

Public submission

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SAVING FORESTS IS CLIMATE ACTION

Many of us now little about the bigger issues to do with forests apart from our experiences of being in the bush on camping trips, or visiting rainforests, camping or hiking etc We may be in awe of their beauty and wildness, but they are endangered by commercial activity.

The bigger issues to do with forest protection can be spelt out in a number of areas:

Commerce / governance / emissions
Ecology / Climate
Culture/ fire / human habitation
Species/ Biodiversity
The economic value of old growth forests

GOVERNMENT/COMMERCE/EMISSIONS

- Carbon capture 'by forest' is the cheapest and most efficient method of reducing emissions– ie don't log!
- Currently native forest logging is exempt from federal environment laws and there is a lack of effective monitoring and control. Federal government oversight is lacking, so taxpayer money is going where we don't agree!
- Plantations are numerous enough to meet Australia's commercial needs
- Tourism and recreational amenity in forest areas is of high economic value
- The best way to meet Australia's zero targets is by NOT logging native forest. Only they can reduce emissions at the rapid rate required.
- Each year around two per cent of Australia's native forests are logged.
- There are clear economic gains from ending native forest logging, (as if forests had to justify themselves!)

ECOLOGY/CLIMATE

- Trees are removed and poisoned....with the aim of making space for plantations. Plantations get overgrown and stunted by weed and undergrowth, building bushfire fuel, and they don't provide the diversity in structure and composition that the tree-dwelling animals have evolved to need.
- Intact forest doesn't burn – there is little undergrowth there due to the darkness.
- Regrowth of ancient forests can take 100 years, too slow for the emissions problem
- Native Forest is different from State Forest. The former is on reserves and should not be logged
- Native forests are part of the water cycle where rain is drawn down from cloud cover moving inland from the sea. They are part of the climate system – creating rain through transpiration and condensation of cloud moisture, providing shade and cooling through dense cover, and removing Carbon from the atmosphere
- They store water in the soil
- They help regulate flood water

- Young trees take a long time to absorb Carbon. On the other hand, old forests/trees have taken decades to grow, and therefore contain a lot of Carbon which gets released if trees are cut and left to decompose

CULTURE, FIRE AND HUMAN HABITATION

- Cultural and community aspects, the local environment, the connection to place are important
- Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, management and sites need to be prioritised
- Human habitation is threatened by fire
- Stopping logging in native forests will help prevent destruction of people's lives and property
- Fire is worse in logged forests due to the timber waste that is produced
- Mature trees don't burn so easily as fire usually doesn't get up into the canopy
- Intact forest doesn't burn as there is little undergrowth

SPECIES / BIODIVERSITY

- Decline and extinction of forest-dependent species is often driven by native forest logging, agriculture (in particular livestock pasture development), urban development and mining. Their homes (tree hollows, protected places in the ground, under logs, tree corridors) are being removed ('cleared' is a weasel word which has a positive connotation; the reality is tree-felling.) 'Stop the chop' is an urgent cry.)
- Long-lasting environmental impacts occur for humans and animals as a result of clear-fell logging and its associated infrastructure, like the extensive road networks and log landings. Water becomes contaminated and habitat fragmented or destroyed, leading to extinction eg koalas, gliders and threatened bird species

ECONOMIC VALUES OF OLD FORESTS

- If harvesting for timber production ceased, and forests were allowed to continue growing to older ages, Native forests would provide greater benefits from their ecosystem 'services' than cutting and pulping them. Ecosystem 'services' means sequestering carbon, bringing rain, holding water in the soil, providing habitat for multiple species of animals, insects, reptiles and birds etc and being places for tourism, hiking and other forms of recreation
- The economic value of native forests for carbon storage is greater than the value of forests for woodchips and paper production.
- They lock up carbon in their trunks,
- Ecotourism strategies and conservation jobs as a 'transition' are required

Collated from materials of the Bob Brown foundation and associated materials

by [REDACTED], Oct 2024