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

For too long the managers of state forests have treated our publicly owned forests as mines, rather than gardens and a source of sustainable timber production. The forests have been overcut by industrialised logging practices, the majority of the accessible big trees have long gone and now the industry has little choice but to resort to slaughtering baby trees to keep their industry afloat. The economics of the industry has been ruined by greed and the tyranny of distance. The loggers, the jinker drivers and the support industries have to travel ever longer distances to source increasingly scarce sawlog resources, destroying rural roads and bridges and shifting costs incurred to local government.

The hardwood industry is currently operating at an unsustainable level, with the NSW taxpayers footing the bill for the regular annual financial losses and the ongoing mismanagement of our hardwood timber industry. It has degraded to the point where now the majority of large sawlogs in NSW are obtained under largely unregulated PNF agreements off private property, beyond the scrutiny of the general public, on land often purchased by saw millers to extract the maximum amount of timber from these backblocks, with the degraded forests then put back on the market for re-sale after the culling of trees has occurred.

In stark contrast, the softwood state forests are well managed, highly profitable and are the model which needs to be replicated for the hardwood industry. Plantation hardwood, with a wider variety of species planted, beside main roads on underutilised ex farmland, close to markets and close to mills is the path to a profitable future. This is the future vision which needs to be targeted, invested in by government and backed by superannuation funds. It is a long term investment but will reap huge rewards down the track. An endless supply of great Australian hardwood for the market at competitive pricing, supporting and growing rural economies and jobs while protecting local biodiversity, water resources and soil.

The exploitation of our remaining native forests for timber must cease, replaced by plantation hardwood grown like crops on underutilised farmland.

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

The logging of our remaining native forests must cease. The hardwood logging industry in its current state is economically doomed. The environmental and cultural costs of their continued operations in its current format is too high for the industry to continue operations. It has lost its social licence. Their only salvation is plantation creation and harvesting timber grown on degraded farmland. The NSW government must take the lead with supporting legislation and significant investment. It will be money well spent. We all need, enjoy and use timber and it should be treated as a farm product, not obtained at unsustainable rates and too great a cost from our remaining and increasingly precious native forests.

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

Our harvested native trees are in the main too young and sappy to provide the durability and strength previously provided by local hardwood. The majority of our hardwood cut from native forests are now used for paper pulp production, burnt for energy generation, manufactured into pallet grade disposable timber products or made into small dimension building materials such as roof battens or garden stakes. The economics of hardwood has been well and truly run over and surpassed by softwoods industry innovation and diversification and the growing supply of softwood products at a much cheaper price. eg. housing framing.

This is an ongoing tragedy for our native forests, but you reap what you sow. The big trees are mainly gone now, and what few are sourced, mainly from PNF operations, provide us with beautiful flooring at too cheap a cost and with an unacceptable environmental legacy.

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

Yes, but the regulation and monitoring of the environmental impacts of these PNF operations by government is threadbare, grossly inadequate and superficial and the devastation wrought by rogue operators on these private blocks, beyond the public gaze, is sometimes devastating and illegal, to our soils, waters and biodiversity.

The NSW softwoods industry is in fine fettle and this is the model which needs to be replicated by the hardwood industry. Plant your own, close to the mill and the towns which supply your workforce. Then you won't need to be endlessly subsidised by the NSW taxpayer and our irreplaceable biodiversity seeking refuge in our publicly owned native forests will no longer bear the brunt of this endless, awful destruction.

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

The State Forests hardwood sector has failed the NSW public and mismanaged our state forests. Clear felling of koala habitat is but one obvious example. I do not blame the people who work for this organisation but hold accountable the people who oversee and govern this corporation and the government regulators who allow it to happen. The future is plantation establishment on underutilised farmland.

A new model of plantation establishment needs to be created whereby 90% of the planted block is harvestable but wildlife corridors constituting 10% of the area and running across the plantation block and along drainage lines, at minimum 50m width, are planted out with local mixed native species, quarantined from disturbance in perpetuity and permanently managed as wildlife corridors and refuge.

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

Tens of thousands of hectares of a wide variety of native trees planted for harvesting in new, recyclable plantations will be a wonderful investment for our children, our grandchildren and those who follow.

This is the vision for the timber industry the NSW government should be pursuing,