

FIONA PRESTON

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

Observational evidence along with scientific reports written over many years indicate that we have long passed the point where forestry operations are sustainable. The situation is urgent and critical. The intensity of logging after the 2019 fires is particularly concerning. Logging devastates the environment, destroys habitat, water quality and helps heat up the planet. There is a psychological component too. This inquiry feels like another delaying tactic when it is KNOWN we are destroying our children's future and you are asking the public for facts already well known to you. We need forests for well-being. What is happening is criminal.

Facts. Already known to you:

Forestry Corporation's estimates of sustained yields have been proven time and time again to be gross over-estimates. Since 2010 yields from state forests have declined by 40% from 1.3 million tonnes down to 0.8 million tonnes in 2023, and are currently only 61% of claimed sustained yields, with the massive loss of resources in the 2019/20 fires yet to be factored in.

It is a tree mining operation, that has only been able to be maintained by removing protections for most mature trees and increasing logging intensity in 2018.

Logging of native forests is not sustainable as it reduces biomass and carbon storage, removes mature trees and their abundance of nectar and browse essential for many species, depletes old growth trees and the hollows that 174 of NSW's species depend upon for dens and nests, increases fire threat and intensity, reduces stream flows, promotes weeds and dieback, and increases erosion and stream pollution.

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

All these values are well known, so this is clearly a delaying tactic. The public should not need to explain this to government or forestry. These incredibly important values are being questioned to delay taking responsible action and closing down the industry immediately. This is a decision that involves personal challenge to all those making it. Courage. Moral fibre. Recognising the difference between right and wrong. Still, here are the facts, already well known to you:

Forests generate rainfall and cool the land, clean the air, provide homes for a plethora of threatened species, are important for recreation and improved health, filter and regulate runoff to streams, and remove carbon dioxide from the air and store it in their wood and soils. If we want to save NSW's 269 nationally listed threatened forest species, including the endangered Koala and Greater Glider, it is essential that we stop logging their homes.

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

It's time to get inventive and to look at minimising the use of wood in favour of new technologies, for example recycling plastics as a building material. Given changes in our environment at a time of climate change, reconsidering the way we build, the homes we live in and the materials we use should be getting greater emphasis. That's where we need a commission, not another time-

wasting talkfest about the already known. Let's carry on the pretence that you don't know. Here are the facts:

Native hardwoods comprised 2.4 million (9%) of Australia's log production of 25 million cubic metres in 2023, with half this exported as woodchips. Saw and veneer logs comprised just 8% of the 8.5 million cubic metres of logs obtained from hardwood plantations, with 87% exported as woodchips. There is no longer any need to log public native forests to build houses. With a change in emphasis we can satisfy our hardwood needs with sawn timber and composite timber products from existing plantations.

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

You know the future. You need to look it hard in the eye. Plantations have to be introduced with care into damaged and flammable landscapes. They are not supportive as an ecosystem. Here are the facts you already know:

Hardwood and softwood plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production. The proportion of saw and veneer logs obtained from hardwood plantations needs to be increased, rather than being exported as woodchips. Without competition from subsidised public forests there will be an increased incentive for selective logging of speciality purpose hardwoods from private forests.

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

More forested land should be given back to the Aboriginal community to manage. Colonialism's exploitative approach to land management had led us and our fellow species on this planet to the edge of the abyss. Under our current management regime, forests, be they State Forests or on private land, have been damaged, their health compromised, so they are curtailed from providing the environmental services that they used to because they are often too small. They are a fragmented ecosystem, rather than a continuous system, and we don't place enough value on them. All this is known to you. Please stop prevaricating on these important issues. But, as these questions assume ignorance, here are the facts, already known to you:

There are 2 million hectares of State Forests in NSW that provide water for numerous town reservoirs, have the potential to contribute to increased tourism, and take-up and store carbon. All these real economic benefits will improve if logging is stopped. In 2023 Forestry Corporation lost \$15 million on their hardwood operations, that's a cost of \$1,281 for each hectare logged. This is despite being paid \$31 million for their community service obligations that year, and obtaining tens of millions in regular equity injections. We should not be paying to degrade forests and log the homes of threatened species. Public forests are of greater economic benefit for water yields, tourism and carbon storage than they are for logging. It is in the best interest of taxpayers to stop logging of public native forests.

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

Again, well known. No submissions needed, no debate required. Every day these actions aren't implemented is time lost. Act on the responsibilities given to you. Find the moral fibre to do what is right and stop logging the remnants of the great forests that existed prior to colonisation. That is the benchmark. Not the forests as they were a decade or two ago. Along with clearing forests

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on private land (sometimes thanks to zombie development applications) and the inertia on closing down logging in native forests, the government is doing the public and all species inhabiting this state a disservice that is frankly environmentally criminal and has ramifications for your future. You know all these facts. The question is one of moral fibre and the courage to act. And I hope, that finally, this talkfest ends and the right call is swiftly made, recognising that forests are not there for us to plunder, that we are a small part of an interconnected web of life that we are fast destroying to the detriment of all species, including ourselves. This decision has reached a point where it has become existential.