

Public submission

KEVIN COLLINS

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Attention: The Forest Industry Action Panel

Submission Regarding the Future of the Native Forestry Industry in NSW

Thank you for considering my input on this very important matter.

I fully support an urgent, complete and permanent end to all logging of native forests in NSW.

Though I live in the suburbs, I have a deep and abiding connection with our country's many and varied landscapes and have spent much of my life walking and camping in the woodlands and forests of NSW. I draw inspiration and personal renewal from these special places, amazed by the intricate, self-sustaining network of life woven into such environments. Australia's natural heritage is an integral part of who we are as Australians and indeed it underpins our very existence by providing for our essential physical and emotional needs.

Tragically, this irreplaceable natural heritage is in serious decline, largely as a consequence of human activity following European colonisation. The landscape was once viewed as home by indigenous Australians, and as the home of our many unique organisms. The land itself supported human society and people reciprocated by tending and caring for it. Unfortunately, such an attitude of stewardship has been replaced by an exploitation mindset in which the environment is valued primarily for the materials and services that humans can extract. Human impact has seriously degraded our land and we are very much the poorer for it.

The decline of NSW forests is well documented. Since colonisation 54% of pre-existing NSW woodlands and forests have been completely removed and more than a third of what remains exists in a degraded state. Natural ecosystems have been severely impacted as a result, and this will only accelerate if logging continues in native forests. I have observed with great sadness the concurrent impact of a drying and warming climate, along with the spread of introduced pest species - all due to human activity. I have personally visited areas subject to invasive weeds and animals, phytophthora, die-back, drought and mega-fires. It has reinforced for me the absolute necessity to take utmost care with what little forest remains.

Please find below my specific reasons in support of ceasing all logging of native forests in NSW.

1. Australia already has an appalling record of species extinctions. Massive disturbance of forest ecosystems would further exacerbate this dire situation because of:
 - Removal of hollow-bearing old trees
 - Disrupting the age profile of forests
 - Making the landscape susceptible to more frequent and hotter fires
 - Soil disturbance (including spread of pathogens)
 - Weed introduction
 - Further reduction in the extent of undisturbed woodlands and forests

- Degradation of areas planned for inclusion in National Parks (e.g. the proposed Great Koala National Park)
2. Forests are essential to the maintenance of healthy catchments yet the quality of water is seriously degraded by logging activities. In a drying climate water must be the priority.
 3. Previous clearing, climate change and invasive species will continue to fundamentally alter the environment in NSW in such a way as to make previous land use practices obsolete. The real world has changed and logging in native forests has been rendered unviable and unsustainable - whether we like it or not we cannot live in the past.
 4. Forests should not be seen simply as an economic resource. They are a living part of what Australia is and of who we are, and as such should not be assessed on the basis of dollar value. Society rightly abandoned the buying and selling of human life because people are much more than economic units of production. So too forests.
 5. From an economic perspective, there is no need to persist with logging native forests.
 - much of the current production is of low value wood-chip to make throw-away products
 - the industry runs at a loss, is heavily subsidised and constitutes a big drain on the public purse
 - hardwood and softwood plantations already supply 91% of our log production and could easily expand to replace logs from native forests, with appropriate incentives
 6. Carbon is effectively sequestered in mature, undisturbed native forests. The logging of native forests results in a net release of carbon into the atmosphere, particularly when it is taken into consideration that much of the wood-chip becomes paper and cardboard that subsequently decomposes. Indeed, when such decomposition inevitably occurs in landfill methane is released - a much more potent greenhouse gas compared to carbon dioxide. Continued logging of native forests thus contributes to anthropogenic global warming - a highly undesirable outcome.
 7. With the right government interventions cessation of logging can be an opportunity to positively reshape the socioeconomics of rural Australia. It need not be the death of communities but could easily be the start of a more sustainable and prosperous society if the government targets regional job creation in tourism, landcare and renewable energy.
 8. Forestry Corporation NSW has exhibited a pattern of non-compliance and illegality in how it runs its business as attested to by numerous fines, a threatened criminal trial and extensive reporting of blatant irregularities. It is shameful that a government agency appears to be a genuinely rogue entity with little accountability and questionable ethical standards. It has not responded appropriately to concerns about its behaviour and

cannot be relied upon to act in the best interests of all NSW citizens. The Corporation's dysfunctional nature is both a symptom and a cause of damaging logging practices in NSW. FCNSW appears to be resistant to reform and needs to be shut down.

9. Victoria and Western Australia have ended logging in native forests, instituting transition programs to support the people and communities affected by the change. These states clearly demonstrate the feasibility of such a move for NSW. The transition away from logging native forests has not been without problems, with activities such as salvage logging being used as loopholes to persist with removing native forest trees. Nevertheless, Victoria and WA are case studies to show it is possible to cease native forest logging, yet also stand as reminders that robust and careful legislative change is necessary to make it work properly.

I trust that the Independent Forestry Panel will carefully consider the above points. I firmly believe that logging in NSW native forests should promptly cease.

Regards,
Kevin Collins