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

The post European settlement history of forests in NSW is characterised by early and intensive exploitation with a view to build the nation, wealth and expand agriculture. The result has been significant clearing of open forests of the western slopes and plains, and partial clearing along the coast. Consequently, it is these environments that has suffered the greatest habitat loss and fauna extinctions. These lands have not been managed to sustain structure and diversity, and should attract urgent intervention to restore native forests where possible and to integrate reforestation with agriculture.

The coastal forests have also been subject to significant agricultural and urban clearing post European settlement; however, the forested area remains disaggregated but similar to pre-European estimates, which can be easily observed in satellite imagery. Exception such as the big scrub in the Richmond Tweed catchments and the Hunter River catchment exist where clearing has been almost complete. This indicates that management of coastal forests has sustained existence, however forest structure, species composition and abundance has changed due to intensive selective harvesting of desirable commercial tree species of highest quality (shape), and the exclusion of fire. This history can be regarded as not sustaining coastal forests in a form that serves all people and purposes.

Since the 1970's and under increasing public pressure, an incremental transition of management of public wood production forests to produce the complete collection of forest outputs including ecological services, recreation, heritage and wood, has been implemented. Tree selection and retention has shifted management to produce diverse forests of variable structure including older stems critical to habitat. It is arguable, that current management strategies embedded in the IFOA's that regulate activities of Forestry corporation NSW that have been formed from principles of forest science, represents intelligent consideration of the challenges. The outcome of these changes is still to be realised in mature forest, however the current management of public production forest indicates capacity to sustain production of the full range of forest values, and is correctly under constant review.

National Parks and reserves in NSW represent about four times the area of wood production forests managed by Forestry Corporation NSW. An absence of any deep survey of the management and the condition of forests in national parks creates difficulty when assessing if structure and function is sustained and producing the values sought. Concerns have been identified with a minimal intervention approach to management. Following larger scale disturbance such as intense wild fire, regenerating forests form overstocked stands of small trees that soon attain poor condition under the burden of intense composition. Forests need to be thinned to form the large trees of the ecological climax condition. Current proposals suggest indigenous burning provided this management and limited the scale and intensity of fire through frequent fuel reduction. The result was open forests with understory of grasses supporting larger mammals.

At the foundation of this exercise is the debate between doing nothing, and actively shaping forests to provide the services sought. The 'no management, no logging' paradigm is uniquely a

modern European concept that ignores 60,000 years of human impact on forests of Australia. Furthermore, it ignores forest science and the knowledge we have of the processes of disturbance regeneration and eco system climax. There is no evidence to support the proposal that 'minimum management' will produce the desired forest function and benefits. Exotic weed and pests alone exclude this philosophy of management. More dangerously it ignores climate change and the likelihood of increasingly intense and frequent fire such as occurred in 2019/20. This fire regime has the potential to slowly degrade the store of primary germplasm (plant & animal), resulting an inability to regenerate. The current state of management of national parks and the associated funding to do so, fails to sustain native forests.

The question of logging is controversial, and good structure and function of the native forest can be achieved with or without it. The issue to tackle is funding active forest management and in particular access (roads). It appears to be quite ridiculous that harvesting to reduce stocking and provide funds to maintain access and critical infrastructure is not part of the management program. The recent invention of 'environmental thinning' provides evidence that both sides of the debate acknowledge the need to control forest structure through stem removal to sustain function, that was so successfully achieved by indigenous Australians for so long.

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

There is no question, that the community of all Australians values forests very highly for there services and therefore deliver much cultural value. Similarly indigenous connection to land is of fundamental importance to culture. It is for these reasons; forests need to find a place in the economy that prevents further clearing and loss. (Note, I can't see how wood harvesting to be regrown represents clearing).

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

and retail

The government of NSW can choose a path of diminishing production of wood from native forests, and replace this source with other cultured sources, or import wood. The question emerges as to what management provides the best solution in terms of benefit and cost to the people of NSW.

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

It is unchallenged that plantation wood production has contributed not only to balance of payments but to NSW economy overall. As to the place native forests have in this debate, I would argue that some harvesting to provide funding for ongoing management of native forests and climate change risks, yields commercial benefit, provides employment and attends to the expectation of all people.

Native forest also has the advantage of long-term production cycles yielding large trees and unique products that serve heavy civil engineering purposes. Plantation investment could never carry this investment period.

Plantation investment is falling behind demand for wood and in the current context of GHG emissions reduction, reforestation should be high on the investment options list for governments, solving multiple problems simultaneously.

Public submission

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

Providing these outputs is the single role of forests, and the role of public forests (State Forests) is central to the obligation of the government to the people of NSW.

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

A mandatory change to forest management in NSW must be the ongoing monitoring of forest condition and productivity in relation to all outputs including biodiversity, recreation, water carbon storage etc. This is the only way managers can confidently fashion forest management so that expectations of the community are being met. The debate is too heavily influenced by opinion and assumptions, and this is the result of a lack of data. Often inferences are broadly applied and fail to account for the regional variations of condition. That is not to say the correct management is known only that current awareness is poor and inadequate. The electorate in particular needs to know the reality of forest ecosystem condition and possibly some education as to function.