

GRAHAM HALL

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**Organisation:** N/A

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**Location:** New South Wales

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

Native forest logging in New South Wales is unsustainable due to overestimated timber yields, the removal of protections for mature trees, and its detrimental environmental impacts. The yield from public native forests has declined significantly since 2010, while logging practices have intensified. This unsustainable approach reduces biodiversity, contributes to climate change, and degrades waterways, ultimately compromising the health of our ecosystems.

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

Healthy, unlogged native forests are essential for the well-being of both the environment and human communities. They play a critical role in regulating climate, providing habitat for countless species, and supporting cultural and spiritual values. Forests contribute to rainfall, cool the landscape, and clean the air. They are vital for pollinators, ensuring the health of ecosystems both within and beyond their boundaries. Native forests also offer recreational opportunities, promote community pride, and hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people. Unfortunately, native forest logging in NSW poses a significant threat to these ecosystems, impacting numerous threatened species and compromising the health of the broader landscape.

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

Despite native forest logging contributing only a small portion of total log production in Australia, it continues to be a significant environmental concern. In 2023, native forests accounted for just 9% of total log production, with half of the harvested logs being exported as woodchips. While hardwood plantations also contribute to log production, the majority of their output is also exported as woodchips. Given the availability of alternative materials like sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products, the continued use of native forest and plantation hardwoods for current applications is unnecessary. The declining market and demand for native forest products, as evidenced by the recent shift of Essential Energy away from native forest power poles, further highlights the need to reassess and curtail these unsustainable practices.

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

To ensure a sustainable and competitive timber industry, Australia should prioritize the use of plantation logs for domestic saw and veneer production instead of exporting them as wood chips. This shift would reduce reliance on public native forests, which are already heavily subsidized by the Forestry Corporation. Additionally, high-end and luxury native hardwood products should be restricted to selective harvesting on private land under stringent regulations to protect these valuable ecosystems.

**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**

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Native forests in NSW offer immense ecological and economic benefits. Unlogged native state forests, covering 2 million hectares, impact diverse communities through improved water quality, increased tourism, and carbon storage. Despite operating at a significant loss, the Forestry Corporation's native forest hardwood division continues to receive substantial public funds. This unsustainable practice undermines biodiversity, threatens endangered species, and negates the higher economic value of unlogged forests. Successful First Nations Ranger Programs demonstrate the effectiveness of traditional knowledge in restoring and managing native forests, highlighting the potential for a more sustainable and beneficial approach to forest management.

**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**

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Native forest logging in NSW contributes significantly to climate change, releasing an estimated 3.6 million tonnes of carbon annually. This is equivalent to the emissions of 840,000 cars. Logging drastically reduces the carbon storage capacity of native forests, with cleared areas retaining less than half of their original carbon. Ending native forest logging would not only mitigate emissions but also allow previously logged forests to recover their carbon storage potential, making a substantial contribution to achieving emissions reduction targets. Climate change poses increasing risks to forest health, and continued logging exacerbates this vulnerability. Unlogged forests demonstrate greater resilience to climate change and the catastrophic fires associated with it. Therefore, phasing out native forest logging is crucial for both mitigating climate change and protecting forest ecosystems.