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

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Sustainability of logging on the South Coast.

The earliest entry in the Oxford English Dictionary for 'sustainability' in the context of natural resource management is from 1980. The definition reads: -the property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise is able to be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources..

Today this definition has been tightened, but remains much the same. Oxford Languages on Google now defines 'sustainability' as: -avoidance of depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance.. We can see that if an activity is sustainable, then ecological balance is maintained.

Furthermore, in 1992, the Rio 'Earth Summit' recognised that sustainability involves balancing economic objectives, which in the past were considered to be the only important objectives, with social and environmental ones. Each must be given equal weight.

So, using these definitions, in practice sustainability means: 1. the base resource will not be depleted; 2. ecological balance will be maintained and 3. social and environmental outcomes will be given equal weight with economic ones.

How well does harvesting of native forest on the South Coast meet these criteria?

1. The base resource, trees in native forests, has been drastically depleted. Evidence for this is the installation of equipment for milling smaller and smaller diameter trees. Logging publicly owned forests on the South Coast now produces the lowest value products: export woodchips, pallet timber and briquettes. This has been funded by taxpayers in the guise of supporting the restructuring of the industry towards 'future sustainability'. Annual removal of the roundwood resource has been falling for twenty years. Having a sustainable resource is always something that might be happening soon, but is not happening now.

2. Ecological balance has not been maintained. Evidence for this is the loss of nesting hollows in logged forest. Only old trees have hollows. As they are logged they cannot be replaced without 100 or more years of growth, maturity and decay. In logged forests, an even-aged forest dominated by e. siberi replaces a mixed-age forest with diverse species suitable for hollow formation. Even after bushfire, older forests retain trees with hollows and logged forests do not. 174 species in NSW rely on tree hollows for dens and nests.

3. Social and environmental outcomes have not been given equal weight with economic ones. Over the period 2009 / 2012, Forests Corporation of NSW had an after tax loss of \$85 million.

Public money has been readily available to prop up the economic aspect of native forest management. No similar amount has been allocated towards a just transition for workers in the timber industry. Today, the high costs of harvesting and haulage, along with competition from the plantation sector mean that the end of native forest logging is inevitable. Yet workers continue to be led along with the talk of 'future sustainability' while at the same time increasing mechanisation has shrunk the number of jobs.

Maintaining the local ecosystem was supposed to be one of the objectives of the Eden Regional Forest Agreement. This document is no longer fit for purpose. A changing climate, changing

## Public submission

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economic conditions and finally its failure to achieve sustainability for the industry show that it is past its use-by date.