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

The current approach to native forest logging in New South Wales is unsustainable, as demonstrated by the 40% decline in harvestable timber yield since 2010. The Forestry Corporation's overestimation of timber availability has led to intensified logging practices, including the removal of protections for mature trees in 2018, which has further depleted biomass and carbon storage in these forests. The practice has not only reduced the ecological value of native forests but also exacerbated fire risks, erosion, and pollution of waterways. In contrast, shifting focus to sustainably managed softwood and hardwood plantations can meet timber demands without the environmental destruction caused by native forest logging. As plantations already supply 91% of Australia's log production, prioritising these operations ensures a viable and competitive future for the forestry industry while protecting the vital ecological functions provided by native forests.

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

Native forests in New South Wales hold immense environmental and cultural value, playing a critical role in maintaining biodiversity, supporting threatened species, and preserving Aboriginal cultural heritage. Over 150 threatened species in NSW, many of which depend on mature trees and hollow-bearing habitats, are directly impacted by native forest logging. The removal of these trees not only reduces biodiversity but also disrupts key ecological functions like pollination, rainfall generation, and landscape cooling. Culturally, native forests are deeply significant to First Nations communities, who have an enduring connection to these landscapes. Forests are integral to Aboriginal cultural practices and knowledge systems, and their preservation is essential for maintaining this heritage. Protecting these forests allows for the continuation of First Nations-led conservation efforts, which have been highly effective in restoring and sustaining forest health, while also promoting a broader sense of community identity and pride for both First Nations and non-First Nations Australians.

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

The demand for timber products in New South Wales can be met without relying on native forest logging, which only accounted for 9% of Australia's total log production in 2023. Of the timber harvested from native forests, half was turned into woodchips for export, showing that this practice is not essential to meeting local needs in housing, construction, mining, transport, or retail. In contrast, sustainably managed softwood plantations provide a more than sufficient supply, with sawn and treated softwood products able to fully substitute for native hardwoods in all these sectors. The shift away from native forest timber is already happening, as evidenced by Essential Energy's decision to stop using native timber for power poles. With the market demand for native timber products continuing to decline, it is clear that the future of NSW's timber

industry lies in the expansion and optimisation of plantation forestry, which can meet all current demands without the environmental destruction associated with native forest logging.

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

The future of timber supply in New South Wales lies in the sustainable management of softwood and hardwood plantations, which already provide 91% of Australia's log production. Expanding plantation forestry, particularly focusing on harvesting logs for sawn and veneer products rather than exporting them as woodchips, is essential for meeting timber demands without relying on native forest logging. The continuation of private native forestry also plays a role in supplying high-end hardwood products, but this should be done under strict conditions that prioritise environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation. By transitioning more heavily towards plantation forestry, NSW can create a more competitive and profitable timber industry, reducing the need for subsidies to the unprofitable native forest logging sector and protecting vital ecosystems. This approach not only meets the timber supply needs for construction, housing, and other industries but also ensures a long-term sustainable future for the forestry sector in NSW.

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 in New South Wales play a vital role in delivering a range of environmental, economic, and social outcomes, and their value is maximised when managed sustainably and inclusively. Allowing native forests to function naturally, without logging, provides immense environmental benefits, including carbon storage, biodiversity protection, and the maintenance of healthy waterways, all of which have direct positive impacts on local communities. Economically, the current practice of native forest logging is unsustainable, with the hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation operating at a significant financial loss, costing the NSW public tens of millions of dollars. By ending native forest logging and focusing on sustainable management practices, these forests can provide greater economic opportunities, such as through tourism, recreation, and carbon credit markets. Moreover, integrating Aboriginal forest management models, like the successful Githabul Rangers program, offers a culturally appropriate and ecologically effective approach to forest stewardship. First Nations knowledge and management practices have been proven to restore and maintain the health of native forests, creating a framework that supports both environmental sustainability and cultural heritage preservation.

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

Ending native forest logging in New South Wales presents significant opportunities to tap into carbon and biodiversity markets, while also mitigating and adapting to climate change risks. Native forests are critical carbon sinks, and logging them drastically reduces their carbon storage capacity, releasing an estimated 3.6 million tonnes of carbon annually equivalent to removing 840,000 cars from the roads if stopped. Allowing previously logged forests to regenerate would help recover lost carbon and contribute meaningfully to Australia's emissions reduction targets. In addition, intact forests are more resilient to climate change impacts, such as increased fire severity and frequency, which logging exacerbates. By preserving and restoring native forests, NSW can create new revenue streams through carbon credits and biodiversity markets, while enhancing the forests' ability to withstand the impacts of climate change. Sustainable forest

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management, including the cessation of native forest logging, not only protects ecosystems and biodiversity but also supports NSW's broader climate resilience strategy, making forests vital assets in both climate adaptation and emissions reduction efforts.