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

Native forest logging in NSW is not environmentally or economically sustainable and should cease immediately. The NSW timber industry should be entirely based on softwood and hardwood plantations. See attached file for details.

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

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

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

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

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

See attached file

Paula Flack

09/10/24

<https://nswdpietfaforms.net/f/IFP-MakeAnOnlineSubmission>

Dear Independent Forestry Panel

Submission to the Independent Forestry Panel re forestry in NSW

I would like to state from the outset that I strongly oppose the logging of NSW public native forests and have done for many years. I do however, recognise that we need a timber industry and want to see one that is completely based on plantations. I offer the following comments regarding public native forestry in NSW.

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

- I live in a rural area and have run beef cattle on our 300acre property for over forty years. Our property is bounded by State Forests to the north and south. I witnessed first-hand the industrial logging of public native forest on north facing slopes on my southern boundary in Buckrabendinni Sate Forest over a decade ago. Large areas of intact mature forest were taken, and huge areas of disturbed and exposed soils were left. Now those areas are a sea of lantana and Bell miners are rampant with areas of Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) evident in the surrounding forest, including our own private forest. Prior to this logging we had never heard a single Bell miner. Now our government funded Habitat Links project linking two areas known to contain koalas is showing signs of BMAD in various koala feed trees we planted over 19 years ago. We are devastated. This is an example of unsustainable over-harvesting causing a domino effect of environmental degradation across not only public native forest but also private property.
- I am a keen bushwalker and care very much about environmental health and sustainability, in particular forest ecosystems. I have observed our public native forests being over logged with ever increasing frequency in my region. Logging practices have changed so much over the decades with clear-felling commonplace now. These practices leave huge canopy openings and evidence of erosion and polluted sediment laden runoff entering the creek systems. I have also seen significant damage to trees that are not removed during logging operations, such as deep slashes in young trunks and exposure and compaction of root zones. These trees are supposed to be the future resource but are often damaged so badly they fail to thrive and are vulnerable to disease, death or fall over.
- Our forests are not recovering from intensive logging, post logging burning and hazard reduction burning. Changes in soils structure and loss of top soil from canopy loss and heavy machinery all contribute to degraded forests that are more fire prone. Forest management

regimes benefit fast growing species like blackbutts and result in less diversity and age differences within forest stands after logging operations.

- Our public native forests are being treated as nothing more than a commodity with scant, if any, regard for the other important values they contain and services they provide. Decades of public native forest over allocation in the wood supply agreements and (mis)management to create even aged, species poor forests, has driven the decline of our public native forest estate.
- I am shocked that four years after the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019/20 Forestry Corp still haven't factored in the enormous loss of timber in their yield estimates. This is unforgivable and demonstrates Forestry Corporation's disregard for sustainable forest management. Many of these burnt forests have already been logged since the fires, impacting further on the already stressed wildlife. So much for ecologically sustainable logging practices. It breaks my heart.
- Timber yields have declined by 40 % in State Forests since 2010 due to lack of available timber. This speaks volumes. Our forests are being cut down faster than they can grow back. This is unsustainable management of our public resource and is unacceptable to me.
- I am also aware that Forestry Corporation overestimate the timber that is available to harvest and that generally only 61% of what they say is available is actually found. The forests are dominated by young regrowth now and even still, they come back and log again before the trees have a chance to get to a decent age and size. When you see the massive stumps from previous operations right back to historical logging and then the smaller and smaller ones from subsequent operations it is so obvious that overlogging has been going on for decades.
- Very little old growth forest remains now and within net harvestable areas individual hollow bearing trees are still being taken, despite so many hollow dependant forests species like the Greater glider, Squirrel glider, Yellow bellied glider and large forest owls now threatened with extinction. It is unforgivable. Every single hollow bearing tree is critical and should not be touched. Forestry Corporation's logging is driving these species to extinction, and it should be stopped now.
- Intensive logging leaves the forests dryer and more prone to weed invasion and intensive bushfires.
- Rather than logging them, our forests should be protected and rehabilitated. They are worth more to us left standing. Especially considering the massive annual losses incurred by Forestry Corporation's Hardwood Division. I absolutely object to my taxes being used to prop up this redundant and damaging business. I cannot believe that this fiscally unsustainable situation has been allowed to persist for decades. Forestry Corporation only survives because we pay it to stay operational, even though we don't support logging in our native forests! Something must change and urgently. I strongly support a swift end to public native forest logging and establishment of a NSW timber industry completely plantation based.
- I am also concerned by the loss of native forests that has been going on for years as Forestry Corporation log them and then claim they are plantations.

- The native forest logging rules are weak and have been further weakened over the past years to enable more timber to be accessed, to meet overcommitted wood supply agreements. Now Forestry Corporation doesn't even have to survey for koalas before logging happens! Even though the logging rules are pathetic, Forestry Corporation still manages to breach them frequently causing irreversible damage, like illegally cutting down giant trees, encroaching on buffer zones and damaging habitat of threatened and endangered species. The irony is that it is usually citizen scientists and forest conservationists (not the regulatory body the NSW EPA) that find the alleged breaches and then, even on the rare occasion Forestry Corporation get fined, it is the public purse that pays, so where is the incentive to behave ethically and legally? Forestry Corporation is an entity that has been allowed to go rogue with immunity.
- Forestry Corporations Hardwood Division is economically unsustainable and costing the state. Wood supply agreements could be bought back with the saving made by stopping logging of native forest.
- It is up to the NSW government to take responsibility and stop throwing money after a dying industry that perpetrates destruction of forest ecosystems and threatened species habitat.

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

- There are 174 species in NSW that depend upon old growth trees for dens and nests. Logging directly impacts on 150 forest dependent threatened species in NSW. Our forest estate should be protected now, so it can recover and provide the many ecosystem services it capable of if healthy and undisturbed. There are many reports exposing the overlogging and poor health of our public native forests. What else does it take to prove that they have not been managed sustainably for so many years?
- I have several Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal friends and acquaintances; some are Elders and Knowledge Holders. Whilst I would not speak for traditional owners, I am keenly aware of the distress and anger caused by logging practices in public native forests and the damage it causes to Cultural sites within the Gumbaynggirr Nation.

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

- I am aware that many new and innovative products are replacing timber in the building industry (my son is a licenced builder). Now even new power poles will no longer be timber having been replaced by a new more fire and termite resistant product.
- I believe our timber needs can be met by plantations which already provide 91% of Australia's log production.
- 50% of hardwood timber logged from public native forests is currently exported as woodchips. This low value use of such a valuable resource should stop.

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

- Private forests contain enormous environmental values and shouldn't be logged. The government should provide incentives so that private forest owners have options.
- Private forest owners should be able to use their own timber for use on their own properties, but not koala or glider feed trees or hollow bearing trees.
- More plantations should be established, but this should be done by the government purchasing suitable land that does not contain native vegetation. The government would make significant savings by stopping logging of native forest and it could redirect the multimillion dollar assistance it provides annually to the Hardwood Division into ensuring we have enough plantation timber available to meet our needs.

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**

- State Forest play a vital role in carbon storage and sequestration, catchment health, generating rainfall, cleaning the air and cooling land. If left to recover from years of unsustainable logging practices, their capacity to deliver these services will increase, as will the benefits to the people of NSW.
- Stopping logging of public native forests will help NSW meet its carbon emission targets.
- Stopping logging of public native forests will improve water quality and quantity for downstream water users for town water supplies and agricultural and domestic uses in rural areas. Young forests are very thirsty but as the forest matures it releases more water.
- If managed in an ecologically sustainable way, tourism is a much more environmentally and economically sustainable and socially acceptable use of our public native forest. The Great Koala National Park proposal on the Coffs Coast is hugely popular not only regionally but nationally and internationally and is a good example of environmentally and economically sustainable alternative use of our natural asset.
- All native forests should be gazetted as National Park, Nature Reserve, State Conservation Area or Regional Park under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. They should be jointly managed by the state government and Aboriginal traditional custodians. I do not support sole control and management of our publicly owned parks and reserves

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.**

- I don't believe that current carbon and biodiversity trading schemes are genuinely protecting the environment as they are claimed to be. Under the current systems, including protected public native forests in a trading or offset scheme could potentially allow continued or even increased industrial carbon emissions and land clearing.
- There is plenty of scientific evidence about the important role forests play in sequestering and storing atmospheric carbon and addressing climate change.
- Logging native forests is not the best use of this important natural asset as along with the loss of biodiversity, it also releases huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Native forests must be protected from any further logging to enable them to recover their capacity and help buffer us from future climate disasters like fires and floods.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my strong opinion that native forest logging in NSW is not sustainable on any level and should cease immediately. The NSW timber industry should be entirely based on softwood and hardwood plantations. Timber workers directly affected by such a change should be adequately supported or compensated.

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide comments on this important matter.

Sincerely



Paula Flack