

# Public submission

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**Organisation:** *Quakers Central Coast (NSW)*

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**Location:** *New South Wales*

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**Supporting materials uploaded:** *Attached overleaf*

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## Submission template

The Independent Forestry Panel has been appointed to lead consultation on the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW, ahead of the NSW Government developing its Forestry Industry Action Plan. The Panel is tasked with consulting and reporting to Government on the best options to achieve the balance between sustainable supplies of timber and NSW's environmental commitments.

The Panel is seeking your views on the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW. This includes forest conservation, public and private native forestry, softwood and hardwood plantations, different land tenure and management regimes, timber supply, and non-timber forest uses such as recreation, apiculture and others.

The Panel invites written submissions from individuals and organisations on the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW. The Panel would like to hear from a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from the timber industry, forest growers, environment groups, unions, Aboriginal communities, local government, business, related industries, tourism and scientific experts.

Please structure your submission to address any or all of the topic areas below, including if and how you think current practices can improve. Please indicate the timeframe for any suggested changes, and the implications for both industry and the environment over the next 30 years.

**Topic areas to address (overleaf):**

- Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW
- Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values
- Demand for timber products, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail
- The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs
- 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
- 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.

Following this structure will help the Panel respond to some of the issues the Government has identified for inclusion in its Forestry Industry Action Plan. However, a submission that doesn't follow this structure can be uploaded to the submission portal and will also be accepted and considered by the Panel.

If your submission includes citations of evidence from published reports, please include full references for those materials.

## Your submission

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

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#### **Introducing us.**

Quakers Central Coast (NSW) are grateful for the opportunity to participate in formulating NSW government policy and practice in relation to State Forests. Quakers strive to live a just life which values the air, the waters, the soil, living things, and the processes sustaining all life. (Religious Society of Friends Earthcare Statement 2008).

Quakers' lives are shaped by testimony, the way that the indwelling Spirit of love and truth in our hearts, calls us to live. We summarise Quaker social testimonies as SPICEE – simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and earthcare.

Truth telling requires us to value the importance of scientific values and processes, see especially Topic 6. In our submissions on the topics, we use the work of many scientists particularly Prof. David Lindenmayer, world-renowned expert on forest ecology, resource management, conservation science and biodiversity protection. We have enough grounding in science and have followed the arguments over forestry in enough detail and for long enough, to have independently verified and hence developed **trust** in the honesty, rigor, integrity, lack of bias and collegiality in the work of Lindenmayer and his colleagues. Where the science on an issue is well-established we may not provide references: rather, the onus is on those who oppose mainstream science to *dis*-prove it.

Our testimonies of Peace, Equality and Community require us to support the well-being of First Nations peoples (covered in Topic 2), and of those whose livelihoods depend on forests, including of course the people who destroy forests, covered in Topic 5.

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

We presume that the topic is concerned with environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Environmental sustainability Native forests are important Carbon sinks. Mature native forests are essential habitat for innumerable species including many threatened species, see Topic 2. Mature forests also mitigate the risk of wildfires see Topic 6.

Economic sustainability: See topic 5 where we cite research showing that logging native forests actually costs the taxpayers money.

Social sustainability: see Topic 5.

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

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#### Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

We find it odd that threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values are included in the same topic. This is eerily reminiscent of the old legislative device of including Aborigines under “fauna and flora”.

Aboriginal cultural heritage values and management deserves its own topic.

Some of us in Quakers Central Coast have lived and worked with First Nations people over a long time. We are of one view, viz. that destroying native forests is not compatible with Aboriginal cultural values. Uncle Bud Marshall, speaking of Newry State Forest on the NSW north coast in July 2023, said “I have lived on and protected my land my whole life. My cultural knowledge was taught to me from a long line of Gumbaynggirr grandmothers and grandfathers. Our cultural knowledge and stories are in this forest. There are machines and gates, cameras and security guards planted on our sacred land, stopping us from walking on our country. They are destroying our land and our culture. We must stop them and protect what we have left. Once it’s gone, it’s gone” (Whaler 2023). We maintain that, wherever possible, forests should be managed according to indigenous cultural management specifically with respect to fire. See Victor Steffensen Fire Country 2020.

Threatened species: Many threatened species depend on old growth mature trees for nesting. Logging such forest with massive machines, as it is done now, destroys their habitat leading to extinction. The Black Summer bushfires 2019-2020 impacted 42% of state forests and 37% national parks estate, with 293 threatened animal species and 680 threatened plant species occurring in the fire ground (DPIE 2020).

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

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no comment

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### 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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Please note that any logging of native forests especially of big old trees, whether they occur on private property or on land designated as “plantations”, is subject to the same critique that we make with regard to publicly owned forests.

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### **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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Social and economic outcomes Providing jobs for people in rural communities is vital. We understand and support people in their concern for their livelihoods. People are often defensive if they feel that their livelihood is threatened. We need the government to give industry employees and rural communities confidence, that they will be supported in the transition to new jobs and that those jobs will be in their communities.

However very few jobs are provided by destroying native forests. They are cut down by massive machines which are operated by very few workers and which are very expensive – the most productive native forests have to be cut quickly to service interest payments on them. Capital investment to support a single full-time employee is many times more than that needed for a similar job in the plantation sector, or other industry sectors, see Price Waterhouse Coopers 2016 which focusses on Victoria and is just as relevant to NSW.

Native forest logging makes far less money than plantation logging. The annual reports of the NSW Forestry Corporation showed that its forest hardwood division made losses of \$20 million in 2020-21 and \$9 million in 2021-22. Shutting down the industry would save taxpayers many millions, see Frontier economics 2021.

Many jobs can be provided in rural communities through creative investment eg creating jobs for First Nations people managing Country, in tourism, apiculture, controlling feral animals and creating industries to use the meat, revegetating areas of forest that have failed to regenerate after logging and repeated wildfires, expanding and managing plantations, expanding fire crews. (Lindenmayer 2024 p208)

It's hard to accept the scientific truths if you think your livelihood is threatened by stopping logging native forests. Even harder when some media fosters mis- and dis-information. The social sciences show that human decision making is based on emotion. But scientists are the experts on how the material/ chemical/ physical world works. If we ignored an electrician's advice about our electrical systems, we could electrocute ourselves. We ignore scientific evidence on climate and trees at our peril. And if we don't stop logging mature native forests that industry will collapse anyway, which will be far worse than an orderly transition, for those depending on forestry for their livelihood.

As for **“the role of state forests”**, the Forestry Corporation has destroyed our faith in its ability to maximise good outcomes, because of its frequent breaches of its own regulations, see Pepper and John 2024.

Environmental outcomes Addressed in topic 6

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### **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**

This very last topic's very last sentence finishes with "...assessment of climate change risks to forests". Quakers practise truth telling. Systems theory shows us that what is happening is *not* mere "climate change" but "climate chaos" as the high and rising levels of atmospheric carbon, such as humans have never co-existed with, create new climate systems which will be difficult for humans to live in. Our governance methods appear to be inadequate to stop or even slow this, due to relentless fossil fuel lobbying.

Moreover, our best method of CCS (Carbon Capture and Storage) continues to decline due to Forestry Commission lobbying. That best method of CCS is to stop destroying old growth native forest – the claim that big old trees don't capture carbon has been disproven (Lindenmayer 2024 especially cover photo and frontispiece) – and there cannot be biodiversity without them. It takes about 300 years to grow a tree with a hollow big enough for cockatoos to breed in: destruction of such trees means they are not reproducing enough, and we are not aware of this because the birds live for up to 100 years – how are we to know they are getting old?

Trees cool the atmosphere, circulate water, turn carbon dioxide into wood, soothe human minds, give us oxygen, mitigate the climate calamity – they are essential to our survival. We are both adding carbon to the atmosphere and destroying our best CCS.

Now for the science on logging old forests and climate risk: Due to lack of time (an inadvertently destroyed file) we are limited to summarising some of Lindenmayer's findings.

Lindenmayer D. 2024 [The Forest Wars: the ugly truth about what's happening in our tall forests](#) Allen&Unwin.

p69 Wildfires are now so frequent in Australia that it is no longer possible to maintain a viable native forest logging industry: (Cary et al. 2021)

p71 the science *is* overwhelming that long-term climate change and short-term weather events made more extreme by climate change *are* key drivers of fire behaviour (Canadell et al. 2021)

Wildfires are also becoming more severe and extensive...uniform, high-severity wildfires that burn vast landscapes are becoming the norm.

74 (from detailed empirical analyses)... fire severity is highest in young forests and declines as forests age, so that it is lowest in the oldest stands of trees (Taylor et al. 2014; Lindenmayer et al. 2021)

75 Previously logged forests also burnt at significantly higher severity than intact forests during the 2019-20 Black Summer wildfires, regardless of the weather conditions

77 A scientific paper – 'Timber harvesting does not increase fire risk and severity in wet eucalypt forests of southern Australia' – written by mostly pro-forestry authors, claimed there was no logging-fire severity relationships (Attiwill et al. 2014). However, the data in that paper actually showed there *was* a relationship, despite the misleading title... The data showed the incidence of crown fire in logged and regenerated forests between ten and 30 years earlier was approximately double that of forests older than 70 years. Crown fire is a recognized indicator of a high-severity wildfire.

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### Postscript

It is, of course, good that the NSW government has set up an Independent Forestry Panel to advise it with respect to its forthcoming Forest Industry Action Plan. However there are anti-democratic forces at work, such as lobbying by forestry-related industries which, of course, have specific short-term interests, which could hinder the government from following the good scientific advice referred to above, and so stopping logging in native forests.

It is vital that the government retain the *trust* of the people. To do this, it must act with integrity. Quakers have a concern for Integrity in public office. We ask, among other things, for:

- The capping of political donations and their declaration in real time;
- The limiting of industry influence in political decision-making when the common good or the environment are not served.

And more: see <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/concerns/quakers-taking-action/integrity-public-office-project>

Yours in Peace and Community,

Quakers Central Coast. [Click here to enter text](#)

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