

GRACE CALLAGHAN

Submission ID: 205254

Organisation: N/A

Location: New South Wales

Supporting materials uploaded: N/A

Submission date: 10/13/2024 10:25:32 PM

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

On July 17th, 2024, Environment Minister Penny Sharpe stated that biodiversity in NSW is in crisis and emphasised the need to improve nature's condition. A major cause of biodiversity loss is the clearing of native vegetation and the declining health of river systems (NSW EPA, 2022). The government's goal of being 'nature positive' cannot be achieved if habitat destruction from native forest logging continues, as noted in the Henry Review (August 2023). With 1,918 Australian species currently threatened, habitat destruction is the main driver, particularly in NSW and Queensland. Logging also impacts river health and wildlife by increasing degrading aquatic habitats and increasing erosion. Native forest logging is unsustainable, degrading biodiversity, and leading to increased vulnerability to fires, pests, and diseases. Additionally, the industry operates at a financial loss, relying on taxpayer subsidies. Despite repeated illegal logging practices, enforcement is insufficient, leaving the community to raise awareness.

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

Australia's biodiversity is a globally recognised treasure, much like the country's historical landmarks. While the destruction of heritage buildings would be condemned, native forests continue to be cleared, supported by government actions and taxpayer funding. This destruction not only threatens wildlife but also undermines efforts to care for and preserve these ecosystems, despite public protests that are often met with criminal charges.

The impact on iconic species like the koala is particularly alarming. Koalas, contributing \$3.2 billion to tourism and supporting 30,000 jobs, face extinction by 2050 due to logging and habitat loss. The Minns government's election promise to establish the Great Koala National Park was a step toward safeguarding biodiversity. However, ongoing logging within the proposed park contradicts this commitment, with the destruction led by a state-funded agency.

Industrial-scale logging has broader consequences, affecting not only wildlife but also communities witnessing the destruction. The 2019-2020 bushfires, which sparked global concern and massive donations, highlighted the cultural and environmental importance of Australia's biodiversity. Nature-based tourism, generating \$20 billion annually, further underscores the economic value of these ecosystems.

The continued logging also raises concerns about the government's recognition of biodiversity's connection to Aboriginal culture. While the Minns government has acknowledged this link, ongoing deforestation directly undermines Indigenous cultural values, sparking growing public outrage and calls for action to protect the country's natural heritage.

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

Native forest logging is not the main source of high-quality timber, as 90% of sawn timber comes from plantations. Most logging in native forests results in low-value, bulk products like woodchips and paper pulp (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forest, 2023, Australia's State of the

Forest Report). The shift by Essential Energy to stop using native timber for power poles further reflects the declining demand for these resources.

New Zealand and South Australia transitioned away from native forest logging decades ago, focusing instead on plantation timber. However, it's crucial that native forests are not cleared to make way for plantations.

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

Native forests are essential for threatened species and those at risk of becoming threatened. Habitat destruction and fragmentation are major contributors to local extinctions, which collectively fuel the broader extinction crisis. Scientific evidence shows that practices like logging, thinning, or 'forest gardening' degrade the biodiversity of both flora and fauna. While some species may see positive impacts, others that rely on diverse, multi-layered vegetation suffer (Murray, Everett, & Lindenmeyer, 2024). This degradation also makes forests more vulnerable to invasive species like lantana and bridal creeper, which increase fire risk and further harm biodiversity.

Plantation forests, already the main source of timber (rather than woodchips and pulp), provide more job opportunities in areas like weed and pest control, fire management, recreation, tourism, and carbon credit initiatives. Expanding plantations on already cleared or degraded land can help meet timber demands while reducing pressure on native 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

The Henry Review states that achieving a 'nature positive' approach is crucial not only for environmental health but also for future economic growth and well-being (Henry et al., 2023, Independent Review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, NSW).

Protecting biodiverse native forests, including the proposed Great Koala National Park, without extensive logging could significantly enhance nature-based tourism, benefiting five local government areas. Forestry Corporation workers could be retrained as caretakers, rangers, and tour guides, leading to job growth in local businesses like accommodations and food services. Additionally, incorporating Aboriginal sustainable practices, cultural events, and bush medicine into tourism can create positive social and economic impacts for both Indigenous and wider communities. Effective management of plantation forests, including fire prevention and invasive species control, could support the growing camping and caravanning tourism sector, especially since national park campsites are often overbooked and restrict pets.

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

The foremost challenge of our time is accelerating climate change. Healthy, diverse native forests, especially those with old-growth trees and hollows, act as carbon sinks and provide significant biodiversity benefits. In contrast, logging these forests releases substantial carbon emissions, primarily from wood chips and pulp. For example, when native forest logging declined in Tasmania, significant carbon credits were achieved.

Planting and harvesting fast-growing plantation trees on cleared or degraded land, however, can be a carbon-positive process and may qualify for carbon markets. Diverse, healthy forests are more resilient to bushfires, effectively capture and retain moisture, and protect waterways.

Public submission

Additionally, dense canopies are less susceptible to weed infestations and serve as critical wildlife refuges, as demonstrated during the Black Summer fires.