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

It is clear that NSW Native Forest logging is not sustainable and has not been sustainable for many years. The ecological values of our native forests have been dramatically reduced through both historical and continuing logging practices today.

The impacts of native forest logging on threatened species of fauna endemic to Australia is well known and scientifically documented as well as shown to be continuing to the forecast 'extinction crisis' for a number of critical species. The remnants of highly biodiverse native forest still standing in NSW are the only hope of retaining some endangered species of fauna.

It is also obvious that a good number of highly sought species of Eucalypt are no longer available as they have not regenerated under the current forestry practices (eg, Australian red cedar).

The continuation of native forest logging has been shown to have significantly changed the structure and function of our native forests in ecological terms. This includes huge loss of old growth trees and their highly valued habitats.

The regrowth after logging leads to a totally different structure of forest and the fauna it supports. Often the diversity of regrowth is vastly reduced from the species mix that was evident in the mature forest prior to logging.

We have witnessed significant increases in the flammability of regrowth forests in recent years compared to the old mature forests.

There are also noticeable increases in soil erosion and stream siltation during logging practices and forest roading.

Beyond the ecological unsustainability of native forest logging in NSW is the lack of financial viability. 'Forestry Corporation of NSW 's native forest logging business appears to offer poor financial returns to NSW taxpayers, with some parts of the hardwood business unlikely to be covering costs' (Frontiers Economics May 2023). The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART) has also reported on the loss-making activities of Forestry Corporation's Hardwood Division. There is clear evidence that the value of native forest would be higher as a standing resource.

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

Australia's rich biodiversity is a resource belonging to all Australians i.e. it is a common property resource. This is not a property right that Governments and Corporations should have the right to sell or destroy/ wipe out for a small non- viable forest industry when plantation timber could replace those commercial products today.

Those remnant native forests in NSW are now critical to the future of some endangered and threatened species such as koala, greater glider, yellow bellied glider, loped squirrel glider, brush-tailed phascogale, to name a few.

In tact forests also provide important ecological services such as carbon capture, nutrient cycling, clean water catchments, clean air, and places for quiet recreation, and social well being.

Native forests have always been significant places for Indigenous Australians. The knowledge about our forests held by Aboriginal people is vast and extraordinarily complex. Not only would they use these forest for food, shelter, spiritual ceremonies, fresh water, but they developed techniques to cool burn these forests to regenerate forest species and reduce fuel loads to manageable levels. Their forest management techniques were far more sustainable than those of European settlers and Forestry Corporations.

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

It is clear that the future of forest and timber industries in NSW lies in plantation timber production. The stark reality in NSW is that native forest logging is largely producing low value products such as woodchips and paper pulp. Only a small proportion of quality timber comes from native forest logging and this resource is ever diminishing, just as old growth forest is disappearing.

The vast majority of sawn timber for construction comes from plantation production and this is the economically viable and sustainable future for forestry in NSW. The transition out of native forest logging completely is feasible as is evidenced by South Australia and New Zealand for several decades.

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

The forestry science, management expertise and new technologies are all available nowadays to make plantation production of sawn timber a very viable and profitable industry. Plantations are able to produce quality timber much faster than native forests, are less fire-prone, and much more selective in the species and timber qualities. They also generate far less greenhouse gas emissions and can employ far more people than native forest logging.

The only important caveat that must be adhered to in developing more timber plantations is that remaining native forests are not allowed to be cleared to plant plantations. The remaining native forests on public lands in NSW are now critical to be maintained for ecological sustainability, carbon capture, land management, and to protect biodiversity.

Development of new Private Native Forestry ventures should be encouraged on cleared lands previously used for pasture or grazing. This conversion would benefit sustainable land management, water management within catchments and reduce the use of chemicals in the environment.

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 approach to management of native forests needs to shift to recognition of the broader values they hold for society as a whole. The cessation of native forest logging will yield far more environmental, social and economic returns than can ever be achieved through continuing native forest logging.

State Forests in NSW was corporatised with the intention of making it a successful financial institution and as has been shown that the native logging component is a financial burden to the Corporation as well as to the tax payers of NSW.

Far greater returns can be gained by returning these remaining forests to the people for recreation, ecological business ventures, cultural heritage education and practice, incorporating Aboriginal co-management models. There continues to be strong economic growth in nature based tourism and the opportunities are endless.

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

No time in history has ever been more pressing than now to change the way we manage our native forests. Not just NSW but the whole world is facing climate change that will affect the fundamentals of everyday life. Continuing the logging of our native forests contributes large amounts of emissions that are accelerating climate change.

By ceasing logging of native forests, NSW can make a positive contribution to meeting our emissions reduction targets. This will also significantly contribute to maintaining healthy forest ecosystems that help native fauna and flora survive the challenges of climate change. Protecting these native forests will make an important contribution to biodiversity credits.

Sustaining diverse native forests ecosystems will be beneficial for coping with proposed changes to temperatures and rainfall patterns. Forested catchments can help regulate runoff and store moisture more efficiently.

The expansion of plantation forestry will also contribute to carbon capture as another benefit in dealing with climate change. This will also stimulate economic benefits through providing carbon credits to the economy.