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

Native forest must be protected from logging to preserve the diversity of its' biome. Koalas, the Greater Glider and many more species are at risk when habitat trees are removed . Unlogged Native forests provide healthy, biodiverse ecosystems which are fundamentally critical for protecting and supplying clean water. Unlogged Native forests help to prevent soil erosion particularly in extreme weather events which we are increasingly experiencing in the Mid North Coast. In logged areas the soil erosion allows sediments and pollutants to enter catchment water supplies and costs millions to mitigate .For example, water from Melbourne's protected forested water catchments requires less treatment than water from other sources. For example It is estimated that the water purification services provided by Victorian forests natural filtration avoid costs of \$33 million per year in metropolitan areas and \$50 million per year in non-metropolitan areas. Additionally native vegetation increases water infiltration into soils to recharge groundwater supplies. Logging and removal of natural habitat, alters wildlife behaviour this in turn increases the likelihood of human contact with wildlife and risk of cross-species infection transmission. A recent 25-year study (Eby P, Peel AJ, Hoegh A, et al. Pathogen spillover driven by rapid changes in bat ecology. Nature 2023; 613: 340-344.), has shown that bat behaviour change due to habitat destruction and climate change has led to increased Hendra virus spillover risk in Australia. Other examples include Ross River virus, lyssavirus, and Japanese encephalitis virus. Researchers , Lawler OK, Allan HL, Baxter PW, have linked the COVID-19 pandemic to biodiversity loss and ecosystem health. (Lancet Planet Health 2021; 5: e840-e850.) Native forest protection is the best mitigation strategy to prevent the risks of virus spillover .Plantation timber is a far better choice for logging and this type of industry is sustainable, profitable and can provide employment in the state of NSW.

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

Australians are intrinsically Connection to country is of great importance to First Nations Australians. Native species in a healthy unlogged ecosystem provides great cultural and spiritual value. Logging creates a loss of these peoples culture and identity. The SOE report identifies that negative shifts in environmental conditions are causing worry and deep distress in First Nations communities. Caring for Country activities by First Nations peoples can improve health and wellbeing, while also improving environmental health.

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

The report into the state of Australia's environment (SOE) over the past five years has warned about the pressure on Native Forests from logging and resource extraction combined with climate change resulting in ongoing environmental deterioration at a continent-wide scale level . This warning has been heeded by some states , In Australia, South Australia has protected native forests since the 1870s. The ACT banned logging in the 1980s. As of 2024, Western Australia and

Victoria have ended their native forest logging operations (except logging for fire breaks, salvage logging after windstorms, and logging on private land).

The reasons are clear: native forestry is unpopular and unprofitable, contributes heavily to climate change and is a major cause of species decline. If we are to have a sustainable timber industry and avoid species extinction we need to follow these Stars examples and move to plantation logging. Pressures from climate change, habitat loss, pollution, resource extraction, and invasive species are threatening every Australian ecosystem, with 19% showing signs of collapse. The World Wildlife Fund Report states Australia is the only developed nation on the world list of deforestation hotspots. This is critical as we are 'locking in extinction through legislative inadequacies' because regional forestry agreements are allowing critical habitat to be logged while being exempt from federal environmental protection law [Environment Protection and Conservation Act 1999]. The number of threatened species has grown by 8% since 2016, such that 21% of Australian mammal species are now threatened. Moreover, this number is predicted to increase substantially over coming decades, with further extinctions expected unless radical changes to sustainable practises are made. Growing hardwood and softwood plantings honor's this connection to country by protecting Native forests.

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

Caring for Country activities by First Nations peoples can improve health and wellbeing, while also improving environmental health.