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

In my answer, I am assuming 'sustainability of current and future forestry operations' is referring to timber harvesting and no other forestry functions or management areas.

I believe it is sustainable for the following reasons:

- In NSW, there is approx 2 million hectares of State Forest, managed for sustainability. By comparison, in NSW there's approx 7 million hectares of National Park tenure under conservation management. Of the 2 million hectares of State forest, half (1 million hectares) is under protection management (never to be harvested). Approx 1% of the remaining total State Forest area is harvested annually. There is more than 3x the amount of public lands in NSW under conservation management than under sustainable forest management. This is appropriate and augers well for both conservation efforts and ongoing timber production.
- State forests have been managed for sustainability since 1916. That's over 100 years. They still exist as functioning forest ecosystems. This is despite a slow creep of tenure conversion to National Park, which is still prevalent today.
- Trees are a renewable resource. They grow back. They absorb carbon in the process. Forestry plants thousands of trees each year in softwoods, and ensures seed trees are retained in selective hardwood harvesting practices.
- Timber production in NSW is currently one of the most regulated industries in existence, yet it still survives. This is a credit to the forestry staff, who are resourceful and adaptive.
- A increasing lack of resourcing of the forestry industry, in particular Forestry Corp., would seem to adversely affect contractor management re: harvesting.

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

- State forests are the only public land tenure that provides for all Aboriginal Cultural practices to continue under native title. National parks are unable to do so around their conservation management framework and obligations e.g. traditional cultural hunting cannot occur in a National Park, but is easily provided for in Indigenous Land Use Agreements under Native Title on State Forest.
- Forestry employs ecologists who's role is to ensure prescriptions around protected, threatened, endangered flora and fauna are followed. These professionals ensure environmental values are considered and protected under detailed plans.
- Koalas: I consistently wonder why so many koalas are found in State Forests, especially in the proposed Great Koala National Park area. Why aren't they in large numbers in National Parks in the same region? Does the mix of tree and therefore leaf age make State forests more desirable locations for a koala diet? A mosaic of different tree ages (selective harvesting in hardwood State Forests) versus a senescing forest (in a National Park).
- Koalas: DPI research has shown that harvesting does not adversely affect koala populations. Dr Brad Law, the principal research scientist at the NSW Department of Primary Industries, recently reported findings that "regulated timber harvesting in state forests did not affect the trend of

(koalas) either metric nor did land tenure, with state forests (where timber harvesting is permitted) or national parks having little impact on the population of koalas. Additionally, results published as part of the CSIRO's National Koala Monitoring Programme (NKMP), estimate that north east NSW koala populations range between 287,830 and 628,010, ten times more than the most recent Australian Koala Foundation estimate. The science conflicts with the assertion that timber harvesting is detrimental to koala populations.

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

- I am terrified that NSW will come to rely on hardwood timbers sourced from developing countries who do not have a regulatory framework in place to assure environmental sustainability. Responsibly sourced, certified wood is the only building material that actually helps tackle climate change. It's renewable, it stores carbon and it consumes minimal energy in its production.
- Sourcing hardwood timbers from overseas increases the carbon footprint of the final timber product (think of the carbon emissions involved in transportation alone).
- Composite products may be an option, but they too tend to have a large carbon footprint due to manufacturing, production and transportation. I note the NSW Government's move to composite telegraph poles produced in Queensland over timber poles produced locally in NSW. This appears to be the antithesis of government action to reduce climate change through lowering carbon emissions.
- As the government struggles to meet demand for housing, timber frames would seem an important renewable resource in meeting this demand.
- There are documented health benefits from using wood in architectural design and buildings. Biophilic design is highly regarded by architects. High value timber for architectural use is a growth area.

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

- I often hear that plantations are the answer. Softwood (pine) grows well in plantations; native timber (hardwoods) are longer term options and not always successful. Additionally, hardwood plantations do not look like their softwood cousins - they look and grow like a native/natural forest. There are hardwood plantations in NSW which have attracted protests around planned harvesting because the forest doesn't outwardly appear as a farmed crop; it looks very much like a natural forest.

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

- NSW State forests are hugely important to the outdoors recreation, leisure and sporting industry, and nature-based tourism. They are critical to product development in the health and wellness experiential space.
- NSW National Parks are limited in what tourism and recreation they can allow due to their conservation management framework. By comparison, NSW State forests sustainability management framework means they can support the widest variety of nature-based activities than any other public land manager.
- Without NSW State Forests, there will be limited opportunities for a range of pursuits to occur on public lands (if anywhere). Think: trail biking, 4 wheel driving, abseiling, dog-sledding,

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mushrooming, fossicking, mountain biking, horse riding, dog walking, car rallies, adventurthons, paintballing, recreational hunting, shooting clubs, pony clubs...the list is endless.

- the first dedicated Wellness Walk on public lands was established in 2023 in a NSW State Forest in partnership with Naturefix.

- the first wild koala breeding facility has been established in a NSW State forest this year.

- the ability to be nimble, agile and responsive to opportunities to develop nature-based tourism exists with NSW State Forests. State forests are not bound by Plans of Management as per National Parks. Forestry is it's own approval authroity under the Forestry Act, providing for more seamless interaction and process in the issuing of Forest Permits (the approval tool for any activity in a NSW State Forest).

- Campground in NSW State Forests are FREE. This creates social equity through inclusiveness, allowing anyone to enjoy camping in nature. By comparison, National Park campgrounds are not free and must be booked online. This disadvantages a range of community in accessing outdoor experiences, particularly some socio-economic demographics.

- NSW State forests are integral to the NSW Government's target of delivering visitor economy growth in the tourism sector to the value of \$91 billion by 2035, focussing on experiential product. The 2035 NSW Visitor Economy Strategy will be anchored around experience tourism, renewing the state's focus on "creating and marketing compelling visitor experiences". It will leverage the state's natural assets and elevate First Nations stories. As NSW State forests allow the widest variety of nature-based tourism activities of any public land manager, they would seem critical to this goal.