

# Public submission

LINDA GILL

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13.10.2024

**Independent Forestry Panel:**

**Peter Duncan AM (Chair), Professor Mary O’Kane AC and the Hon. Mick Veitch.**

**<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/cases/2024/08/independent-forestry-panel>**

I would like to thank the Independent Forestry Panel for the opportunity to make submission on this matter of great environmental importance in the management of our public forests, & to the survival of large numbers of Endangered & Threatened flora & fauna species, the protection of our water catchments, carbon capture & storage sinks, & forest systems that are integral to weather systems.

I write this submission on the unceded lands of the Worimi people & acknowledge elders, past, present & emerging, & their continued presence to this day.

Native forests holds significant cultural and spiritual value for our local Aboriginal community.

I have had 20 years in horticultural production & education. I have also served 26 years as an elected Councillor on the then Great Lakes Council, which has now been amalgamated with Taree and Gloucester, to form the Midcoast Council.

As a retired person, I am now an active wildlife rescuer & care for For Australian Wildlife Needing Aid (FAWNA).

We have lived in this area for over 38 years & have watched the public forests around us, managed by Forestry Corporation (FC), and far from being managed sustainably, these forests have been systematically reduced to even aged mono crop plantations of Blackbutt, Flooded gum & Tallowwood, with minimal wildlife present, & where water catchment functions have been highly modified.

Most habitate values like old trees, needed for hollow dependant species for their existence, have, as a rule been deliberately removed.

## **Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW**

There is overwhelming evidence that Native forest logging is economically and ecologically unsustainable

There is no doubt that FC consistently over estimate the amount of harvestable timber.

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

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.

The Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel (2020) stated the 2019/2020 Black Summer fires were an ecological disaster. In 2021 the Natural Resources Commission Report on the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) stated that native forests are at risk of serious and irreversible harm from the cumulative impacts of fire and harvesting.

The IFOA report recommended that logging should be suspended for three years in Taree, one of the three extreme risk regions in NSW recuperating from the 2019/20 fires. But that didn't happen. Unconscionably, FC began logging in Yarratt State Forest (known unburnt Koala hub) in 2021,

regardless of advice. Their action demonstrated disregard for scientific opinion and the welfare of wildlife.

### **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

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.

Native forests provide recreation and improved health outcomes to locals and visitors alike and are a source of community pride and connection to place

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.

In fact, the current management of our State Forests is resulting in potentially irretrievable habitat and biodiversity loss to the North Coast Bioregion (The NSW North Coast bioregion has over 370 threatened animal and plant species.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/bioregions/bioregions-of-nsw/nsw-north-coast> ) .

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

It is a documented fact that 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.

Half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported.

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.

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.

### **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 FC 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.

### **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 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.

Native forests that are not logged have real and tangible benefits to the entire ecology and economy of NSW.

The native forest hardwood division of the FC 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.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW commissioned a report on Frontier Economics in 2023 that found that FCNSW has been a financial drag on taxpayers over a very long period, losing \$30 million over the previous two years (<https://www.frontier-economics.com.au/public-native-forest-logging-a-large-and-growing-taxpayer-burden/> ).

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.

**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.

Ending native forest logging would be the equivalent to removing 840 thousand 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.

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 more frequently and greater intensity.