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

Environmental Voices is a community group involved in environmental advocacy. We originally met during the federal election campaign 2022 where we all volunteered to support Allegra Spenders campaign of 2000 volunteers. After the election we decide for continue as Environmental Voices to give nature a voice that is so often overlooked in political decisions. While Allegra Spenders MP obviously listens closely to our group, we have also established great relationships with other political and community leaders.

When we did a survey of priority topics for the group, ending native forest logging came up as the most important topic to our member by a clear margin. We therefore in this submission speak out to strongly support an immediate end to native forest logging in NSW. We also support an immediate moratorium to all current logging operations, especially in any area to be considered for the Great Koala National Park. It makes no sense so on one hand already acknowledge the incredible importance of the area as habitat for threatened species and its huge recreational and touristic potential while at the same time logging with increased intensity.

Native forest logging is an outdated practice not supported by ecological science. While timber can be supplied from plantations, critical habitat cannot be replaced, further pressure on endangered and threatened species is unconscionable.

Native forest logging is not sustainable ecologically. It is not even economically sustainable, requiring huge subsidies while still making losses year after year. And finally ins inporrably, it is not socially sustainable with the public opinion hugely against its continuation.

It therefore makes no sense to continue a practice solely to please a small number of jobs that can and must be transitioned to other opportunities in plantation or ecological management.

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

There are many scientific papers published about the environmental importance of our native forests for threatened species, as wildlife refuges and corridors, as places of spiritual and cultural significance for indigenous as well as modern Australians. In fact, there are so many good and reasonable arguments to end this practice that the only surprising thing is that it has survived this long. It is high time to end it!

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

Demand for timber products is already and increasingly covered from plantation forestry. More than 90% of timber supply already come from plantation while our precious native forests are cut down to be turned into woodchips and other low value products. This is in no sensible relation to the incredible value they have left standing, as habitat, for the water cycle, as carbon storage, for clean air, for recreation, for tourism.

Especially with Essential Energy declaring that it will no longer use timber poles for its network spanning 95% of NSW, there is an immediate chance to finally stop native forest logging now in that context, with a major demand falling away.

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

We support the profitable plantation forest industry to meet all our timber needs. All future plantations are to be on already cleared land only. And 'old' plantations that exist within a native forest footprint and are largely indistinguishable from the surrounding native forest are to be included in the future logging free forest estate. It is simply not justifiable to call something a plantation if it is indeed varied precious habitat, only because 30 years ago someone spread a few seeds around. The ecological value has to trump other uses in all assessments.

We currently do not have enough information about private native forestry with the exception that a lot of threatened species habitat is also on private land where edit also deserves high level protection. On the other hand we do support farm forestry where new (!) trees are grown as a marketable crop.

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 are extremely important in delivering a wide range of social, environmental and social outcomes including recreation, mental wellbeing, nature based tourism. We strongly support all of this as long as environmental and ecological principles and protection are of the highest and overarching priority.

In this context we also very much welcome indigenous management, indigenous rangers and implementation of indigenous practices. It is well recognised that all over the world, indigenously managed lands fare better environmentally. NSW has not at all made enough use of this knowledge. We believe that great opportunities exist here regarding our forest management and that these should be ambitiously sought out, such as indigenous rangers, implementation of indigenous management practices (eg different fire regimes) and handing over forests to indigenous owners.

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

Significantly, logging also makes forests more susceptible to more frequent and more intense fires, thus creating another huge environmental risk well beyond the immediate destruction of habitat. As the 2019/20 bushfires have shown, fires pose another grave risk to the viability of our threatened species and increasing fire risk is not justifiable from an environmental but also human safety position.

Logging also releases significant carbon stores. This again sharply contrasts with the carbon storage and cooling properties these forests provide when left standing.

As far as trading in carbon or biodiversity markets is concerned, we have not seen any examples of this being successfully done anywhere in the world. In general, the climate and nature outcomes of such schemes have to be considered poor.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to make this submission. We sincerely hope that you will recommend to end native forest logging by 2025 or 2026, together with an immediate

Public submission

moratorium on all logging operations in any area potentially considered for inclusion in the future Great Koala National Park.