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

The future of New South Wales' forests and their management is as complex as a koala's journey through a eucalyptus forest, deeply intertwined with the demand for the diverse array of products and services these forests provide. It appears that in recent decades, the advanced science of forest management in NSW has been neglected, receiving a lukewarm response from government policies. An independent inquiry would likely uncover substantial evidence to support this claim. A notable indication of this predicament is NSW's reliance on imported timber, signaling a potential disconnect between policy and practice, which questions the sustainability of local forestry operations. To foster a resurgence, significant support from the State Government and public engagement is essential to cultivate industry growth and address the economic, environmental, and climatic challenges that lie ahead. Recognizing the contributions of forest scientists and professionals is also crucial, as they are instrumental in seeding sustainable practices for the future of forestry.

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

The environmental and cultural significance of NSW forests, home to all native creatures and plants, not only those listed as endangered, and the profound Aboriginal heritage, are extraordinary. For over thirty years, I've observed 'the last koala strongholds in NSW' emerge, often in State forests designated for logging and, interestingly, just before elections. With almost four decades of experience, I can attest that forest management is not the environmental or cultural menace it's often portrayed as. It actually aligns with preserving our forests' verdancy and historical richness. Despite assertions by some who seek to appear authoritative, I have not encountered any proof of extinction of native species, flora or fauna, in professionally and sustainably managed forests, including those subjected to routine tree harvesting. I'm aware of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites within State forests that were previously neglected, vandalized, and used as illegal dumping grounds until they were rehabilitated and safeguarded by the Forestry Corporation's efforts.

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

The challenges of the cost of living and housing pressures are significant, particularly for the younger generation and future generations. Turning to the timber industry, it's not merely a matter of constructing treehouses; it's a vital sector in New South Wales (NSW). The continuous operation of the timber industry in NSW is crucial. It's imperative that the forestry and timber sector receives full authorization to manage the entire process: cultivation, harvesting, processing, and marketing. Timber is a fundamental resource, supporting numerous industries beyond its traditional uses.

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

Plantations, be they expanses of softwood, robust hardwood, or Private Native Forestry, stand as the timber industry's unsung champions, both presently and in the future. Enhancing our timber reserves with a blend of native and exotic trees is a clear-cut decision, provided that the experts in charge are prepared for the monumental challenge of managing monoculture forests. The conundrum lies in financing the safeguarding of these lush assets from the capricious tendencies of Mother Nature. Indeed, that is a formidable challenge! In the end, I am convinced that traditional forests and locally-sourced timber will prevail, weathering the climate's unpredictable challenges at an economical cost.

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

The term 'State forests' may denote the land tenure system or refer to the Forestry Corporation as the managing entity. Both are crucial in providing environmental, economic, and social advantages for New South Wales. The success of these entities is attributed to the highly skilled and passionate workforce, armed with state-of-the-art systems and resources. The Forestry Corporation's staff stands out for their extensive expertise. They are not merely specialists in trees; they possess a broad skill set across environmental and forest sciences. Their expertise spans silviculture (tree cultivation) and forest inventory (tree measurement), to forest ecology (habitat management), civil engineering (construction of roads and bridges), forest protection (combating pests, weeds, and bushfires), and timber commerce (sales and marketing). This multifaceted proficiency is akin to an environmental Swiss Army knife, unmatched by any other state agency in the domain.

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

While I'm quite familiar with carbon cycle issues, including atmospheric carbon and its environmental impact, I must admit my knowledge isn't deep enough to make substantial comments. However, I do view active forest management, like timber harvesting and use, in the same light as solar and wind energy. Forests and their offerings, such as timber, wildlife habitats, soil and water conservation, and recreational opportunities, are unique. They can sustain themselves through smart, focused management unlike any other terrestrial ecosystems.