

Public submission

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1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

- Native forest logging is unsustainable for our environment as well as financially. Financially it does not generate a profit. The hardwood timber industry ran at a loss of \$9m in 2021-2022 - a figure that stretches to some \$80m if fire and flood recovery expenses are included. The sum of government subsidies to the industry is estimated to be \$441 per hectare per year. The costs incurred by native forest logging such as building accessways, environmental law compliance and haulage are not being recovered in revenue. In 2021 IPART reported an average shortfall for \$3.96 per green metric tonne.
- Estimations by the Forestry Corporation of the amount of harvestable timber are consistently over estimated.
- The yield from public native forests has declined by 40% since 2010.
- Protections for mature trees were removed in 2018 and logging was intensified to try and get more wood from native forests.
- Logging of native forests reduces biomass and carbon storage, and removing mature trees takes away valuable food sources and hollow bearing trees.
- 174 species in NSW rely on hollows for dens and nests, logging reduces the number of hollows that will be created in native forests. Old trees that contain these hollows serve as habitat for species (Greater Glider) and when destroyed can take decades to replace (up to 100 years).
- Native forest logging increases fire threat and intensity, erosion and water way pollution, and the penetration of weeds and other invasive species.
- Native forest logging reduces the function and health of waterways, including streams and rivers. Native forests are crucial for the health of our soils and waterways. The long term cycle of organic matter breakdown in native forests, sometimes over hundreds of years, is what keeps soil in these areas rich in nutrients. Our native forests are also critical for the health of our waterways. Forests create water vapor flows, which creates rain. These flows are vital for the survival of all life on earth. Evidence now points to even limited destruction of forests can change the whole climate of a region. Forests also improve and protect the quality of our waterways by preventing erosion, breaking down pollutants and providing shade.
- All these indicators show that current and future forestry operations in NSW are not sustainable financially or environmentally.

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

- Healthy and unlogged forests are critical to the whole environment and both First Nations and non-First Nations culture and identity.

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- Forests, particularly healthy mature forests, generate rainfall, cool the landscape and clean the air.
- 150 threatened species in NSW are directly impacted by logging native forests. By continuing logging this fails the federal government's objective to have no extinctions.
- Mature and unlogged native forests are critical for pollinators and play a key role in pollination across the landscape, both inside and outside of forests. The role bats and bees play as pollinators and seed dispersal has been undervalued. A healthy ecosystem is dependent on these species survival.
- Native forests provide recreation and improved health outcomes to locals and visitors alike and are a source of community pride and connection to place. Native forests promotes our well-being which has long term positive affects for all the community.
- Native forests in NSW hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people. Respect for Aboriginal People starts with respecting Country -their land that includes all the native forest estate and belongs to them.
- First Nations people and communities have ongoing connection to native forests and forest landscapes are an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge.
- There are 269 nationally listed threatened species in NSW and the landscape scale significance of native forests means that native forest logging compromises many ecosystems and habitats throughout NSW that represents the home to many species on the extinction list. So many of our forest dependent species are edging so close to extinction is frightening. Some of our rarest and most unique animals rely on forests and the hollows in mature trees to survive. The only way for animals like the Greater Glider, Yellow-bellied Glider, Koala and many other animals to survive is if we stop logging their forest homes.
- Instead of destruction through logging we must **plan to repair and regenerate** our public native forests back to health and actively manage them.
The health and structure of our public native forests has diminished after many years of intensive logging with negligible active regeneration actions. Many are weed infested, dried out, lack the diversity they once had and harbour invasive species. We need a long term strategic management plan and significant investment into the regeneration of these environments. These forest environments can become the State's natural recreation areas, taking the pressure off the National Park Estate. We have lost much in our native forests. NSW Forestry Corp aggressively destroys our forests with no attempt to repair the damage or replant. This is not the time to continue logging but end NSW native forest logging for good.

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

- Logging in native forests accounted for only 9% of the total log production in Australia in the year 2023. Native forest logging contributes only 2.4 million of the total 25 million cubic metres for that year.

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- Half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported. Destroying our forest trees and species habitats to export woodchip is NOT acceptable.
- Hardwood logs taken from plantations made up 8.5 million cubic metres, and just 8% of these logs were saw and veneer logs. 87% of hardwood plantation logs were exported as wood chips. Expanding plantation forests is the solution to ending native forestry logging and save our wildlife as well as protect our carbon capturers- old growth trees and our forests.
- Hardwood sourced from native forests or plantations are no longer necessary for any of the uses identified in this section.
- Sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods can substitute for all current uses for native forest and plantation hardwoods.
- The market and demand for native forests is declining rapidly, the recent example of Essential Energy moving away from power poles harvested from native forests is just one example.

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

- Plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production.
- A higher proportion of harvested logs from plantations should be prioritised as saw and veneer logs, rather than exporting them as wood chips.
- Subsidising the logging of public native forests by the Forestry Corporation is non-competitive and distorts the market away from the more profitable softwood plantation industry.
- Any continuation of private native forestry that could escalate and destroy threatened species habitat must abide by strict compliance and regulations that protect identified species in these private native forests, with a refusal to log if such species exist.
- High-end and luxury native hardwood products should only be selectively harvested on private land and under strict conditions.
- A **plan to fairly transition** the industry to softwood plantation is the answer to end native forest logging. The native forest logging industry in NSW is already dwindling and people and communities are losing out as this happens with no plan to transition workers and facilities to soft-wood plantation and other industry. With a plan to ensure all workers are able to continue meaningful employment in the industry and processing facilities transitioned to processing soft wood only, so people and communities can thrive alongside our native forests that are kept standing.
- While we develop a plan for industry transition, we must have a **moratorium on commencement of all new native forest logging operations**. We need to protect all forests slated for logging for which logging has not yet commenced. This means we need to put a freeze on all new logging, keeping our native wildlife habitats intact and protecting our threatened and forest dependent species.

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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

- Native forests that are not logged have real and tangible benefits to the entire ecology and economy of NSW.
- Native state forests cover an area of 2 million hectares in NSW and impact on a diverse set of living conditions for many towns, from water quality in reservoirs, to greater tourism industry opportunities, and carbon storage and abatement.
- The native forest hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation operates at a loss that runs into tens of millions of dollars, at the expense of the NSW public. It also additionally receives tens of millions of dollars in regular equity injections.
- The people of NSW should not be paying millions of dollars to destroy the biodiversity of our own state and critical habitat for threatened species and promote their decline to extinction. This is morally and ethically wrong.
- Public native forests have a much higher economic value when they are allowed to function naturally and without logging.
- First Nations Ranger Programs have been hugely successful at managing the recovery and health of native forests. Programs like the Githabul Rangers have shown how First Nations knowledge and management can restore the natural and critical function of forests in the landscape. First Nations People's knowledge and skills must be respected and accessed much more than it presently is to recover native forests that have been logged by NSW Forestry Corp. We constantly see the destruction but where is the accountability by this organisation to repair these forests. Images of trees cut down and left to rot leaving a barren landscape with no intent to repair or replant. This organisation lacks the social and environmental responsibility to repair what has taken Mother nature centuries to create!

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

- Native forest logging in NSW is estimated to release 3.6 million tonnes of carbon every year. **Our native forests are so important as they are the best defence against the climate crisis.** They sink and store carbon emissions. The healthier our forests are the more effective they are in this function. If we do not stop logging our forests and manage them back to health they could become carbon emitters and that would be disastrous for us and this planet.
- Ending native forest logging would be the equivalent to removing 840,000 cars from the roads per year.
- Logging in a native forest reduces the amount of stored carbon by more than half of the original value. Our native forests fight climate change but they can't do it if they are logged by a financially draining industry supported by taxpayer money.

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- Ending native forest logging will allow previously logged forests to regain lost carbon and make a significant contribution to meeting our emissions targets.
- Climate change is driving increased risks for forest health and continued logging in native forests is exacerbating that risk.
- Forests that have not been logged are more resilient to the changing climate and catastrophic fires that are occurring as a consequence. Continued native forest logging increases fire risk and reduces CO2 absorption because our trees have been logged exacerbating the worst effects of climate change. We are therefore contributing to catastrophic fires because we have interfered with the natural functions of these complex ecosystems. Logging disrupts the humid microclimates of forests, making them more susceptible to fire. As we experience more severe hot, dry weather periods due to climate change, logging forests exacerbates the already increasing risk of fire. By destroying the canopy that keeps forest damp, logging creates more flammable fuel for fires. There is now conclusive evidence that logging native forests increases the risk of bushfire, not reduces it. Supporting the continued logging of our native forests will increase natural disasters like bushfires and floods. Government financial aid to assist those people affected is another cost to the government born by the taxpayer.

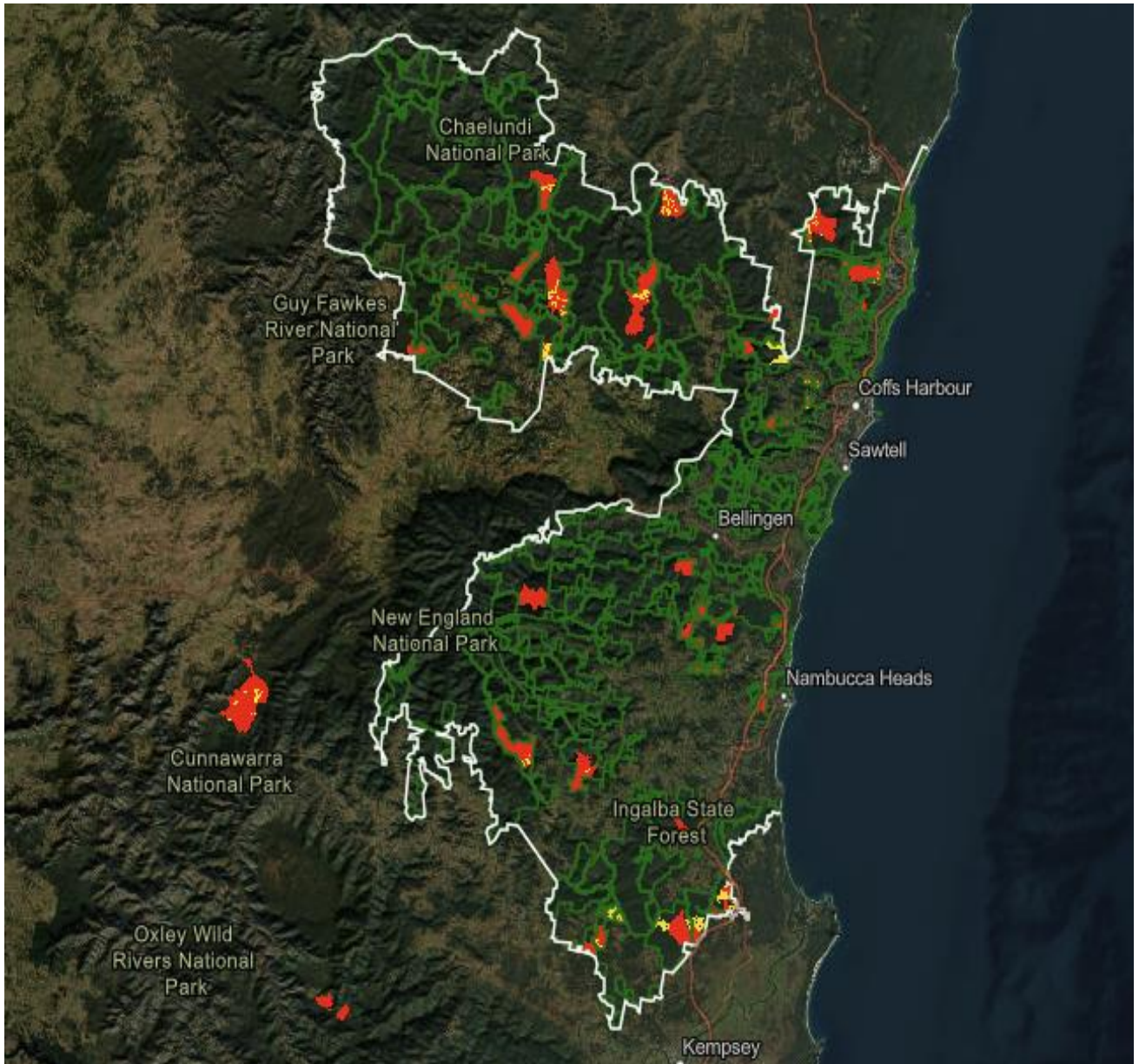
Summary

Finally of utmost importance there must be an immediate **suspension of logging in the Great Koala National Park.**

Native forest logging across NSW is environmentally and economically destructive and is driving the extinction of koalas. The native forests of the NSW Mid-North Coast are internationally significant and are home to around 20% of the state's wild koala populations. Communities from across the state celebrated when the new Labor Government committed to create the Great Koala National Park and allocated \$80 million to make this happen. Sadly, months on from the election nothing has been done except an accelerated pace by Forestry Corporation to log the area on an industrial scale, destroying koala habitat and causing irreversible damage.

The Government has said that they will not stop logging the forest and koala habitat while the National Park is being established. This is an untenable position. They are dragging out the creation of the GKNP to maintain increased logging of the area. Forestry Corp plunder forests, diminishes all of their important values and pushes our koalas closer to extinction. This is environmental vandalism at its worse and a waste of public money. Looking at a map of the GKNP huge areas have already been identified for logging for 2025. Comparing what has already been logged since 2023 this is a massive increase. This is an example of an aggressive action plan by NSW Forestry Corp to destroy as much habitat out of the GKNP before it is even created. The community are angry that our koalas will inherit a destroyed area as a result of planned intensive logging by NSW Forestry Corp. We want this area created and protected now and all logging to cease.

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Map of the proposed Great Koala National Park.

Areas in yellow = logging since 2023 | **Areas in red** = planned logging to 2025

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