

Public submission

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Your submission

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

I have been campaigning to protect public native forests for more than 35 years. I am a retired High School teacher. I was a Counsellor on Nambucca Shire Council for 8 years I was the Nature Conservation Council representative on the Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) Committee during the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) during 1998-2000. I worked, and succeeded, in having the word “ecological” always inserted before “sustainable” so that it was “ecological sustainable” forest management that we embraced and was required. This was carried forward into the legislation. The term “sustainability” on its own is not accepted by myself, by scientists nor by the legislation as what we should aim for. It must be rephrased to “ecologically sustainable”. Logging can be said to be sustainable if the cutting can continue without taking into account its negative impacts such as only younger and younger trees remaining, water quality and quantity declines coming from the forested catchment, increasing threatened forest dependent species and declining recreation and tourism amenity. However, it is only ecologically sustainable if the forests, its dependent flora and fauna, its water generation capacity and myriad other ecological values are also sustained while that logging takes place. We have a situation where the public native forests of NSW, its canopy, the old trees, the natural species mix of eucalypts and the suite of forest dependent fauna and flora are not being sustained during or after a logging event. This is mining. Our public native forests and all their non-timber values are being run down from many years of overcutting. Bill Boyd, an old forester from Wauchope, said, in 2016 on ABC Background Briefing radio program: “In the last 20 years we have logged 200 years worth of timber.” What a statement from an 80 year old man, in the industry all his life. I recently found out that whereas a high quality sawlog in the 1980’s and 90’s was upwards of 50 or 60 cm diameter at breast height (DBH) and which, around 2000, at the time of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) when Bob Carr was Premier of NSW, was reduced to 40cm DBH, it is now only 30cm dbh (ref: Dean Kearney at Community Advisory Panel for the Great Koala National Park in Coffs Harbour in July 2024) A 30cm dbh tree is approximately 30 years old. This is an appalling situation. Our native forests need to be let to grow back and become old if all the non-timber values that have been degraded and often destroyed are to return to the benefit of the forest dependent species that have become rare and for the benefit of the public who enjoy them and the landholders who depend on water coming from them. It is well beyond time to stop logging our native forests beginning with an end to native forest logging on public land now, not in 4 years, 3, 2 or even one. This is my key plea to the Panel. Design and implement an urgent transition out of native forest logging and the benefits will flow into the future. Voluntary exit packages could be fast tracked. The Minns/Labor government will leave a legacy for future generations and make a valuable contribution to mitigating climate change. Business as usual, even for a short time is not acceptable. I am tired of words and processes that talk about protecting looking after endangered species and public native forests but at the same time ensure it is continued to be logged while the “process” drags out as has been happening in the Great Koala Park Assessment Area for the last 18 months. Action is needed not more words and processes. This duplicitous government policy is causing angst to both “sides” on the ground in the regions, is massively damaging to NSW Labor as well as continuing, and cumulatively adding to, all the degradation of the non-timber values of our public native forests described above. that region to be Only action – stopping the logging urgently – will begin to restore the forests and the damaged reputation of the NSW Labor government in the eyes of those in the regions who have a public native forest (a State Forest) nearby which they’ve loved and have watched being destroyed. I also comment on the use of the term “selective” logging when basal area retention limits are as low as 10m²/ha and even allow 25% of test sites to be 6m²/ha. This is not selective in the ordinary definition of the term which implies the canopy and forest itself remains while some trees only are selected and logged. This is not how it is on the ground. Expert Andrew Smith, reporting to the EPA following the Black Summer bushfires had a key recommendation (ignored by EPA and government) that basal areas retained

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should be far higher than allowed in the CIFOA for forest fauna such as Koalas and gliders to survive a logging event. The recommendation is: “15. This report also recommends that the intensity of so called selective harvesting in all DrySclerophyll Forest types be significantly reduced by increasing minimum tree basal area limits and minimum medium and large tree stocking limits, to ensure that populations of threatened and sensitive fauna such as Koala and Greater Glider are maintained at close to normal densities within the net harvest area consistent with principles and requirements for ecologically sustainable harvesting required under Regional Forest Agreements and the Forestry Act 2012.

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

A further point that proves the current forestry operation on public land are not ecologically sustainable is that a great portion has been turned into a sea of Blackbutt species on the north coast which has not sustained the mixed species native forest it has replaced. This has been done intentionally and by management prescriptions that remove the other species by logging or favor Blackbutt by the retention of only Blackbutt seed trees. This devalues the forest for all fauna that need other eucalypt species such as koalas who eat from a range of preferred species (Tallowwod especially, Grey gum, allocasuarina) In a study by Andrew Smith in Pine Creek SF only 1% of Blackbutt leaves were found in Koala scats that were analysed. They were eating 11% of allocasuarinas (this was formerly unknown) and much higher percentages of Tallowwood, Gey gum and other eucalypt preferred browse species. The sea of Blackbutt that now covers so much of what was a mixed species native forest must be somewhat of a desert to Koalas. Regarding environmental values of native forests including threatened species: this is a huge topic with independent experts providing evidence for decades that logging is causing the decline of hundreds and thousands of forest dependent plants and animals. 176 of these are dependent on old tree with hollows which provide their homes. Native forests in 1750 covered 97% of northeast NSW. We have totally cleared more than half of this in our 200 years of occupation. We have logged most of the rest leaving precious little old growth and mature forests, which we continue to run down by logging. It is no wonder that the plants and animals that evolved in and with these forests are also in decline, threatened and often moving quickly from vulnerable to endangered such as the koala. Truthfully this is shameful and must come to an end so all the suite of native forest environmental values including threatened species can begin to recover. This many take 500 years or more and is not even guaranteed with climate change proceeding apace due to our impacts proceeding also. Climate and fires will continue to threaten our native forests and the animals who depend on them even after logging ends.

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

More than 90% of NSW timber already comes from plantations, mostly the softwood plantations. What small effort it would take to help the plantation industry grow by the small amount it needs to for NSW to source all its timber from plantations. Now THAT would be a “Nature Positive” action. Just do it and we’ll also save millions from propping up the native timber industry which is anyway in decline due to overcutting. I support in full the submission from North East Forest Alliance (NEFA). Many building products these days are composites rather than timber (flooring, decking and power poles) or bamboo (flooring.) A huge alternate industry to wood fibre is Hemp fibre that can be used in bricks (hempcrete) for building construction for example. Steel framed houses rather than timber are the norm now. to enter text

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

Yes let's help softwood plantations continue and grow in size in appropriate locations. They are profitable and providing for 90% of NSW timber needs already. They are less prone to fire (D. Lindemayer submission to this Panel) so have a greater chance of delivering a sawlog (a higher value product) if let to grow old enough. About half of the timber coming from public native forests is used for woodchips or low value products such as palletes. And shockingly, an even higher percentage, 87% of the timber harvested from Hardwood plantations in Australia is exported as woodchip.(nefa.org.au ABARES) This is an indictment on forest management over the years and now: Inflated yield estimates, Wood Supply Agreements that are for volumes that don't exist force overcutting that runs the forest down. This is the timber industry cutting itself out of a future. It is this longstanding and continuing situation that has brought us to this time where the overwhelming public opinion is that our native forests, and their millions of years of evolution into a complex system of life and values is, on every measurement, worth more if protected and let grow old again. The simple solution is to let plantation timber grow for long enough that it produces sawlogs not woodchips and other low value products. Private native forest logging rules are not strong enough, being even weaker than the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (CIFOA) rules that apply to public native forests. A convincing and well researched case has been put forward by the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) that NSW can meet its timber needs without private native forest logging by letting plantations grow longer into valuable products. But, for a time, landowners should be paid if they have and keep old forests on their land in perpetuity. Keeping their forests for the public good and being paid an annuity could be voluntary for a short while.

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

Once public native forests are protected Joint management with aboriginal communities is supported but not sole management. The issue is how they are managed and not by who. They must be managed for protection not exploitation. Once protected and growing back naturally, every single non-timber value will increase each day, each year. These values, already discussed include economic and social benefit as well as environmental benefit. to enter text

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

This is not complicated. Once logging is stopped in our public native forests the carbon they store will increase thus reducing our emissions and mitigating climate change. This is what has to be done. To get tangled up in the carbon credits (ACCU) processes that are a nightmare due to the engineers of them trying to make money instead of just do the right thing, is a waste of time. Let's just increase the carbon stores by stopping logging and letting our forests grow. Simple .. but urgent. It's a similar story for biodiversity. If our forests are let grow older again, habitat will recover and the animals mostly will return over time. Trying to make money from biodiversity off-sets is not supported, especially as the current scheme allows money to be deposited in a fund if no like-for-like habitat can be found. Utterly defeating of what the scheme portrays itself to be. I oppose the word "markets" being used to monetise such intrinsically valuable and living things such as forests and nature itself. THE OPPORTUNITY IS STOPPING LOGGING OF OUR NATIVE FORESTS URGENTLY. I am sickened and disgusted at the devastation on the ground to these forests by years of logging but more so that the style of logging these days is near clearfell, removes the canopy, removes the forest and all the myriad creatures and plants that evolution has taken millions of years to create. We are in a climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis.

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Stopping destroying our native forests will turn around both these crises. We must do it and do it now. When I walk in an intact forest I feel good. When I walk through a logged area, even years after, I don't want to be there. We evolved with forests too and gain a feeling of being a part of everything when we enter a rainforest, for example. Old forests are living things full of living creatures and plants. They are a cathedral as much or more than any church is. How dare we destroy what we have been given from nature. I am begging the panel to make a strong recommendation to immediately suspend logging in public native forests, offer voluntary redundancy packages to effected workers, pay out the Wood supply agreements and use any left over money for resoration jobs in the new Parks and expanding the softwood plantation estate. Hardwood plantations in public native forests must only continue where they do not link areas of native forest, where they are on land no steeper than 10 degrees and not being used by native fauna.

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