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

****Ensuring Sustainability for Koalas and Forestry Operations****

I am writing to emphasize the urgent need for sustainable forestry practices in New South Wales, particularly in relation to the protection of our native koala populations. As the climate crisis escalates and habitats shrink, it is imperative that we reconsider current and future forestry operations to safeguard both our environment and the species that depend on it.

Current Challenges

The forestry industry in NSW has historically prioritized timber production over ecological health. This approach has led to habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation, significantly impacting koalas, which rely on specific tree species for food and shelter. With estimates indicating that koala populations have declined by over 50% in the last two decades, the sustainability of our forestry practices must be reassessed.

The Need for Integrated Management

Sustainable forestry is not merely about resource extraction; it involves a holistic approach that integrates ecological, social, and economic factors. Implementing adaptive management strategies that include habitat restoration, preservation of wildlife corridors, and controlled logging can significantly enhance the resilience of both forests and koala populations. Prioritizing biodiversity in planning can ensure that forestry operations do not come at the expense of our native wildlife.

Future Forestry Operations

Looking forward, it is essential to adopt practices that align with the principles of ecological sustainability. This includes:

- **Selective Logging****: Instead of clear-cutting, selective logging can reduce habitat destruction and maintain the structural integrity of forests.
- **Buffer Zones****: Establishing buffer zones around critical habitats can protect koala populations from the impacts of logging and human encroachment.
- **Restoration Projects****: Investing in reforestation and habitat restoration can help rehabilitate areas that have been degraded by past logging practices, fostering a healthier ecosystem.
- **Research and Monitoring****: Ongoing research into koala populations and their habitats is essential. Monitoring should guide adaptive management decisions, ensuring that forestry practices evolve in response to ecological changes.

The future of the forestry industry in NSW must prioritize sustainability to protect koalas and other native wildlife. By implementing integrated management practices and adopting a conservation-focused approach, we can ensure that our forests remain viable resources while also preserving the unique biodiversity of our region.

I urge the forestry industry to commit to these sustainable practices, as they are vital for koalas and for the overall health of our forests and ecosystems.

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

Forests in NSW are rich in environmental and cultural values. They provide habitat for threatened species, including koalas, and support complex ecosystems. Additionally, forests hold significant cultural heritage for Aboriginal communities, who have managed these lands for thousands of years. It is crucial to recognize and incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and practices into forest management plans. By doing so, we can foster a stewardship model that respects both the land and its traditional custodians, ensuring that cultural heritage is preserved alongside environmental health.

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

Timber remains a critical resource for various sectors, including housing, construction, mining, transport, and retail. As the demand for sustainable building materials increases, it is vital that we align our forestry practices with this demand. Sustainable forestry can provide high-quality timber while minimizing ecological impact. By focusing on responsible sourcing and promoting recycled materials, the industry can meet demand without jeopardizing forest health or koala populations.

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

The continuation and expansion of softwood and hardwood plantations, along with Private Native Forestry (PNF), are essential for meeting timber supply needs sustainably. These practices can offer a more controlled approach to timber production while safeguarding native biodiversity. Integrating biodiversity conservation measures within plantation management can mitigate the risks of monoculture plantations, ensuring that wildlife, including koalas, can thrive. Promoting PNF can also engage landholders in sustainable practices, fostering a sense of stewardship that benefits both the environment and the local economy.

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 play a pivotal role in maximizing environmental, economic, and social outcomes. By implementing diverse management practices, including Aboriginal forest management models, we can create a more holistic approach to forest stewardship. Collaborating with Aboriginal communities can lead to innovative practices that honor traditional ecological knowledge while enhancing biodiversity and resilience. Additionally, State Forests can serve as critical areas for conservation, recreation, and education, contributing to community well-being and environmental health.

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

Forests are essential in mitigating climate change by sequestering carbon and providing biodiversity benefits. There are significant opportunities to develop carbon and biodiversity markets that incentivize sustainable practices. By assessing and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from various forest uses, we can enhance the carbon storage potential of our forests. Implementing strategies to adapt to climate change risks, such as monitoring for pests and

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diseases and ensuring genetic diversity, will strengthen forest resilience and support overall ecosystem health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of forestry in NSW must prioritize sustainability and the protection of our native species, particularly koalas. By adopting integrated management practices, recognizing cultural values, and addressing the demand for timber responsibly, we can create a balanced approach that benefits both the environment and the economy. I urge the forestry industry to commit to these principles and work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure the long-term health of our forests and the species that inhabit them.