Independent Forestry Panel

Public submission

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

The definition of sustainability has been said to be the ability to support a process over time and it is often broken down into three core concepts: economic, environmental and social.
In regards to current and future forestry operations in NSW, particularly logging of native forests, these three core concepts/processes are interconnected but contradictory, in that actions that support economic activities undermine the resilience of the environment.
Native Forest operations lean on the environment to produce resource levels of timber growth, trying to produce sustainable wood harvest product levels to continue forestry operations over time. These operations support timber industry employment, a social good, but costs the rest of society through the loss of our natural heritage and fines paid by the public for the Forestry Commissions inability to ensure compliance with environmental standards.
Issues related to these losses sustained by the general public have previously been ignored as they can be difficult to quantify and unlike industry organisations, the public are not unified in their knowledgeable of the situation or organised to voice their interests.
Plantation Timber production that meets sustainable timber accreditation on public or private land should be encouraged, so long as it does not stimulate clearing of additional native vegetation, a threatening process for native Australian species. Timber from plantations can support the continuation of a timber industry and the public demand for affordable timber products.

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

Environmental and cultural values exist for native forests, in particular old established native forests. They in particular have the necessary forest structure to provide habitat for many species. These benefits cannot be provided by sites other than forests, other activities or created by trying to find areas that will offset losses for these areas, as each forest site has individual characteristics.

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

Australia should seek to meet timber product needs through sustainable plantation development on land already cleared of native vegetation. NSW should protect the remaining native forest areas. Since colonisation forests were often impacted with previous logging activities, and yet native forests still provide the best opportunity to support some species fauna/ flora protection and protection of natural water cycles.
Demand for timber products should not be met by additional overseas imports where sustainable forest practices cannot be verified.

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

Softwood or Hardwood Plantation operations need to be established on land already cleared of native vegetation or they will exacerbate the problem that already exists from native vegetation clearing in its adverse effect on native species populations.
Private Native Forestry should not be based on clearing of existing native trees but rather establishment of plantations on already cleared land and focused on operating in a sustainable manner. This may lead to social impacts in regional areas with new plantations increasing corporate ownership and management, rather than family or individual operations, as time lines for plantation establishment requires decades of operation prior to realising economic returns from timber harvesting.
Private Native Forestry establishment should be independently assessed and vetted for the approval of operations not only for the on property impacts, but for any broader regional issues that the operation may create. (This potentially can be attended through Local Land Services and Local Councils but the application processes need to be coordinated, clear and streamlined to minimise obstacles to private industry plantation establishment).

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

To truly maximise a variety of ecological outcomes, natively vegetated State Forests should be converted to areas that are protected for conservation of the native flora and fauna and protection of water catchments. The aim of timber production is not compatible with these objectives and so should be ceased in these forests.
Natural areas play a significant role in water, nutrient and carbon cycles, which are all disrupted by logging operations. These areas should instead be actively managed and monitored to maximise ecological outcomes.
State Forest plantation areas should operate to meet sustainable timber accreditation, as this will protect the ecology of the area for long term viability of the plantations both ecologically and economically.

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

Multiply values outside the economic system will be realised from these native forest areas, including to support recognition that there is intrinsic value in the existence of native vegetation and biodiversity separate from human usefulness.
Value for the Australian population stems from increasing national pride in protecting perpetuation of our unique ecosystems, and will support a unification of our cultural and societal Australian identity through understanding of our Continent and its flora and fauna. Additional value comes from supporting ecological services provided from intact Forests, including supporting biodiversity, nutrient, carbon and water cycles on which human society depends.
Other objections to participating in these markets is the recognition that there is an inability to adequately and accurately assess the ecological interactions and processes with current available scientific measures. The dynamic nature of natural processes and increasing climate variability brings risks to participate in these markets, such as the carbon or biodiversity markets. Predicted increasing drought and fire occurrence may lead to economic risk if participating within a market structure.