

Public submission

MITCHELL TRUEMAN

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Your submission

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Current forestry operations in NSW are deeply problematic and unsustainable. As a young adult who has had the privilege to work with the Forest Alliance, I am writing as a representative of a generation that will inherit the outcomes of the actions (or inactions) of our state government and the recommendations from this panel. The Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) continues to plant itself as a bad faith and unsustainable contributor to managing our native forests, and I have no doubt that if these practices continue, future forestry operations will also be extremely unsustainable.

My trust in the state government and FCNSW has significantly eroded, particularly due to the failure to protect the Great Koala National Park (GKNP) from increased logging despite clear election promises. My research with the Forest Alliance into logging within the GKNP showcased an increase since the announcement of the proposed park. This was based off the public information available on FCNSW's own website. This is deeply disappointing and demands immediate action.

The plight of native wildlife, especially the Greater Glider and Koala under current forestry operations further supports the current unsustainability of forestry operations. Their survival is heavily dependent on our native forests, which are under threat from ongoing destructive logging practices. If we continue on this path, I am genuinely fearful that extinction of forest-dependent wildlife will occur within my lifetime. The stark contrast between NSW and the steps taken by Victoria and Western Australia, which have successfully ended native forest logging, underscore the urgent need for NSW to adopt this approach. The failure by our state to protect our forests has been disheartening, and as I learn more about the industry, my disappointment only grows due to the lack of effective action from FCNSW, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and our state government.

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

Forests are vital reservoirs of biodiversity and cultural heritage. In 1750, there were 55 million hectares of native forest in NSW, but today, half of that has been lost to deforestation¹. It's unacceptable to contemplate that within my lifetime, iconic Australian species could face extinction and invaluable Aboriginal cultural sites will be lost due to mismanagement.

Native forests also provide essential services like water regulation, habitat connectivity, and spiritual enrichment that are crucial for the environment and local communities. The loss of

¹ Ward M. et al. (2023), The impacts of contemporary logging after 250 years of deforestation and degradation on forest-dependent threatened species

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these benefits under the current forestry operations deeply troubles me, as it undermines both the ecological balance and cultural heritage that define NSW state forests.

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

The logging of public native forests is unnecessary for meeting the current demands for timber products. To me it is clear: we shouldn't have to sacrifice our native forests for timber when sustainable alternatives exist. Plantations provide an effective and sustainable solution for timber needs, offering a viable source for construction, mining, and other industries without compromising our environment. I strongly advocate for a complete transition to plantation timber.

There is a significant shift in industry practices that supports moving away from traditional hardwood sources. For example, Essential Energy has adopted composite utility poles, reducing their reliance on hardwood timber. These poles are more environmentally sustainable and have greater fire resistance. Major retailers like Woolworths and Aldi have also committed to sourcing deforestation-free products. Aldi's commitment to avoiding the destruction of all ecosystems, including native bushland, is a testament to the changing landscape of corporate responsibility. These actions from large companies support the systematic shift in the industry reducing the demand for timber products.

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

I support the continuation of softwood and hardwood plantations that are managed sustainably and ethically. Plantations offer more effective and profitable wood production options where they already account for 91% of Australia's log production. They not only produce greater yields but also contribute higher profits, showcasing their capability to meet current and future timber supply needs in NSW without the ecological and ethical compromises associated with native forest logging².

It is imperative that we prioritise the transition from public native forest logging to sustainable plantation forestry. This shift not only supports environmental sustainability but also ensures the viability and resilience of NSW's timber industry in the long term. As we move forward, enhancing the management and expansion of plantation forests will be crucial in meeting our timber supply demands while protecting native forests and their biodiversity.

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

The current management of our State Forests is not just unsustainable but also shortsighted, considering the potential these lands have for delivering broader environmental, economic, and

² Blueprint Institute (2023), Branching Out: Exploring Alternate Land Use Options for the Native Forests of NSW and FCNSW annual reports

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social benefits. In the last financial year alone, FCNSW reported operational losses of \$28.6 million, while receiving \$31 million for community service obligations³. This stark financial discrepancy underscores the mismanagement and inefficiencies plaguing our approach to current forestry practices.

Redefining the management of State Forests to include diverse practices, especially Aboriginal forest management models, would transform their contribution to NSW. By shifting focus from timber production to fostering tourism, enhancing carbon storage, and expanding recreational opportunities, we can maximize the ecological and cultural dividends from public forests. This redefined approach not only aligns with sustainable resource management but also respects and integrates traditional knowledge systems, offering a more inclusive and beneficial strategy for managing public forests.

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

Ceasing native forest logging is not just an environmental imperative but also a crucial climate strategy. Currently, the logging of native forests in NSW contributes substantially to carbon emissions, releasing approximately 3.6 million tonnes of CO₂ annually - this accounts for 2.6% of NSW's total emissions⁴. Halting these operations would significantly enhance the forests' ability to recover and store carbon, mitigating the impacts of climate change and aiding in our broader environmental goals.

In the context of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change risks, the State must reevaluate the utilisation of forest resources. Transforming our approach to forest management can turn these ecosystems into robust carbon sinks, supporting biodiversity and strengthening carbon markets. Embracing this change will safeguard our forests for future generations, ensuring they continue to serve as vital ecological, economic, and cultural assets.

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³ Blueprint Institute (2023), Branching Out: Exploring Alternate Land Use Options for the Native Forests of NSW and FCNSW annual reports

⁴ The Trees Project (2022), NSW Forest Carbon: An Effective Climate Change Solution