

Public submission

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Steven Pope. South East Timber Association

Topic 1 Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

The NSW timber industry is the most sustainable industry. Only a fraction of 1% of the state forests is available for harvesting each year. Harvesting in state forests is selective. There is no clear felling. And the NSW government agencies regulate everything that happens in the state forests. They are watching over and controlling everything that timber workers do.

I've been working in this industry for 50 years and every site that I have harvested at has regrown.

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

It is important to protect the environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values. It is my experience that Forest Corp and the EPA have the exclusion zones that need to be in place to protect species like koalas and greater gliders before any timber harvesting begins and they are protected.

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

Since 2017, the South East Timber Association has been a voice for local people who are interested in the timber industry, not just timber industry workers. Based in Eden, SETA has 110 members. There are 5 timber contractors who are members.

Our timber industry members are working mostly in hardwood. Producing saw logs for housing and furniture and pallets.

The majority of SETA members live around the [REDACTED]

The 5 timber contractor members have around 55 full time employees.

The employees of SETA's timber industry members have a range of skills that people have mostly learned on the job. There are also some mechanics and machinery operators, people like that, who have done TAFE courses as well.

We're not investing more money in Pope Logging at the moment, unless we have to, because there is so much uncertainty about the future of the industry. It's also difficult to keep employees motivated when all of a sudden a government decision could put them out of work. The psychological damage caused by this uncertainty is huge. Lots of timber employees have mortgages to pay plus all the ordinary bills and at the moment many of them are wondering how they are going to pay their bills in future.

Submission

Around 80% of the operating expenses of our timber industry members gets spent with local businesses and local suppliers.

My business, Pope Logging, sponsors the local basketball, the CEO sleep out, we sponsor families and people through Compassion, we donate to the guide dogs. Most of the local contractors do similar things to help those who are less fortunate.

If the timber supply was stopped, it would have a terribly negative impact on the economy of the South Coast. I can give you a good example of this. When the timber loader at Eden was damaged in a major storm a few years ago and all timber products stopped moving, the towns slowed right down. No one was spending any money. Businesses in Eden had a terrible time during the time when there were no chips being shipped before the loader was repaired.

If the timber supply ceased permanently, there would be hundreds of jobs lost locally and in other places. Shops would close as people moved to other places to find work which means some schools could close.

The housing timber produced by SETA members goes to Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra. People love ironbark for decking and things like that but you cannot grow that species of tree in a plantation, you will only find it growing in a state forest.

If the timber supply stopped it would have major consequences for home building in Sydney, Wollongong, Canberra, Newcastle, right across NSW. The price of timber would go up because you would have to import all the hardwood, and this would make it even harder for young Australians who want to own a place of their own.

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

Hardwood plantations are good but on the South Coast the trees take a long time to grow to produce a saw log.

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

Without State Forests you would have no timber industry. There are just not enough plantations and private property around in NSW to supply the hardwood we need to build more houses.

Topic 6. Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity benefits, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risk to forests

I am not an expert in this area but because the forests are being harvested which promotes more young trees to grow so they are soaking up more carbon from the atmosphere than just leaving and locking up forests.