

SEBASTIAN BACHLER

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

To protect biodiversity and combat climate change, it's essential to stop the logging of native forests, which play a critical role in maintaining ecological balance. Instead, the focus should shift to expanding and managing timber plantations. These plantations can provide a sustainable source of timber while reducing pressure on native ecosystems. Transitioning to this model not only supports environmental health but also meets the growing demand for wood products in a responsible manner.

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

Forests are vital ecosystems that harbor significant environmental and cultural values, particularly in the context of threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage. In forestry areas, species such as greater gliders and koalas face increasing risks due to habitat loss and fragmentation. With the current rate of extinction and the escalating pressures of climate change in 2024, logging in these critical habitats is not compatible with conservation efforts. Protecting these forests is essential not only for preserving biodiversity but also for respecting and honouring Aboriginal cultural heritage, which is deeply intertwined with the land and its ecosystems. Prioritising conservation over logging can help safeguard these irreplaceable values for future generations.

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

The demand for timber products in New South Wales is significant, driven by sectors such as housing, construction, mining, transport, and retail. As these industries continue to grow, it is crucial that timber is sourced from sustainable plantations rather than native forests. Sustainable plantations can meet the rising demand for wood products while minimising environmental impact and protecting vital ecosystems. By prioritising plantation-sourced timber, we can support economic development while ensuring the conservation of native forests, which are essential for biodiversity and climate resilience. This approach not only satisfies market needs but also aligns with responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

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

The future of softwood and hardwood plantations in New South Wales is crucial for meeting the state's timber supply needs. While Private Native Forestry can play a role, the primary focus should be on developing and managing plantations as the main source of timber. This approach ensures that logging activities are conducted in a sustainable manner, minimising environmental impact while supporting economic growth. Workers in native forests should shift their efforts toward maintaining these vital ecosystems, focusing on the upkeep of roads, tracks, and visitor amenities. By prioritising plantations for logging and conserving native forests, we can strike a balance that meets timber demands while protecting our natural heritage.

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

State Forests play a vital role in maximising a range of environmental, economic, and social outcomes, offering diverse management options that include Aboriginal forest management models. By prioritising these approaches, we can enhance biodiversity, support local communities, and recognise Indigenous cultural practices. The focus should be on sustainable management practices that benefit both the ecosystem and the economy. Logging activities should be restricted to sustainable timber plantations, ensuring that native forests are preserved for their ecological and cultural significance. Emphasising these areas will help create a balanced strategy that meets timber needs while fostering a healthier environment and stronger community ties.

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

Mitigating and adapting to climate change risks within New South Wales forests is crucial for preserving their ecological integrity and resilience. Research by Dr. Philip Zylstra has highlighted the fire resistance of old-growth forests, demonstrating that these ecosystems can better withstand and recover from bushfires compared to younger or disturbed forests. This resilience is vital as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of fire events. To effectively address climate change risks, it is essential to prioritise the conservation and management of forests in NSW. These areas not only provide significant carbon storage but also support diverse flora and fauna, contributing to overall biodiversity. Therefore, logging should not take place in these forests, as it compromises their integrity and diminishes their ability to adapt to climate change. By focusing on the protection and sustainable management of forests, we can create a robust framework for mitigating climate change risks while supporting healthy ecosystems in New South Wales.