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

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Native forest logging is totally unsustainable, in my opinion, especially the way it is done now: clear-felling coupes of old growth forest in high biodiversity areas, such as currently being done within the long-promised proposed area of the Great Koala NP, is environmental destruction at its worst; one could even call it "ecocide".

Adding insult to injury, we NSW taxpayers are subsidizing this activity by Forestry Corp to the tune of \$20million (FY2020-21; SMH 23-5-2023); and \$9million (FY2021-22; The Guardian 13-2-2023) together with similar figures for FY2023-24, no doubt. This is unconscionable! And it makes NO ECONOMIC SENSE WHATSOEVER. On these grounds alone, Forestry Corp should be shut down immediately.

So, to comment on the first point, the activities of Forestry Corp are UNSUSTAINABLE both environmentally AND economically.

Added to these reasons, as if more were needed, the timber produced from trashing our forests doesn't even go to make fine furniture, or floorboards, or even architraves or decking timber products; most goes to make pulp! A very small amount is made into wooden pallets and tomato stakes.

I ask this: Are these good uses for our magnificent biodiverse habitat forests? One has to agree that the answer is a resounding 'NO!'.

Then there's the question of bushfires: Professor David Lindenmayer (ANU) is a world-leading forest ecologist and has proven beyond doubt that logged forests burn more strongly than unlogged forests; and that regrowth burns ferociously. (Source: Numerous journal and news articles, for example: <https://theconversation.com/has-logging-really-stopped-in-victoria-what-the-death-of-an-endangered-glider-tells-us-230394>)

Even Forestry Corp cannot log a burnt forest, although I read that they have tried. (For example: Guardian, 31-7-2024)

My conclusion: the current and future forestry operations in NSW are totally unsustainable, and have been for quite some time. Forestry Corp should cease all activities immediately and all employees and contractors should be paid out.

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

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Forests have intrinsic value in themselves, as complex, living, functioning organisms. I believe they have a right to exist, as do our Indigenous brothers and sisters. They are favourite places to visit, with a HUGE tourism potential. Who has not experienced the wonder of seeing a towering Mountain Ash [Eucalyptus Regnans] in Tassie and Victoria? Or the Daintree Rainforest of Cape York? Our NSW forests and rainforests are just as awe-inspiring in their pristine evolved natural form.

They also "provide" humans with so many things for free, just by existing:

- Oxygen
- CO2 sequestration

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- Food , fruits, berries, leaves, fungi, fibres, etc
  - Clean water for drinking
  - Habitat for forest creatures, including our iconic Koalas, universally loved around the world
  - Hollows for creatures and birds to nest in (Old Growth Forests only)
  - Tourism , bushwalking, recreation such as mountain biking, camping
  - Therapy , contemplation of nature, photography, scientific study
  - Medicines
  - Generation of rainfall through transpiration
  - Cooling of the landscape
  - Pollination , habitat for insects, birds, bats and other pollinators vital for human agriculture.

- Sacred places which have existed for millennia in Indigenous dreaming and stories  
The forests of NSW are absolutely vital for the continued existence of hundreds of threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna. Australia is home to many biological 'hotspots', containing species found nowhere else on Earth. Surely this alone is a reason to preserve, conserve, cherish and look after our remaining forests, especially our unique Old Growth forests, such as those in the promised Great Koala NP, where Koalas thrive?

We require a massive shift of thinking in NSW, away from extraction, exploitation and profit, to one of stewardship and conservation, more akin to Indigenous thought, which sees nature as part of themselves, and themselves as part of nature, as indeed we are. It is the height of hubris to imagine ourselves divorced from and above nature. Yet this is our current mindset. However, after 236 years we should be mature enough as a people to change; many people yearn for this. Our very existence on this planet requires it, and we should begin by finally protecting our forests.

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

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I have read that almost all our construction timber comes from plantations, both hardwood and softwood. Therefore, there's no need to take Old Growth Forests for housing; indeed, as noted before, zero % of the timber taken now by Forestry Corp is used for housing or even fencing; most of it goes to make pulp, used for cardboard; a very small % is made into pallets and tomato stakes, both of which could be made from recycled plastics, which are much more durable, and of course, reusable.

(Article on this: <https://theconversation.com/logged-native-forests-mostly-end-up-in-landfill-not-in-buildings-and-furniture-115054> )

In fact, I read recently that electricity poles are being replaced not with wood but with fibreglass and resin composite poles (See article:

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/political-fight-sparks-as-electricity-network-axes-timber-power-poles-20240626-p5jp08.html> )

Does mining use timber? Surely the old days of pit props to hold up the roof of the underground mine are gone, as most mines seem to be open-cut these days; and we don't use wooden carts any more for transport.

Retail is a different matter, as most of the goods we buy are packaged in cardboard, some of it made from our precious and irreplaceable Old Growth Forests! This is SUCH a destructive, pointless and heartbreaking industry, when we view Old Growth Forest as only fit to be pulped. Surely the offcuts from softwood and hardwood plantations could be used for pulp instead?

Or imagine this: REDUCE packaging! We really do not need to have so many products encased in cardboard; we should be taking reusable containers to the shops so we can buy in bulk without

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the need for single-use packaging, only briefly used to wrap food, and then discarded, much of it ending up in landfill.

This sort of thinking also needs to change. We cannot live sustainably on a planet where resources are not valued, or worse, are used and discarded so blithely. We need a revolution of thought and practice.

Startling statistics, Source: NSW Upper House MP Sue Higginson, <https://www.suehigginson.org/> :

- Half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported; and
- 87% of hardwood plantation logs were exported as wood chips! (This is extraordinary, you would assume that hardwood plantation logs were useful for housing, construction, furniture, floorboards, fencing, etc., but apparently we have vastly more timber than we need growing in plantations)

Sue goes on to say that 'Hardwood sourced from Native Forests OR plantations are no longer necessary for any of the uses identified in this section', adding yet another reason to end IMMEDIATELY the destruction of our precious Old Growth Forests in NSW. The Native Forest industry cannot be justified IN ANY WAY.

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

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Softwood and hardwood plantations are well-established, as I noted in (3) above.

Private Native Forestry will be in danger of enormous expansion when Old Growth and State Forests are protected from Forestry Corp, as has happened in Victoria, since VicForests were disbanded and Old Growth logging 'ended' in January this year: The people involved in VicForests and their logging contractors have just switched their destructive operations to PRIVATE Native Forests. It's a total unmitigated disaster.

(Article on this: [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/vicforests-closure-healthy-forests-foundation-logging/104194836?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-08/vicforests-closure-healthy-forests-foundation-logging/104194836?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web) )

As noted in (3) above, we do not need to continue either public OR private Native Forestry, as we have an abundance of both softwood and hardwood plantations to cover all our timber needs, with most of the wood produced being exported for pulp. This, I think, must be the end of the argument.

#### **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**

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See my points above, there is no longer any need whatsoever to destroy public OR private Native Forests; in fact, there is a crying need to do the opposite, for so many reasons, also noted above. We really need to stop logging NOW! It's utterly senseless and totally illogical to continue!

#### **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**

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This section is about "Offsets" of various kinds; they are a neat accounting trick that enables greenhouse gas emitters and biodiversity destroyers to continue doing what they've been doing for 236 years - since White Settlement - but it's time to stop. It's tantamount to very sophisticated "Greenwashing" in my opinion.

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It's worth noting that the economic system which has encouraged everyone to exploit nature for so long, so that the Earth is on its knees, cannot and will not fix the problems it has created.

Please read this very pertinent piece by Dr Richard Denniss, of The Australia Institute.

I have reprinted it here in full: 'A 'Green Wall Street' in Australia won't save the planet. Markets value profits, not platypuses':

If we're serious about protecting endangered species, we must protect what's left of their habitat, not ask the market to set a price for destroying it.

'Neoliberalism can't and won't fix our climate crisis or save our endangered species from extinction.

Market-based policies have failed spectacularly when it comes to aged care, disability care and saving the Murray River. But despite the catalogue of catastrophe, earlier this month Tanya Plibersek said: 'Ultimately, I would like to see the market truly valuing nature, so that protecting forests is more valuable than destroying them.'

The environment minister went on to suggest that by establishing a biodiversity market Australia could one day 'house its own Green Wall Street: a trusted global financial hub, where the world comes to invest in environmental protection and restoration'.

Markets do not value people, platypuses, or ecosystems.

The only thing markets 'value' is expected future profits that a company or an activity might generate. The share price of a company reflects investor expectations of future profits and dividends. It would be great if the corporations 'investing' in biodiversity were doing it purely to save the koalas or bogong moths, but the fact is that no one invests out of the goodness of their heart without expecting some sort of return.

While Plibersek has been vague on the exact terminology of the units that would be traded under the proposed scheme, the most likely customers for biodiversity certificates or credits would be landowners who want to OFFSET [my emphasis] the destruction of some of their remaining wildlife habitat to build new developments or new mines. The 'market price' for such destruction won't be determined by the value of a Koala, but by the potential profits of destroying a similar sized piece of habitat elsewhere.

Australia doesn't need elaborate new 'market mechanisms' to save our precious environment. We just need to stop approving new housing developments where Koalas still like to live, or new mines where Platypuses live.

And we need to stop the approval of the 116 coal and gas projects currently on the books in Australia which will inevitably cause the climate change that most threatens all of our unique species.

The problem with such policies is they work, which is why those determined to destroy what's left of our habitat prefer to avoid some regulations in favour of complicated trading schemes that just don't work.

This is not a new critique. The New South Wales auditor general recently investigated the state's biodiversity scheme and found the NSW Department of Planning and Environment 'has not effectively designed core elements of the Scheme'.

The auditor general's report, described as 'damning', found that 'key concerns around the Scheme's transparency, sustainability and integrity are yet to be fully resolved' and 'that biodiversity gains made through the Scheme will not be sufficient to OFFSET [my emphasis] losses resulting from development'.

Despite the failures of the NSW biodiversity offsets scheme, the federal government is racing down the same flawed path. [!!! My expression of alarm]

As the state of the environment report makes clear, habitat loss is one of the major risks to what's left of Australia's biodiversity. Even if it were possible to measure all the biodiversity on each hectare of land, and develop an exchange rate for Koalas, Platypus, and Possums, and then ensure

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there was no fraud or conflicts of interests, the idea that we will let mining companies and property developers destroy some of what's left of our precious habitat as long as they buy an 'offset' from someone else is bizarre.

If Australia is serious about protecting our endangered species, we need to protect what's left of their habitat, not ask the market to set a price for destroying it.

Unfortunately, this same obsession with offsetting has become central to climate policy as well. Rather than insist big polluters reduce their emissions, and rather than prevent new gas and coal mines being built, the Albanese government's proposed 'safeguards mechanism' will likely place no binding obligation on big polluters to actually reduce their emissions, simply allowing them to purchase carbon offsets instead.

At the heart of the safeguard mechanism will be yet another complicated trading scheme, where both existing and new fossil fuel projects will be allowed to increase their emissions while buying dodgy offsets from someone who has promised not to chop down a tree they were unlikely ever to chop down. Even though the investigation into integrity concerns with such dodgy credits won't be completed till December, the climate change minister, Chris Bowen, is planning to have his new carbon trading legislation drafted by November.

Scrapping \$11bn per year's worth of fossil fuel subsidies and banning new coal and gas projects would be great for the budget and the climate, and it would free up a lot of money to save animals.

But instead of doing what's cheap and easy, our government has chosen to do something complex and risky. It's easy to see why the property developers and mining industry are willing to take the risk, but it's hard to see what's in it for the Koalas.

Source: The Guardian, 15-9-2022,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/15/green-wall-street-in-australia-wont-save-the-planet-markets-value-profits-not-platypuses> ]

Others have noted the short-sightedness of such schemes, and that many of the schemes established so far are not working, are fraudulent, are not properly overseen, or do not even exist except on paper.

Example: 'It's almost beyond belief: findings last Australia's biggest carbon offset scheme' by Michael Bachelard, The Age, 11-10-2024: [https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/australia-s-biggest-source-of-carbon-offsets-built-on-house-of-cards-credits-worth-495m-20241009-](https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/australia-s-biggest-source-of-carbon-offsets-built-on-house-of-cards-credits-worth-495m-20241009-p5kh3m.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawF3X8JleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHd1jmYIY90b2WwvASveuA2zdD-zFUPKRRgbOjeWG-OYpii99iwZde6KDCA_aem_Y8S0W3rMfmB7fgSP91TtBw)

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This is an excellent 9 minute video report by Stephen Long, a veteran journalist, on the problems OFFSETS are creating rather than solving: 'Video Report: The Carbon Credit Grift Destroying Koala Habitat', 14-4-2024: (<https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/video-report-the-carbon-credit-grift-destroying-koala-habitat/>) It is well worth watching.

The NSW Audit Office produced a report on the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme - this is what they found, in a nutshell:

[extract from article by Sophie Vorrath, RenewEconomy, 30-8-2022:

[https://reneweconomy.com.au/failure-by-almost-every-measure-offsets-under-fire-again-after-damning-](https://reneweconomy.com.au/failure-by-almost-every-measure-offsets-under-fire-again-after-damning-audit/?fbclid=IwAR3QUyFwF13Ca4EA7RI1zZ9RZxs_GGDnuclbv3fkkN2xVOsRWjayhIwk0dU)

[audit/?fbclid=IwAR3QUyFwF13Ca4EA7RI1zZ9RZxs\\_GGDnuclbv3fkkN2xVOsRWjayhIwk0dU\]](https://reneweconomy.com.au/failure-by-almost-every-measure-offsets-under-fire-again-after-damning-audit/?fbclid=IwAR3QUyFwF13Ca4EA7RI1zZ9RZxs_GGDnuclbv3fkkN2xVOsRWjayhIwk0dU)

'The New South Wales Biodiversity Offsets Scheme has been slammed as a 'failure by almost every measure,' after an audit determined its effectiveness so far has been 'limited,' with key concerns remaining around its integrity, transparency, and sustainability. [!!! My astonishment - why haven't they terminated the scheme forthwith, as it is SO unfit for purpose???)

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Yet Chris Minns, the NSW Premier, seems to be happy to go down the OFFSETS route, nevertheless:

This is a quote from 'The carbon con killing koalas', by Stephen Long, TAI, 9-4-2024  
( <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/the-carbon-con-killing-koalas/> ):

In a budget estimates hearing, Minns candidly explained,

'There are many industries and many companies and governments around the world that are desperate for carbon offsets and would be looking at jurisdictions like New South Wales in relation to that. You have to have the system up and running before you can quarantine a park or an area to allow for that area or that zone to be eligible for the carbon transfer. If you do it in reverse, then you can't retroactively go to that national park or that forest and say, 'This will now apply to carbon offsets in the future.' '

It was a remarkable admission'

Stephen Long goes on to explain the problems with carbon credits, carbon markets, offsets, ACCUs, and the subterfuge, sleight-of-hand & sophisticated greenwashing that's being rolled out by developers, fossil fuel companies, and now, politicians of most parties.

It's a job to know how to stop this juggernaut, as it trashes more of our forests, our environment, our flora and fauna, in the name of profit. But it must be stopped, the twin evils of destruction of forests AND the continued and increasing emissions have to be exposed, examined and vilified. If we go down this road, we will undoubtedly regret it. It spells destruction of not only our Koalas, our forests, our environment, but the whole of NSW, Australia, and ultimately the planet.

Why would we do this?