

Public submission

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Forestry Industry Action Plan

Dear Industry Forestry Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my research to your panel. Please find my reasons why I strongly believe that the NSW State Government should end native forest logging in our Public Native Forests.

As way of background. I originally come from the Pacific Northwest in Washington State and after returning home from living abroad, saw the devastation of forests up there. When the spotted owl that is reliant on old growth forests became endangered, there was a groundswell of advocacy to stop logging old growth. I volunteered for an organisation advocating for the US Congress to legislate the protection of Old Growth that eventually did happen under President Clinton.

As a result of this over logging by timber companies and a failure to comply with regulations like 10 metre buffers for rivers and streams caused the extinction of 7 salmon runs. As an avid fisher, I was horrified that the timber industry was allowed to breach the regulations meant to protect important habitat and fisheries. During the consultation process for the decision to end old growth logging there was a moratorium put into place. I lived near old growth at the time and I noticed roads going into a roadless old growth area. When I went to the Dept. of Agriculture's local office to enquire about the roads. I was told by the Ranger that they had to use the funding for the roads before it ran out. I didn't realise how nefarious that was until after the agreement to end old growth logging was struck. The deal was all old growth in roadless areas would be off limits.

The Dept. of Agriculture was facilitating the timber industries ability to log more old growth even though it would severely impact a newly listed threatened species.

I immigrated to Australia in 2001 and in 2009 moved to a rural area surrounded by National Parks and State Forests. When I saw the first trucks going down the road, it raised alarm bells. I remembered reading an article about illegal logging in Yabbra State Forest years before so I googled the article. I found the article and names of people reporting the illegal logging.

I called the Forestry Commission of NSW as it was called at the time and was invited to go into a log coup with their representative David Wilson and forest contractors. They showed me how threatened species are protected with exclusion zones. They explained how only 40% of the basal area is logged in a form of selective logging. They told me that Forestry Corp. did not engage in clear felling when I asked them.

This is the sort of practice I lobbied the USA to do instead of clear felling. Something still niggled at me because of the disingenuous act of the Dept. of Agriculture in the USA when it came to roading old growth roadless areas when they knew that would be the agreement so I reached out to [REDACTED] from the Clarence Environment Centre. We went out into the same compartment Forestry Corp. took me to and he showed me breaches of their operation.

Members from the North Coast Environment Council, North East Forest Alliance and other concerned community members went in Doubleduke State Forest and engaged in an audit of operations as set out in the harvest plan and the RFAs. It was discovered that about 15Ha of an endangered ecological community was logged.

A public meeting was planned with State Members of Parliament, local representatives and community members attending with a follow trip into the forest. When I went out to the forest to make sure the EEC was still accessible I ran into a Forestry worker. I asked him what he was doing and he said he was asked to assess if the soil type was part of an EEC. He admitted he didn't even know what an EEC and that he had told his manager so. The man said that the manager told him to look it up on the website.

Here is a link to the preliminary audit:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ncec/pages/187/attachments/original/1487758250/Supplementary_Audit_of_Doubleduke_State_Forest.pdf?1487758250

This started my 14 years of documenting the ongoing mismanagement of our Public Native Forests as an independent filmmaker. I have attended audits in Girard State Forest where unmapped streams and old growth logged.

I went to a post logging audit where Rainforest was illegally logged and burnt in Wedding Bells State Forest.

I've witnessed illegal logging activities by Forestry Corporation in Gibberagee State Forest where the endangered melichrus urceolatus habitat was logged then burnt.

Justice Pepper (2011) of the NSW Land and Environment Court comments after reviewing the Forestry Corporation's history of convictions (after it burnt an exclusion area for the Smokey Mouse in south-east NSW): However, in my view, the number of convictions suggests either a pattern of continuing disobedience in respect of environmental laws generally or, at the very least, a cavalier attitude to compliance with such laws. ... Given the number of offences the Forestry Commission has been convicted of and in light of the additional enforcement notices issued against it, I find that the Forestry Commission's conduct does manifest a reckless attitude towards compliance with its environmental obligations ...

Just recently, Forestry Corporation was fined \$360,000.

Court fines Forestry Corporation \$360,000

1st August, 2024

In a damning judgement handed down in the NSW Land and Environment Court, Justice Pepper pulled no punches. She found that the NSW Government's logging company, Forestry Corporation, (FCNSW) had failed to protect areas that were unburnt or lightly burnt in Yambulla State Forest after the 2019/20 bushfires, and that the logging of those areas was likely to have harmed several threatened species.

Justice Pepper found:

"...FCNSW's offending conduct was not trivial and occasioned substantial actual and potential environmental harm. FCNSW will continue to undertake forestry harvesting activities and has not sufficiently demonstrated genuine contrition and remorse for its commission of the offences."

The judgement follows last week's revelations by South East Forest Rescue that Forestry Corporation illegally logged Greater Glider den tree exclusion zones in Styx River State Forest on the north coast.

The timber industry keeps getting wood supply agreements with more timber than is actually available leading to payouts at the taxpayers expense. Forestry Corporation is either incapable of managing the forests sustainably due to inadequate staffing or there is as Justice Pepper found, a cavalier attitude for compliance. These forests are owned by the public, not the timber industry and Forestry Corporation and their current practices are not sustainable, ethical and they have lost their social licence.

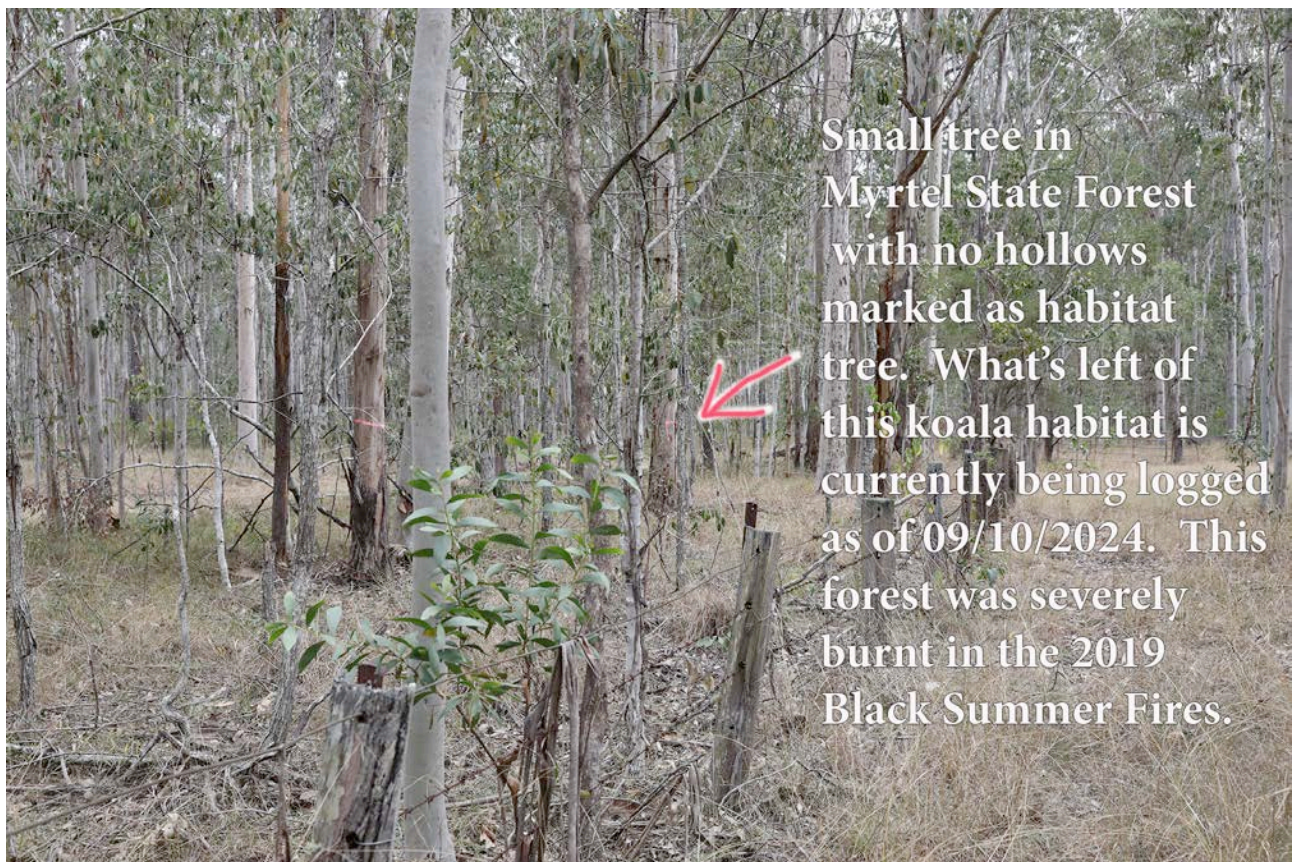
Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

New South Wales Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs)

"The New South Wales (NSW) Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) provide for sustainable forest management, certainty of access to resources for the renewable forestry industry, and a comprehensive conservation reserve network.

The NSW RFAs are long-term bilateral agreements that strike a balance between the environmental, social and economic uses of our forests."By the definition of the RFA's, Forestry Corporation has not been sustainable for the past decade operating at increasing losses to taxpayers, breaching regulations meant to protect our threatened species and ongoing over logging has gutted our supply of sustainable timber. This has been proven by independent ecologists. This last year alone, Forestry Corp. lost over \$26 million even with the help of post fire and flood grants from taxpayers.

I suggest the Industry Forestry Panel go into our State Forests with independent ecologists to see how dire the situation is. I'm surrounded by State Forests and there are not any of the big trees left. As you can see in the photo of a Forestry Corp. harvest compartment in Myrtle State Forest, the mark up of habitat trees are barely even 100mm in diameter. Habitat trees need to have hollows to be habitat for our threatened hollow dependent fauna.



Myrtle State Forest mark up by Forestry Corporation of NSW. Most of the the big habitat trees are all gone so they are now marking up trees as habitat that don't even qualify as such. This tree marked up as habitat with take well over a 100 years to achieve that status. This koala habitat is severely damaged during the black summer fires is currently being logged.

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

I filmed [REDACTED] for a campaign to raise awareness about the values of our public native forests. You can view the video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuKQGdR1r0>

Transcript of video: G'day, I'm [REDACTED]. It's hard to believe that our precious native forests are still being destroyed. They're home to wildlife that is unique in the world. Protecting our native forests is more important than ever before. They produce oxygen. They store carbon. They produce water and they bring rain. We need to protect our forests

for a safer climate. Who speaks for the trees and our future? I do, and you can too. It's time to stand up for the forests now.

Right now, I see the biggest asset of our forests since they've been so degraded is to let them store carbon to mitigate climate change and assist our governments in meeting targets to reduce carbon.

The over logging of the past decade has dried out our forests with heavy single tree selection (clear felling) and leaving bush fire hazard with all the post logging debris left on the ground. My property burnt during the black summer fires and fared better than the State Forests. My property was designated as a Biodiversity Conservation Trust Conservation Area in 2010 and had good canopy cover keeping the ground cool and doesn't have post logging debris on the ground to create fire hazards like logging compartments have.

Leaving our forests alone makes our forests more resilient to fires and extreme weather events from my observations of living in the middle of both over logged and protected forests.

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

We already have enough softwood plantations to supply timber for housing. I see trucks with large softwood and hardwood logs going to Broadwater to be burnt for electricity. If there is a timber building shortage, why are they burning it? With the heavy industrial logging over the past decade, there are hardly any good sawlogs left in our public native forests. It's time to let them recover and support our life support system by storing carbon, creating moisture, taking up too much water with increased extreme weather events to help mitigate flooding and erosion.

There are so many alternatives over logging what's left of our forests. Hemp is 20 times more recyclable than wood products. Hemp can be made into building materials, paper and even clothing. It's archival and can be grown in paddocks.

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

There are many softwood plantations already established. We need to retool some of the sawmills to process multiple fibres like hemp. The timber industry has been given a lot of money post fires and floods. Investment should be given to the timber industries to diversify the resources they can process.

If we keep going business as usual, their industry will die out in the next few years anyway. I have heard from people who work within the industry and they know the writing is on the wall and there just won't be merchantable timber left.

I met with loggers in Kendall several years ago who quit the industry for what they said is 'how unsustainable' the industry has become.

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 best social, economic and environmental outcomes for our forests is to let them recover. Tourism makes more money for the state than the timber industry does and employs more people.

The NSW visitor economy is the biggest in Australia, achieving a record \$53 billion in expenditure in FY24 and employing **almost 300,000** workers. The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 had a target of \$65 billion.

The most recent Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Figures found here:
https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Indicator_6_5a_employment_2024.pdf

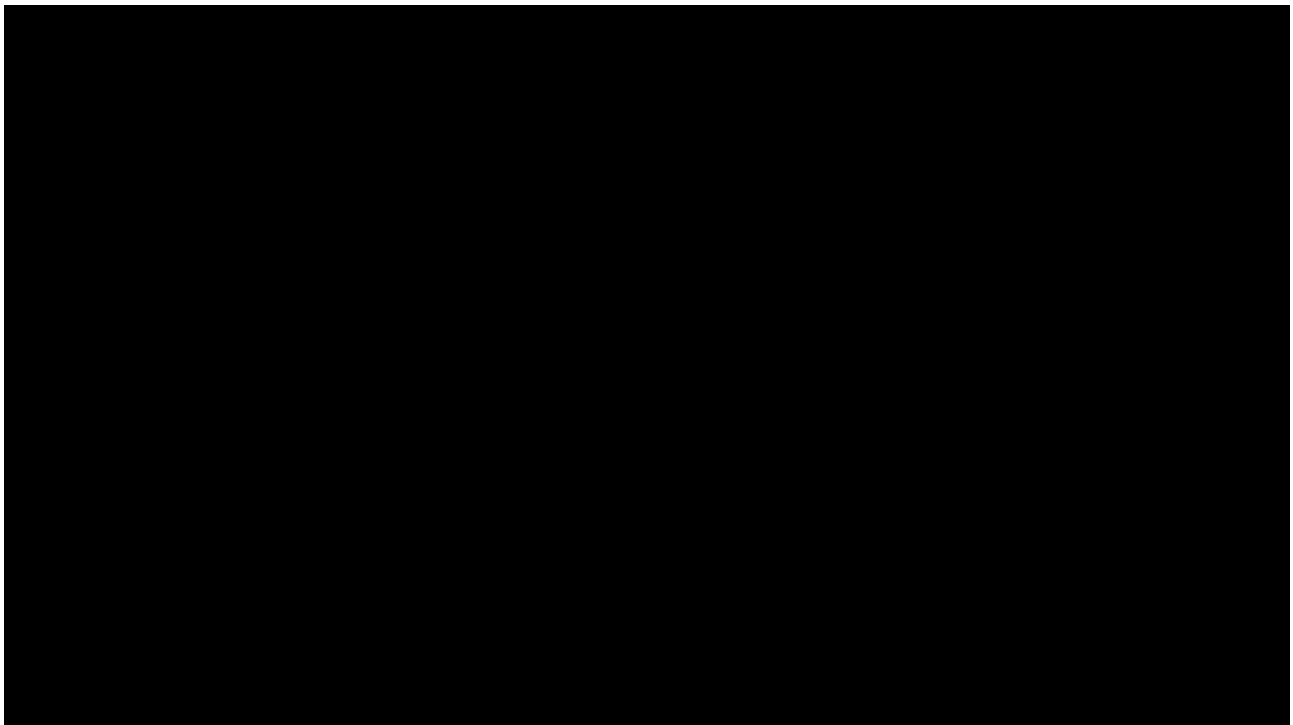
A study of the New South Wales hardwood sector prepared for the North East NSW Forestry Hub (EY 2023) found: • the New South Wales hardwood industry generated 5,920 direct FTEs and 2,980 indirect FTEs • most indirect jobs generated are in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, followed by the transport, postal and warehousing sector.

All of these jobs could be transitioned into mixed fibre production of building materials and the indirect FTEs could be kept as well.

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.

If Forestry Corporation of NSW continues to log our public native forests as they have the past decade, there will be more methane produced with debris on the ground or carbon released by burning softwood for electricity that our opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits will literally go up in smoke.

Below are photos of our Public Native Forests with descriptions to support an end to native forest logging.



North Coast community inspects Endangered Ecological Community as reported by the North East Forest Alliance President Dailan Pugh OAM, November 2010



Girard State Forest where Old Growth Forest and unmapped stream was logged. August 2010.



Cherry Tree State Forest 2015 – Trees meant to be protected were severely damaged during the logging operation. Excerpt nefa.org.au - NEFA has documented that the Forestry Corporation of NSW have breached the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act by not abiding by a national recovery plan, the National Parks and Wildlife Act by roading and logging the Endangered Ecological Community Lowland Rainforest, as well as committing breaches of 4 conditions of the Integrated Forestry Operational Approval, 41 conditions of the Threatened Species Licence, 19 conditions of the Environment Protection Licence, 7 conditions of the Fisheries Licence and numerous conditions of their own Harvesting Plan.



Wedding Bells State Forest July 2011 – Rainforest logged and burnt.



A landscape reminiscent of Tasmanian clear felling, with supposedly protected rainforest in the background, where major damage has been identified.



The investigation, which included professional ecologists lasted only a few hours, so a comprehensive assessment was not possible at that time. However in the short time available we once again identified widespread breaches of the Threatened Species Licence, under which Forests NSW is supposed to operate, and which we have asked the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), the responsible regulatory authority, to immediately investigate.

Excerpt from Clarence Environment Centre.

<https://cec.org.au/cec.org.au/local/WeddingBellsSF/index.htm>



Gibberagee State Forest January 2019. Koala habitat was logged without proper mark up of trees and Forestry Corporation had to stop work. There was an ongoing protest there for awhile with NSW residents and taxpayers took time out of work to protect the koala habitat from illegal logging. In this photo you can see how losing the canopy from over logging will dry out the landscape making it more prone to drought and bush fires.

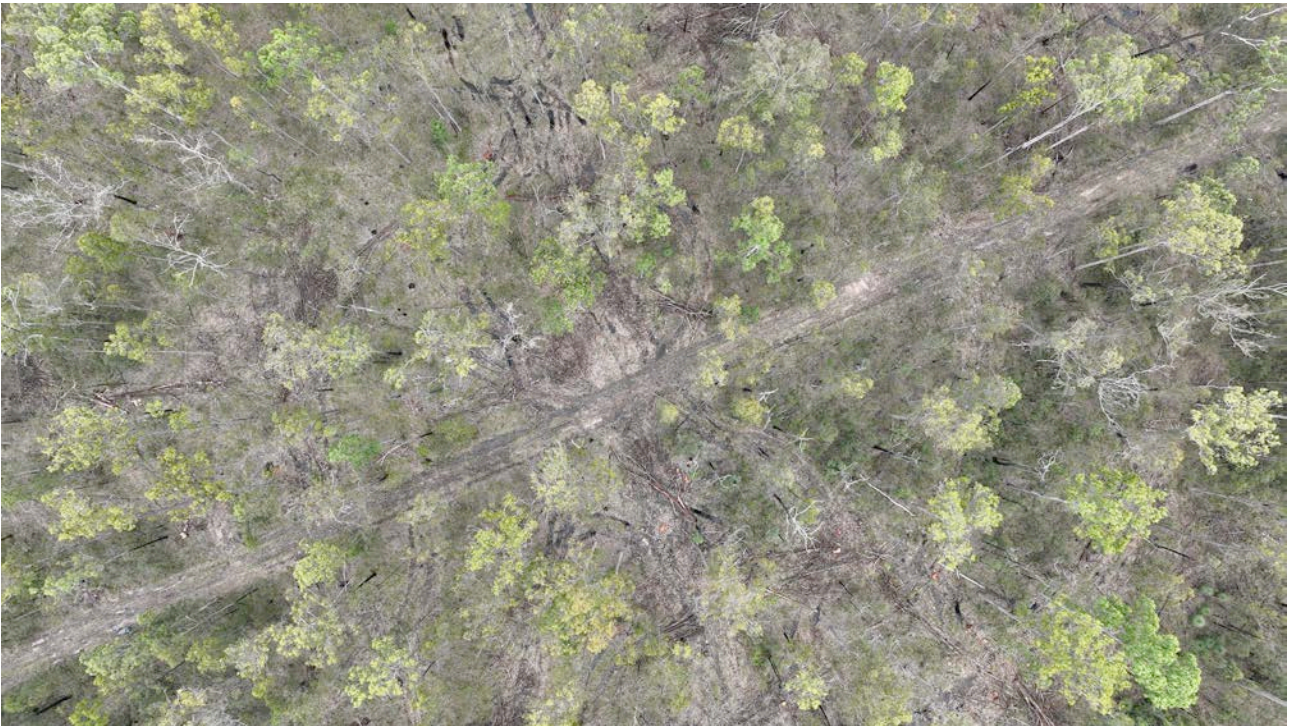
This NEFA video outlines the breaches and community involvement in bringing this to the attention of the NSW State Government.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7rC1iRcHB0>

When I called Forestry Corporation in 2010 for the first time I talked to a gentleman and asked him about the logging and how long it would go on and what would the forests be like. He responded with, "they would log until all the big trees are gone." 14 years later, our forests are almost all quasi plantations with only small trees left. I believe this is in breach of the spirit and requirements of the RFAs and Integrated Operational Forestry Agreements.



Braemar State Forest 2024



Braemar State Forest 2024



Braemar State Forest, March 2024 – Braemar is part of the Banyabba koala population that is considered regionally significant. Over 70% of the population was killed in the 2019 Black Summer Fires. Forestry Corporation is now logging what is left of their habitat. These photos show how sparse our forests are now and the damage logging does to soil and our endangered koalas habitat. This is indicative of the state of our forests in Northern NSW.

Here are some links that will give you more than enough evidence that we need to end logging in our public native forests in NSW if we are to prevent extinctions of our threatened species. Australia is already a world leader in species extinctions and deforestation. This impacts on the health benefits our forests give Australians, our waterways and the flora and fauna dependent on complex forest ecosystems.

The North East Forest Alliance engages independent ecologists to audit logging operations. This resource here highlights the ongoing systemic culture of non-compliance of regulations detailed by Justice Pepper.

<https://www.nefa.org.au/audits>

Polling shows the majority of people in NSW want an end to native forest logging with only 19% in support of it. Forestry Corporation have lost their social licence to log our public native forests.

<https://www.nature.org.au/polling-shows-majority-support-in-new-south-wales-for-an-end-to-native-forest-logging>

Current koala crisis at Braemar State Forest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcSjgu61ILY&t=1s>

Ecologist David Milledge discusses how important big old hollow trees are important.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtcu9yCdRZ0&t=75s>

Kendall State Forest where I met the loggers who have quit due to the unsustainable practices by Forestry Corporation. These forests were subjected to broad scale clear felling.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eLOElrjaO8>

Logging of Endangered Ecological Community in Doubleduke State Forest.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0zGBLPQBzI&t=3s>

Video highlighting how unsustainable logging of our public native forests is.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40qvF8cs3XU&t=24s>

This video produced by members of NEFA highlight the values of our forests and the current crisis they are facing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN-SRJUJG2E&t=2s>

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my research as to why I strongly urge this panel conclude that the socio-economic and environmental reasons can only lead to a determination that we need to end logging in our public native forests in NSW.

Faithfully yours,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]