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Submission ID: 204886

Organisation: N/A

Location: New South Wales

Supporting materials uploaded: N/A

Submission date: 10/13/2024 2:43:43 PM

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

Native forest logging is unsustainable and uneconomic. It degrades land and waterways and impacts our farmers by reducing water supply and/or degrading that water supply to the point where it creates a cost to agricultural production. It also detrades the water supplies of rural communities and increases costs on rural residents and councils. Clearfelling increases the penetration of invasive weeds which in turn impact rural land and agriculture, adding additional costs for our farmers. Movements of logging vehicles cause significant damage to our already poor rural roadways and again cause significant costs to rural communities and councils. It produces relatively little economic benefit, mostly producing low value products at significant cost and requires ongoing government subsidies. Production and yields have fallen significantly and continue to decline despite the removal of numerous regulations designed to balance commercial exploitation with environmental considerations. The Forestry Corporation and loggers frequently breach environmental and operational conditions resulting in fines which are then largely paid from government coffers, imposing a cost on the whole of the people of NSW. The degradation of mature forest caused by native forest logging also has an unsustainable and severe negative impact on native species (both flora and fauna). By removing mature trees it reduces the nest/den habitat required by more than 150 native species, including endangered and iconic species. Logging increases the likelihood of severe fires such as the widespread 2020 fires which further impact native ecosystems and species. First Nations people in NSW have an ongoing connection to our remaining native forests and these are an important part of their cultural heritage. These connections and heritage must be respected and maintained in accordance with our commitments to the UN.

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

I recently travelled the Monaro Highway from Victoria to Sydney. The contrast between the beautiful forests of the Victorian side of the border and the moonscape interspersed with patches of plantation on the NSW side couldn't be greater. I strongly urge the Minns government to follow the lead of their Victorian counterparts and end native forest logging immediately. Australia is home to a unique and precious biosphere which is currently at risk of total collapse. Continued native forest logging is incompatible with NSW's and Australia's commitments to UN biodiversity and natural/cultural heritage preservation. Our remaining native forest habitats are critical to the survival of over 200 threatened or endangered species and ongoing native forest logging will inevitably lead to increased extinctions. NSW has some of the last remaining habitat for numerous endangered species. The clear and frequent disregard for endangered native animal exclusion zones by the NSW Forestry Corporation and loggers demonstrates that continued logging is incompatible with the survival of these species. Mature forests are critical in the hydrologic cycle as producers of expiration and moisture. The volume of oxygen produced by large and mature forests also helps to cool the air, encouraging

condensation and consequently rain. These factors are critical to our water supplies and to farmers.

In an increasingly urban society, native forests play a critical role in the wellbeing of the people of NSW by providing an escape and connection with nature which is missing in large cities.

Opportunities for recreation and outdoor activities such as bushwalking and mountain biking improve our health, which is increasingly important in reducing the burden on our health system.

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

There is a demand for forest products, but the demand for native forest products is minimal and can easily be met by plantation products. Native forest logging products amounted to less than 5% of total sawn log production in 2023. There is sufficient degraded agricultural land in NSW to sustain an expanded plantation-based forestry industry. The majority of the timber required for housing in NSW is pine or similar plantation grown softwoods and composite timber products which are stronger and less subject to termite infestation, etc. More than half of all native forest logs produced are used for woodchips (i/e/ a low value export). With the increasing move to digital platforms, demand for these type of products is falling and can largely be satisfied by paper recycling or chipping of saw log by products.

Similarly, timber for furniture, etc can be supplied by native plantation timber or recycled/upcycled waste timber.

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

Almost all softwood products are now produced via plantations. Similarly, hardwood plantations provide an increasing proportion of all hardwood products. Together, plantations produce more than 90% of all forestry products produced in NSW. Plantation forestry is a sustainable and scalable industry which will continue to provide at least as much employment in rural communities as current native forest logging does. Contrary to the case with native forestry logging which requires ongoing and unsustainable subsidies which distort the market, plantation logging is both sustainable and profitable in its own right.

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

Remaining native forests in NSW cover around 2 million hectares (approximately 2.5% of the land area of NSW). Their environmental, economic and social benefits are massively disproportionate to their footprint.

The environmental benefits of undisturbed native forests are well documented, including improved air and water quality, improved biodiversity, improved soils in adjoining land, reduced levels of invasive species, retention of carbon and so on. There are also significant regional economic benefits from tourism, reduced costs for agriculture, water supply and so on.

Conversely, native forest logging is a significant net economic drain, with ongoing losses due to costs exceeding sale prices for products and direct costs to the taxpayers of NSW in annual subsidies amounting to tens of millions of dollars.

First Nations ranger programs provide improved social and economic outcomes for First Nations communities by providing opportunities to work on Country while creating or enhancing pride and social wellbeing, with the associated reductions in social harm and the cost to the people of NSW in dealing with these harms. Stewardship and preservation of forests could also generate income for First Nations communities via carbon credits and similar bio-banking initiatives.

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

Ending native forest logging would have enormous benefits for NSW's commitments to reducing carbon production. Native forest logging directly releases over 3.5 million tonnes of carbon each year, mainly due to the resulting substantial reduction in stored carbon. Conversely, an ongoing cycle of plantation forestry is either neutral or carbon positive.

Unlogged forests are more resilient to climate change and contribute to healthier, sustainable ecosystems. Conversely, logged forests are weaker and more susceptible to the impacts of fire, pests and invasive species.