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

Native forests are crucial for our ecosystems and the world we are living in. Logging of native forests reduces biomass and carbon storage, which will have severe negative effects on our climate. It also reduces the function and health of waterways, including streams and rivers. Logging in native forests is not sustainable: when the older trees are removed essential hollows, food sources and other habitat for forest wildlife is removed. About 174 species in NSW rely on hollows for their dens and nests, logging reduces the number of hollows that will be created in native forests. Continued logging will contribute greatly to the extinction of forest dependent wildlife, the koala and greater glider are only two examples of many species that need to be protected.

Further, native forest logging increases fire threat and intensity. Logging disrupts the humid microclimates of forests, making them more susceptible to fire. By destroying the canopy that keeps forest damp, logging creates more flammable fuel for fires.

The 2019/20 fires have made this situation much more urgent and serious.

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

Mature, healthy and unlogged forests are critical to the whole environment: they generate rainfall, cool the landscape and clean the air.

They are crucial for the health of our soils and waterways: The long term cycle of organic matter breakdown in native forests, sometimes over hundreds of years, is what keeps soil in these areas rich in nutrients. Native forests are critical for the health of our waterways. Forests create water vapor flows, which creates rain. These flows are vital for the survival of all life on earth.

Native, mature and unlogged forests support biodiversity and are important for ecosystem health and habitat connectivity. They are a vital habitat and refuge for many threatened and non-threatened species that rely on mature, intact forests. 150 threatened species in NSW are directly impacted by logging native forests. They are critical for pollinators and play a key role in pollination across the landscape, both inside and outside of forests.

Native forests provide recreation and improved health outcomes to locals and visitors. This can be through walking, bird watching, fishing and many other recreational activities that people enjoy. I want my children to be able to enjoy old forests and be able to deeply connect with nature in many years to come. Forests can also bring visitors and tourists into these unspoiled areas which will have a positive impact on the communities.

For First Nations people native forests hold significant cultural and spiritual value. They have an ongoing connection to native forests and the forest landscapes are an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge.

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

There is no longer a need to log public native forests for any of the uses in construction, mining, transport and retail. Sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods can substitute for all current uses for native forest and plantation hardwoods. Research shows that the forest logging is highly inefficient and unsustainable: half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported. Even timbers from hardwood plantations just 8% of these logs were saw and veneer logs. 87% of hardwood plantation logs were exported as wood chips. This is certainly not justifying growing hardwood plantations.

What is worse: the hardwood timber industry ran at a loss of \$9m in 2021-2022 - a figure that stretches to some \$80m if fire and flood recovery expenses are included. The sum of government subsidies to the industry is estimated to be \$441 per hectare per year. The costs incurred by native forest logging such as building accessways, environmental law compliance and haulage are not being recovered in revenue. In 2021 IPART reported an average shortfall for \$3.96 per green metric ton.

This all shows that hardwood sourced from native forests or plantations are no longer necessary. Shifting to treated softwood logs and composite timber products can cover all needs of NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail and support sustainable industry practices.

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

Hardwood and softwood plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production. Rather than logging unreplaceable native forests, the focus should shift to higher-value plantations that can better meet timber needs. New plantations could be established on already cleared land to supply timber products into the future. Rather than wasting good timber to make woodchips, a higher proportion of harvested logs from plantations should be prioritised as saw and veneer logs. Subsidising the logging of public native forests by the Forestry Corporation is non-competitive and distorts the market away from the more profitable softwood plantation industry. Ending public forest subsidies would boost sustainable high-end timber production on private lands. But even with logging native hardwood on private land there need to be strict conditions applied to ensure harvesting is done sustainably and without negative impacts on the environment, wildlife and ecosystems.

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

Public native forests have a much higher economic value when they are allowed to function naturally and without logging.

Native state forests cover an area of 2 million hectares in NSW. They impact on a diverse set of living conditions for many towns - from water quality in reservoirs, to healthy eco-systems with an abundance of wildlife, and carbon storage and abatement. Protecting and restoring State Forests will increase the economic value through tourism, job creation and recreational opportunities. The Forestry Corporation is currently financially unsustainable, relying on government support and yielding less timber compared to managed plantations. Its native forest hardwood division operates at a loss that runs into tens of millions of dollars, at the expense of the NSW public. It also additionally receives tens of millions of dollars in regular equity injections. The people of NSW should not be paying millions of dollars to destroy the biodiversity of our own state and critical habitat for threatened species.

Diverse forest management, particularly Aboriginal models, can enhance the cultural and social value of forests. First nations ranger programs have been hugely successful at managing the recovery and health of native forests. Many examples have shown how first nations knowledge and management can restore the natural and critical function of forests in the landscape.

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

Logging in native forests releases large amounts of carbon which is contributing to climate change. Ending native forest logging will allow previously logged forests to recover, regain lost and store additional carbon and with that make a significant contribution to meeting our climate goals.

Healthy native forests are essential for reducing the impacts of climate change like wildfires and drought. Forests that have not been logged are also more resilient to fires.

By stopping logging, forests can play a large role in mitigating climate risks and supporting opportunities in carbon markets.

The true value of our native forests does not come from wood production, but from their critical role in carbon storage, the water cycle, providing critical habitat, reducing fire risk, recreation and spiritual connection.

It is time that NSW follows the lead of WA and VIC and sets and end to native forest destruction now.