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

Native forest logging is occurring in critically important conservation areas, such as the Bulga State Forest, which houses remnant populations of threatened species that are already vulnerable following the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires. These species are territorial, and with the onset of spring, their survival is further compromised. Habitat destruction leads to displacement, increased competition, and ultimately, local extinctions. These biodiverse remnants are becoming alarmingly rare.

Furthermore, the complexity of our native biodiversity cannot be restored through plantation-style plantings. The true depth of what we stand to lose remains largely misunderstood. Recent research has also demonstrated that logged forests are significantly more susceptible to severe bushfires. Evidence from the 2019-2020 Australian forest fires confirms that logging practices elevated the risk of high-severity fires (Lindenmeyer et al., 2023). This is not just an environmental issue; it is a direct threat to our communities.

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

Australia's rich biodiversity is a global heritage, cherished and protected by communities around the world. The outpouring of support following the Black Summer fires, alongside widespread protests, underscores the public's deep concern for our environment. Access to undamaged old-growth forests offers psychological healing and sustains community well-being.

The destruction wrought by logging causes irreparable harm to ecosystems and leads to collective grief for communities that depend on these forests. Native forests are critical for threatened species like the koala and various gliders and hold immense cultural significance for Indigenous peoples. It is an appalling contradiction that while defacing heritage buildings is labeled criminal vandalism, the legal destruction of native forests is permitted.

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

The future of timber supply lies not in logging native forests but in sustainable plantation forestry, as evidenced by successful transitions in New Zealand and South Australia. Plantations are more profitable, create more jobs, and are better for carbon capture. The potential for nature tourism in Australia is immense, and initiatives like the Great Koala National Park could bolster economic growth in local communities.

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

Like NZ & SA the future of forest & the timber industry is plantations, more profitable and employs more people, more positive in terms of carbon capture, fast growing

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

Native forests are vital for the survival of threatened and potentially threatened native species. Habitat destruction, primarily due to industrial logging, is a significant cause of local extinctions. In 2004, over 16,532 plant species and 3,817 animal species dependent on forests were documented, with more species likely to be identified as research and reporting improve (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry, Australian Government, 2004).

Scientific research indicates that logging, often referred to as 'thinning' or 'forest gardening,' can diminish the richness of flora and fauna. While it may benefit certain species, it severely impacts others that rely on diverse, multi-layered vegetation for survival (G.J. Murray, C. Everett, & D.B. Lindenmayer, 6 Sept 2024, 'Logging by Another Name - Forest Gardening, Perils and Irritations'). This practice also makes forests more susceptible to invasive weed species such as lantana, bridal creeper, and invasive grasses.

According to the Frontier Economics Report ("The Time to End Native Forest Logging in NSW is Now," 30 May 2023), direct employment linked to the hardwood sector of FCNSW amounts to approximately 1,070 jobs statewide. This includes workers for FCNSW, harvest and haulage contractors, and mills. Employment opportunities are particularly strong in the management of protected forests, recreation and tourism, plantation-based forestry, fire and invasive species management, and the administration of carbon and biodiversity credits. Shifting focus from native forest logging to plantation timber is unlikely to have a significant economic impact, especially since native forest logging is already operating at a loss and relies on government subsidies. Plantation forests can provide more employment opportunities due to the necessity for effective management, including weed and feral species control, fire risk management, and the oversight of carbon and biodiversity credits. They also offer recreational benefits for communities and tourists. Nature tourism is the primary reason people visit Australia, generating approximately \$20 billion annually for New South Wales, according to the National Parks Association of NSW. The creation of the Great Koala National Park, as opposed to its destruction, is expected to further stimulate economic growth in all five Local Government Areas by enhancing tourist-related businesses (such as accommodation and nature-based services) and creating jobs for rangers and in regeneration efforts.

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

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and native forest logging directly undermines the emissions reduction targets set by NSW and Australia as a whole.

Logging native forests produces significant emissions, as demonstrated by the major carbon credits achieved in Tasmania when native forest logging was reduced.

Healthy, diverse forests that include complex flora, such as old-growth trees, provide the best habitat for wildlife, as evidenced during the Black Summer fires, and serve as optimal carbon storage.

Complex, healthy forests also retain moisture more effectively, with heavily shaded areas being less susceptible to invasive weed species that increase bushfire risk (HotSpots Fire Project, May 2017, Nature Conservation Council & NSW RFS).

In contrast, the planting and harvesting of fast-growing plantation timbers on existing cleared or degraded land is carbon-positive.

Public submission

Because plantation forests grow relatively quickly, they also facilitate more efficient carbon capture.