

MICHELLE GRIFFITHS

Submission ID: 204615

Organisation: N/A

Location: New South Wales

Supporting materials uploaded: N/A

Submission date: 10/12/2024 9:47:23 PM

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

Current forestry operations in NSW are unsustainable and have little to no regard for the effects on wildlife and the environment as a whole. Things have deteriorated since the government repealed The Native Vegetation Act (NVA) in 2017 which according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has resulted in deforestation tripling in a small area of North West NSW. The organisation fears if this pattern continues throughout the rest of the state, the consequences would be dire. 'It is imperative that strong safeguards of forests and wildlife habitats be restored, with new legislation enacted to facilitate this.' (WWF-Australia: Native animals lost to tree-clearing in NSW 1998-2015 p2)

It's frustrating to see even pockets of forested land destroyed to make way for housing estates. The Campbelltown area is a prime example of that, home to a healthy koala population but what does that matter? Our trees and the wildlife they support are overlooked. Property developers seem to get what they want but what about the rest of us. This country has the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world and that's because of our actions. We are all responsible. Drastic change is needed. Our forests need to be protected for the benefit of mankind, wildlife and this planet. I am a citizen of NSW asking for change.

'A total of 517,956 hectares of native bushland was reportedly cleared for agriculture, native forestry and other development from 1998 to 2015, in the NSW Government's Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Woody Vegetation Change Report Card 2013,15.'

'Multiplying by average densities, this gives estimates of at least 9.1 million mammals, 10.7 million birds, and 67.1 million reptiles killed, over 86.9 million animals in total.' (WWF-Australia: Native animals lost to tree-clearing in NSW 1998-2015 p8). This is unsustainable.

Deforestation is a problem throughout Australia and the world. May NSW lead the way and be an example to the rest of Australia and the world by ending native forest logging in NSW. That may encourage other Australian states to follow suit.

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

The environmental value of forests cannot be understated. They capture and store carbon which helps mitigate climate change and they produce oxygen without which, we'd die. In the event of high rainfall, floods and winds, forests are like protective barriers, helping to absorb water and shield against winds. Forests are therefore beneficial in reducing soil erosion and landslides. Forests are also responsible for healthy soils high in microbial activity through organisms such as earthworms, ants, termites, bacteria and fungi. This soil biodiversity helps regulate pests and diseases. Forests are complex and diverse ecosystems and everything within the ecosystem is interconnected. You cannot affect part of the ecosystem without affecting the whole ecosystem. And when you forcefully bulldoze the trees and everything in its path, there is no getting it back. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), estimated 4.9 million animals died due to tree clearing each year over the decade 2005-2015. (WWF-Australia: Native animals lost to tree-clearing in NSW 1998-2015 p2) This is appalling and what has happened to reduce this loss of life over the last ten

years? And on top of that the fires of 2019/2020 decimated plant and animal life. The studies have been done. I don't understand why the government hasn't listened to conservation organisations such as WWF, Greenpeace Australia Pacific and Nature Conservation Council and others. Deforestation in NSW is rife and is killing a ridiculous number of animals each year and increasing the risk of extinction of the koala, sugar glider, coastal emu and many more forest dependent wildlife. If First Nation people were in charge of land conservation, the environment would not be exploited as it is. They honour and respect the land and its animals, which many Australians would benefit from learning. It's not all about money. And we need to stop viewing the life of trees and animals as inferior to our own and instead see ourselves as a part of the natural landscape and not separate from it. Then, we may wake up and realise, we're destroying a part of ourselves when we destroy our native forests and bushland. The problem is, the average person has become disconnected from nature. A walk in a forest has relaxing and calming effects on our minds, bodies and souls and is beneficial for our health and well-being. We need to re-establish this connection to country and could learn a lot from our aboriginal heritage with regards to conservation and land management for better outcomes in general but particularly in the face of extreme weather events such as fires and floods.

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

It's in Australia's highest interest to stop logging our native forests to build houses and source the timber from sustainable plantations. It is important all of our industries adopt sustainable and ethical practices as our native forests are not a resource we should be exploiting or relying upon. Loopholes that exist when it comes to deforestation will be taken advantage of which is why a clear-cut decision to end native forest logging is overdue and should be legislated upon. A decision that is not open to interpretation and abuse but will need to be communicated and enforced.

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

Enough land has been cleared to support the future of softwood and hardwood plantations. "There are approximately 1.7 million hectares of timber plantations in Australia. In 2021-2022 these plantations supplied 22 million cubic metres of timber, equating to 87% of all harvested Australian timber, making commercial plantations the clear leader in commercial wood production." (Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) article The value of Timber Plantations in Australia. Statistics from Australian forest and wood products statistics, March and June quarters 2023). So investing in more plantations on already cleared land would supply timber products into the future. Assessing and shifting to higher value plantations may be a way to go in addition to continuing private native forestry to help meet timber needs. Public forest subsidies need to end which will help encourage sustainable timber production on private lands.

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

Forests buffer extreme weather conditions and play a vital role when it comes to intercepting precipitation, water infiltration and retention. Conversely, forests are susceptible to climate change so the more we log our forests the less we are equipped to deal with climate change and unpredictable weather patterns which pose further risks to the health of our forests, native animals and of course, ourselves. Our beautiful forests attract local and overseas tourists which supports jobs and promotes recreational activities in our great outdoors. Forest management

would benefit from greater input from aboriginal elders sharing their knowledge and wisdom on how to manage the land so existing models can be changed and improved upon to better suit the ever-changing environmental conditions.

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 store carbon so their existence is crucial in mitigating climate change. Removing native forests through logging worsens climate change, soil health, water quality, air quality and kills too many of our native animals. Please, may the logging of our native forests end and the planting of trees be a priority to restore carbon capturing and support our climate goals. May The government put tighter restrictions on industries particularly high polluting ones, requiring them to offset their pollution by planting trees or by some other measurable means. We all have to work together, governments, individuals and industries if we are going to create beneficial change. With regards to the health of the planet, we are all stakeholders and this country does not have a good reputation with regards to the deforestation of our forests.