

Public submission

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Topic 1:

Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

I have worked in the forestry industry for 30+ years and have seen a lot of change in that time. In recent years I have witnessed the introduction of a lot more regulation. This regulation has focused solely on the environment, and has resulted in a large area of forest that was previously available for harvesting now being locked up in reserves and environmental exclusion zones.

I believe that the existing IFOA rules hinder regeneration and rehabilitation of degraded land. Some of these areas are covered in weeds such as Lantana require mechanical disturbance and removal followed by a burn to encourage proper regeneration of the native species. Some of these 'weedy' areas are locked up in what are classed as threatened ecological communities as mapped under the IFOA (e.g. some of these areas are old banana plantations that are now covered in weeds). These rules need to be reviewed with silvicultural outcomes and the health of the bush in mind.

Hazard reduction burning and burning for the health of the bush needs to be improved and a lot of the regulatory hoops that need to be jumped through need to be reviewed. Presently it is quite difficult to undertake a HRB and achieve both good environmental outcomes and a reduction in fire risk to neighbours and communities.

Our public State forests have been certified to AS/NZ4608 (Responsible Wood and PEFC) since 2006. This certification is based on the true meaning of sustainability which is placing equal importance on environmental, social and economic values.

I truly believe that harvesting of our native forests is a sustainable option for Australia. Based on my time in the bush I have witnessed the full cycle of forest growth. I have witnessed areas that were harvested approx. 30-40 years ago regenerate and become available for selective harvesting again. These forests still have all the values in them, if not more, that they had 40 years ago. Flora and fauna have not been negatively affected.

Topic 2:

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

- Koalas are an elusive animal however I have seen numerous koalas in the bush over the years. The Government needs to look at the real cause of threatened species, including the Koala, decline rather than blame an industry which has proven studies and science to back up that they do not have a negative effect on the Koala population.
- Brad Law's independent research has shown that there is no discernible difference between Koala populations on State forest as National Parks. In fact, State forests have funded and provided land to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital to build a purposed built breeding facility. This was done by the State Forests, not National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- The people who work in the native forests timber industry love the bush and the wildlife in it which is why they have chosen to spend their lives working in it. They are truly passionate about the bush and care for it's health.
- Integration of Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge is used on an everyday basis when working in the native forest timber industry. State forests undertake activities such as cultural heritage

surveys with local Aboriginal Elders within the community. There are also numerous media reports of 'cultural burns' being undertaken as a collaborative project between local Aboriginal Groups and State forests. Sharing of this knowledge is key to ensuring the health of the bush. Our current regulations do not lend themselves to this knowledge being gained and implemented.

- Should areas be locked up (e.g. GKNP), there would clearly be a reduction in the contractor based. With this would come a significant loss in the specialised skills and machinery that these contractors have, which would result in a much less favourable outcome when fighting wildfires. These contractors know the bush like the back of their hand, have the skills to put firebreaks into steep country using the most environmentally friendly route, ability to work under extreme pressure in very dangerous situations, operate specific machinery such as harvesting machines which were critical in removal of dangerous trees after the 2019/2020 bushfires (i.e. these trees posed a catastrophic risk of throwing embers as well as causing injury or death to fire fighters. They were too dangerous to remove manually).
- I encourage you to watch the videos on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website: [Australian Forestry – planning for tomorrow, today - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au). There are 4 or 5 videos.

Topic 3:

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

- The demand for timber in Australia is growing and is predicted to far exceed current production levels. Locking up further native forests from harvesting does not make any sense at all. This would lead to Australia importing more timber from overseas countries who have far more lax environmental regulations. The carbon footprint of this imported timber would significantly contribute to climate change due to the emissions associated with international shipping and transportation. It would also lead to an increase in the current cost of living and housing crisis that Australia is experiencing.
- Australia is currently a net importer of timber due to public native forests being locked by what can be described as a handful of greens groups dispersing emotional and untrue 'stories' about harvesting in Australia.
- Many Regional towns rely on the timber industry to survive and to keep food on the table. I have lived in Regional Australia for all of my life and have had a close relationship with the forest. I have first hand knowledge of harvesting being excluded from large areas of forest which has caused mills to close and towns to die as the population is forced to move elsewhere for work.

Topic 4:

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

- To assess the impact of the 2019/2020 wildfires on the native forest harvesting of our public native hardwood plantations increased to continue to supply timber to the community. As this resource is finite, this had a large impact on the timber that is now available to harvest from within plantations. A large injection of funding is needed to re-establish plantations, and to expand this wood supply base.
- It needs to be said though, that plantation timber is not always a direct substitute for that obtained from our native forests. There are differences in species, wood density and strength. Not all species that are harvested within the native forest can be economically grown in a plantation as they are limited by land availability, site suitability and long growth timeframes. Land that is suitable for plantation establishment is also usually suitable for Agriculture, thus they would be competing for the same land.
- A reduction in the timber produced from our native forests would lead to shortages in critical products such as poles, piles, girders and structural timbers. Pine is not a substitute for these.
- Private native forestry can assist in supplementing this, however the land base is not large enough to sustain an industry, and the population of Australia, for any length of time.

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

- State forests have a lot more diverse recreational opportunities such as horse riding, dog walking, 4WD, camping, archery, mountain biking and hunting. These activities are not well catered for within the National Park system/estate. These activities do not fit in with the National Park's strict environmental policies. State forests however allow these activities and I believe they are a key element of sustainability and allowing the public to use their public forests.
- State forests also support other commercial activities such as grazing, and apiculture, quarries (i.e. they provide gravel to local councils to repair council roads), providing sites for telecommunication towers and associated infrastructure and manning fire towers that provide early warning of fires across tenures. These facilities again, are not well catered for within the National Park estate.
- Forestry provides a lot of direct and indirect employment throughout regional NSW. Jobs in harvesting, timber processing, transportation of both raw and sawn products and sales roles support regional development. This is in stark contrast to locking it up and relying on small tourism ventures.
- State forests have developed an award winning tourism attraction at Sealy Lookout. State forests have partnered with a local Aboriginal company who run a successful café. They have also partnered with Tree Tops to create outdoor adventure activities. Similar partnerships have been fostered and Tree Tops and Bouncing nets are also provided on State forest at Kiwarrack and Cumberland in Sydney.

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

- As stated above, Australia is a net importer of timber products, most of which are sourced from countries that do not have the same strict environmental regulations as us. The carbon footprint of timbers imported from overseas areas that are prone to deforestation has been likened to the equivalent to millions of tons of CO₂ globally, comparable to the emissions of major fossil fuel-consuming nations like India.
- Sourcing timber locally ensures emissions are reduced.
- Forests that are managed for timber harvesting sequester more carbon than those that remain untouched. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recognises that sustainably managed production forests that maintain carbon in growing trees while producing an annual yield of timber deliver a large, sustained climate change mitigation benefit. It is a well known fact that when timber is turned into wood products such as tables, chairs and structural timber, it stores the carbon in the wood for life.
- Using timber and wood products saves energy and has lower carbon emissions during the production cycle when compared to other common construction and manufacturing materials such as concrete, plastic, or steel. This is particularly relevant to the construction industry, as it's estimated that eight per cent of global greenhouse emissions come from concrete and cement manufacturing ([Choose wood: How this renewable resource can reduce your footprint - Make It Wood](#)).
- The trees that are used to produce wood and timber products release oxygen while storing carbon, a valuable service given the growing impacts of climate change as our atmospheric carbon increases. Australia's forests alone store around 22 billion tonnes of carbon. Wood continues to store that carbon when used in products and building materials. In fact, the ability to sequester large amounts of carbon offsets some of the carbon emissions generated from the production of a building over its lifespan. Trees also filter water in the ground, clean our air, and do not produce any harmful pollutants while they grow.
- A bonus benefit for decorating with wood is that the feelings of natural warmth and comfort that wood elicits in people have the effect of lowering blood pressure and heart rates, reduces stress and anxiety, and increases positive social interactions. By choosing renewable resources like wood, we can reduce our environmental impact, promote a circular economy, and enhance our quality of life ([Choose wood: How this renewable resource can reduce your footprint - Make It Wood](#)).