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

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Based on our brief post-colonial history, and the evidence of multiple organisations representing the health of our environment and native fauna and flora, it is clear that forestry operations in NSW are not sustainable; indeed, all native forestry logging, in NSW and Australia-wide, is unsustainable.

Academics from ANU, Griffith Uni and the Uni of Qld state that "Since European colonisation, 29 million hectares (54%) of the forests and woodlands that once existed in New South Wales have been destroyed. A further 9 million ha have been degraded in the past two centuries. This amounts to more than 60% of the state's forest estate". (<https://science.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/more-half-nsws-forests-and-woodlands-are-gone-ongoing-logging-increases-extinction>)

In 2021, it was revealed that analysis of Forestry Corporation figures obtained by the office of David Shoebridge show the profit from native forest logging in 2019/20 was a just \$28.03 a hectare. This equated to an average profit of less than 20 cents for each mature tree logged. Compare this to the value of a mature urban tree, which can run into the thousands.

It is clear that forestry operations in NSW have been, and continue to be, run in a way that is unsustainable economically and environmentally.

Forestry Corporation is an entity that makes economic, environmental and species losses that have a negative impact on our native species, the health of our environment, the state budget and our reputation.

To our shame, NSW is known globally as a deforestation hotspot.

In 2023, World Wide Fund for Nature ranked NSW last out of all nine states and territories for protecting and restoring trees.

Estimations by the Forestry Corporation of the amount of harvestable timber are consistently over-estimated.

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.

In 2021, more than 100 world leaders have promised to end and reverse deforestation by 2030 at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. Yet, 6 years out from this, logging continues apace in NSW, including in critical habitat for endangered species such as the greater glider, coastal emus, and koalas.

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In terms of sustainability, you cannot put a dollar value on the loss of a species such as the koala, greater glider or waratah.

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

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It is a terrible indictment of Forestry Corp, large land-holders and policy-makers that 100 Australian endemic species are listed as extinct (or extinct in the wild) since the nation's colonisation by Europeans in 1788. (<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news-and-media/latest-news/a-review-of-listed-extinctions-in-australia>). This is likely to be a significant under-estimate, given the ongoing discovery of new species. The extinction list includes 38 plants, 34 mammals, ten invertebrates, nine birds, four frogs, three reptiles, one fish, and a protist. This tally represents about 6,10% of the world's post-1500 recognised extinctions. Mammals have suffered the highest proportional rate of extinction (about 10% of the endemic mammal fauna), yet the NSW government continues to endorse native logging in important habitat areas for the Greater Glider (such as in Bulga State Forest) and koalas, and having protestors against this shocking situation arrested.

There are 269 nationally- listed threatened species in NSW. Even our state's floral emblem, the waratah, is now listed as vulnerable. The ongoing logging of native forests compromises many ecosystems and habitats throughout NSW. Australia is known globally as a deforestation and extinction hot spot. Loss and degradation of habitat through forestry operations and land-clearing has been hastened by extreme weather events including mega-fires. This is a dog chasing its tail - our post-colonial environmental mismanagement fueling more and more destruction. The loss of habitat for native species results in stress, breeding issues and disease (such as chlamydia in koalas), and increases the risk of road and dog kills. It hastens extinctions. It is this broad-scale clearing and degradation of forest habitats that is far and away the main cause of species extinctions. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219303/>)

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

Native forests in NSW hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people.

First Nations people and communities have ongoing connection to native forests and forest landscapes are 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**

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In a country suffering the devastating effects of climate change - extinctions, increasing heat, severe weather events....it is disgusting that any native or mature tree is harvested for woodchips. This is economic and environmental insanity/incompetence.

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.

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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. This is an inexcusable waste of a precious resource; a resource that, if left in place, would assist our resilience to climate change and extinctions.

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.

Since colonisation, vast area of private land have been cleared for farming with little regard to climate and biodiversity risks. These cleared areas are an opportunity to re-forest with plantations for timber products.

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

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Plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production. As stated in point 3, vast areas of already-cleared land can be used for plantations.

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 not only non-competitive and distorts the market away from the more profitable softwood plantation industry; it is not in the public interest - for the people, for native fauna and flora, or for our collective futures.

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**

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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 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.

The native forest hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation 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. This is an intolerable situation.

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.

It is time to close the irresponsible entity that is Forestry Corporation and support workers in the logging industry to transition into nature-positive areas of economic activity, such as forest rehabilitation, fire management, habitat surveys and support and responsible plantation management.

**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**

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Unless native logging is stopped now, this may all be too late.

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 as a consequence.

According to the UN Environment arm, forests are essential to keep global temperature rise to 2°C. They are our best natural ally in reducing emissions while enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem benefits.

According to the Climate Council, it is the combined effect of burning and releasing fossil fuels while allowing ongoing deforestation, that is super-charging climate change, and the NSW has been reckless in this instance. "Burning fossil fuels, in combination with destruction of carbon sinks due to deforestation and other activities, has contributed to more and more carbon dioxide building up in the atmosphere, more than can be absorbed from existing carbon sinks such as forests. The build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is driving global warming, as it traps heat in the lower atmosphere. Carbon dioxide levels are now at their highest in human history. It is not effective to 'offset' greenhouse gas pollution from burning fossil fuels by storing carbon in forests. This is because fossil fuels are pumping much more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than existing forests can absorb. At the same time, carbon stores in forests and other natural carbon sinks will become increasingly unstable as climate change progresses. Droughts, tropical storms, heatwaves and fire weather are increasing in severity and frequency because of climate change. This will continue to result in increases in forest losses, contributing to more and more carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. Risks are significantly reduced but not avoided by keeping the rise in global temperature well below 2°C."