

Public submission

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Submission to the Forest Industry Action Panel

From Jenny Cullen [REDACTED]

I will not go over, yet again, all the facts and figures as to why the forestry industry is wasteful of both our timber and our taxes or devastatingly destructive of complex, varied ecosystems and driving many plants and animals to local or global extinction. This has all been known clearly for decades and you will have the current figures before you. I hope you have all read *The Forest Wars* by David Lindenmayer, which very succinctly presents the dire state of the forestry industry.

I beseech you to act on the bleeding obvious. Koalas, gliders and countless other creatures, great and small, depend on forests. Take the forests away and you lose the wildlife. Volumes of studies have been written, professional and citizen scientists are diligently documenting signs of wildlife, we have long known enough. The problem is not a lack of knowledge but a complete lack of political will to do what's necessary. Politicians of every persuasion mouth platitudes about their commitment to saving the koala or ending extinctions, but continue to allow logging of vital habitat.

I have been writing letters to try and save native forests since I was a teenager and I am now 67. Over my lifetime there have been some significant wins, but the overall picture is one of massive loss of forests and wildlife. Right now, the NSW government is allowing clearfelling in multiple areas earmarked for the promised Great Koala National Park. I have visited several of these sites this year and been appalled to see the total removal of all vegetation in these operations. This is not selective logging as was once practised long ago. This is total war with massive machines to remove everything growing, then poison to make sure nothing returns. Like so many others, I feel a deep sense of betrayal that Minister Sharpe and her government promised, seemingly sincerely, that they would create the Great Koala National Park if elected. Over two years into their term, they continue to allow forestry to destroy areas under consideration for inclusion in the National Park. And they wonder how to restore trust in government?

My own home is timber and I love wood as a material. However, we can no longer have everything that everybody wants because there are now 8 billion humans and other species are being driven to extinction. Native hardwoods need to be seen as a precious resource, available only if it is grown in plantations and for high-end products. Plantations should be grown on land which has already been cleared, not by clearing forested areas. Composite and engineered products, plus treated pine are now ready alternatives to hardwoods.

There are confusing debates about the definitions of "native forest" and "plantations". One area that I saw being clearfelled had last been logged about 60 years ago – and forestry in those days did not involve total removal of every plant from shrubs to tall trees. 60 years is long enough that this forest had grown a wide mixture of species of trees and lower storey plants – it was a recovering mixed forest ecosystem and provided valuable habitat for koalas

and a myriad of other species of birds and wildlife. There were documented recent koala sightings and scats. Yet this was being destroyed as if it had no ecological value.

Ecological value needs to be given a weighting like economic value. It is actually worth more than any money because humans cannot recreate what they so easily can destroy. We cannot bring species back to life nor recreate the complex webs of an ecosystem, much of which is still not fully understood.

With the huge loss of forest already suffered in the over two hundred years since British settlement, we do not have enough left to keep taking it as we have got used to doing. Additionally, climate change means that extreme fire and weather events are likely to be more frequent and more damaging. Intact forests with ample connecting corridors are the only way wildlife can survive.

Where our own safety and wellbeing is concerned, we try to maximise the margin of error in any risk. If in doubt, make it safer. We need to apply the same caution and care to our remaining forests and wildlife. Please use your power and opportunity to recommend decisive, immediate action to stop native forest logging and design a transition for affected workers. In other industries, several thousand people may lose their jobs overnight due to a restructure, business collapse or moving offshore. The fact that a relatively small number of people will need to change jobs from their current roles in forestry is not a justification to destroy our remaining forests. It's a challenge the government can meet.