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

Since about 70% of the logs taken from native forests end up as wood chips for paper production or to be burnt for so-called renewable electricity, and a similar percentage of hardwood plantation timber is also used this way, I believe that this is unsustainable. Paper and cardboard can be more economically produced from bamboo or hemp, which have higher yields per hectare and use less water. Of the timber that isn't used this way, some goes into low value products like pallets and tomato stakes. The amount of timber ending up as high value products can be sourced from plantations. Native forest logging has run at a loss for many years and is heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. If Forestry Corp. was a private company it would have gone into administration some years ago. As the number of people protesting against native forest logging is increasing, and their actions are increasingly delaying forestry activities and tying up police time, it is unlikely that the industry will ever return to profitability. Reducing native forest logging will have an immediate economic benefit to this state and will assist us to meet our emission reduction targets.

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

Forests promote rainfall, filter our air and water, hold soils together, slow down the passage of water through the landscape (thus providing a more reliable water supply for our towns and cities), produce oxygen and remove carbon dioxide from the air. They help to cool the air and buffer us from destructive winds, which are increasing in frequency because of climate change. Spending time in a healthy forest has been proven to assist a person's mental health and, thus, productivity.

Forests provide essential habitat for native birds and animals, many of which have become endangered because of the reduction in their living space. It is estimated that only 3% of our original native forest cover remains. Logging destroys this habitat and, as most animals are territorial (that's why we invented Border Force) affected animals cannot simply move into unlogged areas, as those are already occupied and will be defended by the residents. Logging increases the risk of high intensity wildfires and increases erosion, silting up creeks and rivers. Currently, in NSW, Forestry Corp. is intensively logging areas of high conservation value for endangered animals such as Koalas and Southern Greater Gliders. They are doing this during the breeding season for many birds, reptiles and amphibians. Many of these animals will not be able to breed this season and those that live in logging coupes will likely perish. Because logging takes out most of the immature trees in an area, none can go on to develop hollows, essential for an estimated 174 of our native species. The hollow-bearing trees that are left will eventually die and fall over, earlier than they would have done naturally, for they are no longer protected from the elements by surrounding vegetation and are subject to increased predation by sap-sucking invertebrates. As no new hollow-bearing trees are being allowed to mature, all 174 of those hollow-dependent species will become extinct.

Not being of first nations heritage, I cannot comment on the cultural values of forests from their perspective but, I sincerely hope that their input on this issue will be actively sought. For too long nobody has bothered to ask them what they think about things that affect them and the lands that they know they are responsible for.

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

Very little hardwood timber is needed for housing. Most house frames are either steel or softwood. Polished hardwood floors and decking are not essential and can be sourced from plantation timber. Bridges are mostly built from steel and concrete these days and the amount of timber needed for wharf and jetty pilings is not large.

Because most of our lowland forests have already been cleared, logging trucks are now travelling further, over narrow, winding dirt roads to bring the logs down from high country. This means increased costs for fuel and maintenance of both trucks and roads. It also means increased danger for truck drivers and the general motoring public.

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

Timber supply needs can be met entirely from a combination of plantations and private native forestry, provided the latter is conducted sustainably, and doesn't impact any endangered wildlife. Farmers have to grow what they sell, foresters should be subject to the same principle.

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

Aboriginal forest management should be encouraged in areas where it traditionally occurred in the past. This does not include wet forests. We need to preserve the forests we have left for a range of activities that benefit the populace, such as recreational activities, honey production etc.

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

Obviously, forests are valuable allies in the fight to restore our world to a liveable state. By absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen trees and other vegetation, are our only way to economically reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. We can not rely on unproven technologies such as carbon capture and storage to provide this service. We need more trees, not fewer. The amount of carbon sequestered by a tree is proportional to the leaf area exposed to daylight. The larger the tree, the more carbon it can draw down from the atmosphere.

I do not believe that we should be trying to "monetise our forests" as our current Premier has suggested. Economic benefits will flow from forests being left intact and actually increasing in area because of the environmental services they provide. Increasing forest cover will decrease insurance costs by mitigating environmental disasters such as those that have occurred all over the world in recent times. It is a rare SBS News bulletin lately that doesn't have coverage of an extreme weather event, such as Hurricane Helene, Typhoon Yagi and Storm Boris. In September, every country in South America was fighting wildfires. We don't need markets to fix the problem. markets are what got us into this mess in the first place.