. Fauna surveys are renowned to be inappropriately conducted if done at all and animals are maimed, displaced and killed during all levels of extraction and processing. Those animals that are not immediately maimed, displaced or killed when trees are felled or vegetation is destroyed are then left to find alternative refuges and food. Slash piles are left for weeks and months, and native animals will use these to avoid predation and for shelter. They will then be incinerated when the slash piles are burnt. Apart from the inherent cruelty involved in this, threatened species are being pushed further towards extinction and new species are being added to the threatened species list. Carbon is released during the logging process, while slash piles decompose, from burning slash piles, and from waste generated at timber mills. Twelve to fifteen percent of global emissions are from native forest logging and land clearing. It is the third largest emitter, behind energy and agriculture. In NSW, as much as 40% of the forest's biomass is incinerated and 30% gets left on site after burning (The Tree Project, 2022). We are in a critical decade for climate action and mature native forests are important for zero emissions. 3.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are released from forestry in NSW. We are in a biodiversity crisis and mature native forests support over 174 native animal species by providing hollows and dens. Why are we still destroying our native forests? Only 4-8% of the forest's biomass (4% from southern forests and 8% for northern forests) gets turned into sawn timber (eg. housing and furniture). Most of the timber is used for short-lived products such as paper and cardboard. Halting native forest logging and protecting forest and bush would result in real action on climate change and biodiversity loss. It takes many decades to centuries for

forests to capture lost carbon and we need to reduce emissions now. Extinction is a choice, and by continuing to log native forests the choice is made to push species towards it.

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

Australia leads the world in mammalian extinctions. We have unique flora and fauna found nowhere else on the planet and continuous human culture dating back 60,000 years. Recent research has identified south-eastern/eastern Australia as a global extinction hot spot (Cardillo et al 2023). We currently have almost 1000 species of plants and animals threatened with extinction in NSW, so we've been busy destroying the place over the last 236 years (not long at all!). Of these, 150 threatened species are directly impacted by native forest logging in NSW. I'm middle-aged. During my lifetime I've watched species once listed as common become listed as vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered. In 1986 I saw my first greater glider. It was in Tallaganda State Forest. I was beside myself with excitement. It didn't dawn on me back then that this forest was logged and these gliders would be lost. This species has now been listed as endangered. Having worked as a zoo keeper, museum curator, educator, tour guide and researcher, I see the changes. Species like greater gliders don't do well in captivity. Artificial nest boxes have limited success. They are a sensitive species and research has found that logging 2km away can impact them. They have high site fidelity with home ranges from 1 to 10 ha, containing up to 20 den trees for hollows. They rely on mature forests, like so much of our wildlife does. They are at risk from climate change and are susceptible to fires, drought and higher evening temperatures. Stags and dead trees are important to them, and they require intact forests as they don't cope well in fragmented ones. They do better in state forests and national parks with the large areas of forest and connectivity. Flying foxes like the grey-headed flying fox have gone from 'common' to 'Vulnerable' in my lifetime. They are keystone species. Zoonotic diseases are prime examples of how a species can normally live with pathogens but shed them when under stress, and bats are the screaming klaxon asking us to pay attention to their plight. Our flying foxes (and of course many birds and invertebrates) rely on flowering events, which are staggered across flora species temporally and geographically. Drought and rain can decrease the availability of food and we have been seeing increased cases of heat stress and mass deaths in flying foxes. Starvation events are also now reducing numbers and pose a serious threat. They come to urban areas for food and shelter simply out of survival and are then forcibly removed. The forestry industry benefits from pollinators but their habitat is fragmented and being lost to native forest logging. Do I need to go on about koalas? Probably not as I think you get the picture and know the very real, sobering and shameful facts. Yet as I type this, native forest logging is happening in areas like Bulga State Forest, where threatened species, including koalas, greater gliders and many others exist. They are being wiped out. Not only that, they're injured and mutilated in the process, which is inconceivably cruel. The threats to our fauna and flora don't just act in isolation, and logging native forests must be seen through this lens. The cumulative effects of habitat modification, destruction and degradation to agriculture, industry, renewables farms, urban development and infrastructure, roads; climate change and extreme weather events; introduced species and pets; and existing and emerging diseases means that our unique flora and fauna are under incredible pressure. Plants and animals need intact and healthy habitat to survive and thrive. First nations people need native forests for the health, cultural and spiritual connection they provide. My ancestors were Wiradjuri, from Mudgee way, and the landscapes of earth, water, forests and sky were crucial for their way and meaning of life. Our native forests provide mental and physical health benefits to all people through their shade, carbon capture and storage, bioprospecting, clean air and water, stable soil, micro and macro climates, biodiversity and intrinsic beauty. Our country and its unique place in this world should be protected for the non-economic values of

culture, identity, spirituality and pride. Our native forests are worth more intact and protected and I'd like to see an immediate moratorium on native forest logging in NSW while this review is being conducted. Biobanking carbon credits and offsets schemes should not be a consideration. We need to retain what we have, not replant. Tourism makes more economic sense than unsustainable logging that is supported by tax-payer's money and contributes to biodiversity loss, land degradation and carbon emissions. This transition could happen immediately, taking advantage of the growing domestic market keen to experience their own country, and incorporate Indigenous communities with pest control, education and protection of culturally sensitive sites. I started researching humpback whales in NSW in 1985, at a time when you were lucky to see 20 of them over a two-week survey period thanks to whaling's devastation. Now you can see 20 simultaneously in the same field of view in your binoculars. They are a conservation success story. Let's turn our appalling record for threatened species around and make success stories of the plants and animals that need our native forests to survive by ending native forest logging and protecting what remains in perpetuity. We are running out of time to make meaningful and positive changes.

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

Most of the timber used in NSW already comes from plantations. NSW native forestry primarily uses the wood for pulp and woodchips, exporting it overseas and then importing the finished or refined products. End the native forestry industry and use plantations on land that has already been cleared for agriculture or industry. Do not remove native forest for plantations. These plantations can supply wood for paper, packaging, pulp and timber. These products can be made within Australia, thus increasing employment opportunities and decreasing emissions and costs from transport. Fine-quality timber products can be made from recycled timber, and housing, construction and industry should be actively recycling timber. Demand for paper has fallen as more people use electronic devices. The use of forest biomass used for sawn timber for housing has declined by 90% in the past 20 years and continues to decline (Lindenmeyer, 2024). Plantation timber is more suitable for construction and is more widely used. The native forest industry is dominated by woodchips and paper pulp, exported and then sold back to us in other forms.

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

The Northern Territory, ACT and South Australia do not log native forests and rely on plantations. Western Australia and Victoria say they have ceased native forest logging but still continue it under different guises. New Zealand ceased native forest logging in 2002 and maintains plantation-only industries. Plantations reduce the risk of fires as they are usually fast-growing and the wood is more likely to be harvested before there is a fire risk (Lindenmeyer et al 2022). Plantations can provide product for virtually all uses and should be prioritised now. Private Native Forestry should only be used for select high-end products that recycled and plantation timber cannot replace and only under strict conditions, oversight and enforcement. However, I have genuine animal welfare concerns about plantations of native timber such as blue gum. In 2015 I spent time in Victoria and South Australia doing blue whale research. We often travelled between Portland and Port MacDonnell (past the plantations) and spent time in Portland. When ships were in port to collect the wood chips the logging trucks worked non-stop all night and the road kill was high. I saw dead koalas near the port and personally rescued a mother and joey that were along the road headed into the port. The wildlife rescuer said that the only safe place to put the animals was in the blue gum plantations. She said the animals can smell the wood chips and travel down

to where the ships are loading. Footage of koalas in downtown Portland is not hard to find, nor are dead koalas. The ABC's Four Corner's exposed the abhorrent cruelty of the blue gum plantations in 2013 and it is still being exposed to this day as it is still occurring. I used to work with koalas and know they favour blue gum leaves. While I support plantation only and want an end to native forest logging in NSW now, I want plantations to be managed ethically and thoroughly with regards to native fauna that sets up residence within them. I am still horrified by what I saw on the Vic/SA border.

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

I do not support 'cultural thinning' and 'forest gardening' as management models. I also do not support our native forests being harvested following extreme weather events or having extensive fire trails and hazard breaks through them. Victoria is currently enacting their cessation of native forest logging by actively removing native forests under the guise of cultural practices, fire breaks and salvage logging, all of which continue the risks of fire, soil health decline and extinctions just under the banners of customary practices and health and safety. It is akin to Japan's 'scientific' whaling program. Similar to First Nations Ranger programs elsewhere in the country, employment and knowledge sharing opportunities exist for Indigenous people to be involved in restoring and preserving the health of our native forests. Unlogged native forests provide many benefits economically and environmentally to NSW. Clean water ways and catchments, cooler temperatures, healthier soil, more stable land, natural beauty and wonder and unique flora, fauna and landscapes translate into high value ecosystems for communities bordering intact native forest areas and visitors to them. They provide health benefits as well as other economic wins such as tourism. Intact native forests draw down and store carbon. They are the obvious, sensible, existing and free mitigator against climate change! Keeping our public native forests intact is a better economic model than continuing to log them, as NSW tax payers are paying to keep this industry afloat due to losses and litigation. NSW residents should not be paying millions of dollars to destroy the rich biodiversity of our native forests and the critical habitat of threatened species. Tallaganda State Forest provides critical habitat for 31 threatened species and yet this habitat gets destroyed for woodchips, pallets and pulp.

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

Trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere and store it long term. No biobanking, carbon credits, offsets, biomass burning. People can't be trusted to follow through or hold to account, and we can't wait 50-100 years for forests to grow or have more species dwindling and being lost forever, let alone the emissions that are still produced by these methods. Protecting our forests will help us meet our emissions reduction target. If we protect our native forests instead of logging them, 76 million tonnes of carbon can be prevented from entering the atmosphere by 2050 (The Tree Project NSW Carbon Report, 2022). If you look outside a plane window while travelling interstate you can see how much land has been cleared since Europeans arrived. There is no need to clear remaining native bush for plantations. There is enough cleared land to utilise. But these plantations have to be well planned and managed to operate effectively, efficiently and reduce issues like erosion, biodiversity loss, feral animals and weeds, poor animal welfare, waste, and impacts from fires. Fauna spotters should be utilised at all plantations and animals such as koalas should be translocated when logging is due. Carefully schedule the sequence in which

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compartments of trees are thinned or cut to mitigate against damage to native fauna (Lindenmeyer, 2024). Surveillance technology could be utilised to identify when large animals such as koalas enter plantations. By keeping mature native forests intact and protecting our native forests, hopefully we can increase the abundance and resilience of our native flora and fauna and the health of the forests themselves. As it currently stands, the NSW native forestry industry is a nature-damaging industry subsidised by the taxpayer for a small number of jobs and very little profit. Logged mature native forests are more susceptible to higher intensity and more frequent bush fires and water catchments are negatively impacted as regrowth after forests are logged draw up more water for growth (Lindenmeyer, 2024). Public opinion and scrutiny has increased concerning native forest logging and questions why this industry persists. The union influence as major donors to political parties is recognised, as is the damage that the industry has on the environment. Just like whaling, times have changed and we need to evolve and adapt and accept our responsibilities in looking after this land for now and into the future.