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

The logging of native forests in NSW is simply not sustainable now, nor into the future. "Sustainable" as a concept applied to the modern forestry logging industry is flawed. It is based on a calculation that boils down to 'how often can this area of forest be logged to supply timber products? When are the trees sufficiently regrown so that they can be cut down again?' The calculation does NOT consider in any real way 'what is the impact of periodic repeated logging on this forest's wellbeing, its ecology?'

Repeated periodic logging irreversibly changes the forest environment. Time and time again modern industrial style logging with swift heavy machinery reduces an area of forest to bare soil in a matter of days. The lack of canopy and removal of vegetation exposes logged areas to sun and wind, reduces moisture and shelter, promotes weed invasion and results in water runoff polluting forest waterways.

The forest becomes characterised by large, open, dry and inhospitable spaces for many forest species. Ecological connectivity is compromised. Wild animal and plant populations are compromised, they cannot live in the logged areas but their movement is inhibited by these open areas.

The drying and thinning of the forest causes increased vulnerability to wildfires - something we have all witnessed in recent years.

Logging cycles are often every twenty years. This is insufficient time for a forest to regrow into the forest it was once. 80 to 100 years is the minimum time for an injured forest to really regenerate. Thus the modern logging industry causes the disappearance of old growth forests. It takes away habitat for many species including those that are threatened or endangered. It decreases rainfall. It decreases carbon storage. Waterways are polluted impacting clean water supply for many species, including humans.

All for a theoretical yield estimate that is inflated due to failing to account for events such as wildfires.

The yield from state native forests has decreased by nearly half over the last 10-15 years. Forestry Corp NSW has recorded significant financial losses in recent annual reports.

FCNSW logged over 300 acres in two months in 2023 in Ourimbah State Forest. I was horrified when walking through the forest after the logging to discover many, many large trees and vegetation debris, including tree branches, lay felled. Long chains of bark piles metres high and close together were created through the remaining trees. On querying this issue it was revealed that there was no intention by Forestry to retrieve any of these felled trees, woody debris and bark for other uses, nor to leave it to naturally decompose. The logged area would be burned in the future as a 'hazard reduction' fire. It is estimated that current logging practice leaves an average of 60 per cent of what is cut down on the the forest floor as 'rubbish debris'. The sheer waste is simply appalling. To then burn the debris created by logging causing smoke pollution, more carbon emissions, health risks and wildlife disruption adds insult to injury. This is not a sustainable practice.

The idea that the logging of native forests is in anyway sustainable is unfortunately illusory.

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

Healthy native forests that are intact have inestimable value to wildlife, endangered or otherwise and to local communities. It is imperative that unlogged forests are protected and that previously logged forests be allowed to regrow into maturity. Some of the reasons for this were discussed in submission 1 above.

Thriving mature native forest is vital for our environment and First Nations culture as well as the wider community.

Such forests provide safe habitat, especially for threatened and endangered species such as the Greater Glider, the Koala, the Yellow Bellied Glider, the Glossy Black cockatoo, the Micro-Fishing bat, Platypus, Stuttering Frog, Turpentine and Ironbark trees and the brush-tailed Rock Wallaby to name just a few of the 150 threatened species in NSW affected by forest destruction.

Unlogged native forests filter air and water, help create rainfall and the canopy cover provides shade, keeps a more moist atmosphere bringing cool relief to a heating landscape.

These forests are also just simply beautiful to be in, providing still quiet places for humans as well as wild beings. I am lucky enough to live near Ourimbah State Forest and over many years have walked most days in this precious place. No matter the mood I may have been in when first entering this exquisite forest, I always emerge lighter and more relaxed.

The health benefits for humans by simply spending quiet time in an intact forest are well documented. Time spent 'forest bathing' has been shown to decrease raised blood pressure and depression.

The native forests are places where local community and visitors can gather in recreational activities such as walking, bicycle riding or just picnicking.

They provide opportunities to learn about the importance and cultural significance of Country to First Nations and an opportunity for First Nations to practice culture and grow well being. A traditional custodian of the Central Coast's native Ourimbah State Forest put it simply and powerfully:

"It makes me feel good when I can care for Country"

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

The demand for timber from native forests is decreasing and the majority of timber taken from native forests is used for producing paper pulp and wood chips. The FC NSW Harvest Plan for logging coupes 8 and 9 in Ourimbah State Forest 2023 showed that wood taken for sawn timber was a minority of the total harvest. Much less native timber is used in housing and reconstruction (reduced by 90 per cent in the last twenty years). Plantation wood and composite timber products can easily meet any needs in the above industries.

(ref for above see David Lindenmayer The Forest Wars pp103-108)

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

Timber harvest from plantations already contributes greatly to the production of logs. It can be increased even further by ensuring that more of the plantation harvest be kept for logs rather than wood chip export. Reliance on plantation timbers will grow, promoting that industry if the current subsidisation of FCNSW's logging of state native forests is stopped.

Private Native Forestry must be strictly regulated and used only for the specific purpose of luxury timber products.

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

Current management of native State Forests in NSW does not maximise positive environmental, economic nor social outcomes. As mentioned above, logging by FCNSW in state native forests has run at a loss in recent years and receives government subsidies funded by taxpayer monies. Public money is being used to support an unprofitable industry that destroys the habitat of threatened wildlife, destroys biodiversity, compromises rivers and streams, increases carbon emissions and increases the risk of more frequent, intense and hotter wildfires. That public money, instead of being used to shore up a flailing destructive industry, could be used to help regenerate and restore NSW's magnificent forests. That in itself would provide ongoing employment opportunities including the introduction of more First Nations Ranger and cultural programs. Custodianship and stewardship of our native forests could be shared across both the indigenous and non-indigenous communities. This could promote a healthy sense of local responsibility and leadership of nearby native forests and a real interest in regrowing and sustaining native state forests. Appropriate tourist and recreational activities and educational programmes including guided walks, eco workshops, school excursions etc. would again create employment opportunities and stimulate local and regional economies. Most importantly, this would support the thriving of our native forests with their complex biodiversity and extraordinary wildlife. So much better than logging the heart out of the intended Great Koala National Park.

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

Rather than logging NSW's native forests towards exacerbating climate change and racing towards extinctions and ecological collapse, logging could stop. This would allow the forests to recover over time. As they recover, the forests' capacity for carbon storage will return. The maturing forest will support the generation of rainfall, creating cooler more moist landscapes. The risk of catastrophic fires will decrease. Resilience to the changing climate will improve. Why wouldn't the NSW Government bring a halt to logging the public's native forests sooner than later?