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

Native forest logging is unsustainable. Estimations by the Forestry Corporation of the amount of harvestable timber are consistently overestimated. Instead, the yield from public native forests has declined by a staggering 40% since 2010. Then protections for mature trees were removed in 2018 and logging intensified to try to get even more wood from native forests. Logging of native forests also reduces biomass and carbon storage, and removing mature trees takes away valuable food sources and hollow bearing trees.

Now 174 species in NSW rely on hollows for dens and nests, as logging reduces the number of hollows that will be created in native forests. Native forest logging increases fire threat and intensity, erosion and water way pollution, the penetration of weeds and other invasive species, and reduces the function and health of waterways, including streams and rivers.

Topic 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. 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, as they lose access to all these things. There are a further 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. Mature and unlogged native forests are also critical for pollinators and play a key role in pollination across the landscape, both inside and outside of forests. In addition, native forests provide recreation and improved health outcomes to locals and visitors alike and are a source of community pride and connection to place. They hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people and communities, and have ongoing connection to native forests and forest landscapes, forming an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge.

Topic 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, contributing only 2.4 million of the total 25 million cubic metres for that year. Half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported instead.

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. As a result, 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 of this.

Topic 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, so 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. High-end and luxury native hardwood products should only be selectively harvested on private land and under strict conditions.

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

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 a diverse set of living conditions for many towns, from water quality in reservoirs to greater tourism industry opportunities, not to mention carbon storage and abatement. The native forest hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation also operates at a loss that runs into tens of millions of dollars, at the expense of the NSW public. This is on top of the tens of millions of dollars it receives 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. Public native forests have a much higher economic value when they are allowed to function naturally and without logging. For instance, 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.

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

Native forest logging in NSW is estimated to release 3.6 million tonnes of carbon every year. Therefore, ending native forest logging would be the equivalent to removing 840 thousand cars from the roads per year. Logging in a native forest also reduces the amount of stored carbon by more than half of the original value. Instead, 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 only exacerbating that risk. Forests that have not been logged are much more resilient to the changing climate and catastrophic fires that are occurring as a consequence.