

Public submission

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Submission to Independent Forestry Panel

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Native forests are vital if we are to protect our natural environment and native species. They are also an important mechanism for the NSW government to reach its carbon emissions reduction target. These forests are an invaluable method of carbon capture and storage, much better than any artificial scheme devised by corporations.

There are a multitude of benefits that native forests provide to plants, animals and humans. Unlogged forests can generate rainfall, cool the landscape and clean the air. In addition, they provide hollows for the 174 species of animals that rely on them for nesting and food; provide a home to 269 nationally listed threatened species in NSW and play an important role in the pollination of our native plants as well as the plants needed to produce our food in the agricultural industry.

In addition, our native forests reduce the threat and intensity of fires, erosion and water-way pollution, and the penetration of weeds and other invasive species. They are more resilient to the changing climate and catastrophic fires we will continue to experience as carbon emissions rise unabated.

First Nations people and communities are connected to native forests and forest landscapes which are an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge. Native forests contribute to the living conditions for many towns including water quality in reservoirs and tourism in regional areas. The NSW government's newly announced tourism plan to entice tourists to other areas in the state away from Sydney would benefit these communities if forests were protected from logging.

Presently, the logging of native forests is unsustainable. Estimations by the Forestry Corporation of the amount of harvestable timber are consistently over-estimated and the yield from these forests has declined by 40% since 2010. When plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production, the continued logging of native forests makes no economic sense, particularly when there is a decreasing demand for wood from native forests.

For the year 2023 logging in native forests accounted for only 9% of the total log production. Half the logs taken from native forests in that year were turned into woodchip and exported.

The Forestry's Corporation's native forest hardwood division is operating at a loss of tens of millions of dollars. In addition, it receives tens of millions of dollars in regular equity injections. I do not believe this non-competitive market should be paid for by the people of NSW when the money could be much better spent on schemes to protect and restore publicly owned forests.

There are a number of benefits to the ending of native forest logging, including improving the health of the environment, protecting vulnerable species and the opportunity for the NSW government to implement policies to deal with climate change. It would, just as importantly, provide an opportunity for First Nations Ranger Programs to be implemented

which have been hugely successful in managing the recovery and health of native forests elsewhere.

I, therefore, strongly support the rapid halt to logging of native forests. NSW has been a laggard in the protection of these important habitats and it is time their value is recognised and protected.