

Public submission

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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW
protecting nature through community action

TAMWORTH - NAMOI BRANCH



SUBMISSION TO FOREST INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN

Dear Independent Forestry Secretariat

Please accept our submission into the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Background to the issue

It is vital that any decisions about the future of forestry in NSW clearly distinguish between those State Forests, or portions of State Forests, that contain plantations and those that contain native forests. The NSW Forestry Corporation and forestry organisations have a history of obscuring this critical difference to hide financial losses in native forestry operations and to give the false impression that removing logging from public native forests would end access to wood products for construction and other essential industries.

The Tamworth Namoi branch of National Parks Association of NSW is opposed any logging in public native forests but supports the NSW plantation industry. Plantation timbers already provide more than 90% of the wood used in the building and allied industries. Plantation timbers, softwood and hardwood, have the capacity to fulfil all sustainable uses for wood products. New plantations should only be established on degraded lands rather than through the clearance of currently intact native forests.

All natural habitats and landscapes, including the NSW forest estate, must be managed to ensure that they continue to deliver essential ecosystem services (air and water), maximise the protection of biodiversity and provide opportunities for sustainable recreational activities.

Permanent protection and ongoing management as National Park or another reserve category of under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* is the most appropriate framework for the ongoing management of our public native forests.

Responses to focus questions

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Current forestry operations are making a very significant contribution to escalating rates of habitat and species loss in NSW. Moreover, forestry practices cause unnecessary and damaging disturbance to forest ecosystems. Forestry activities go far beyond the removal of vegetation and include roading, modification of water courses and exposure and disruption of soil structure. The adverse environmental impacts of these activities range from habitat loss,

reduced water quality, landscape scale habitat fragmentation, introduction of pests and weeds to reduced capacity for carbon sequestration and storage. None of these adverse impacts can be considered 'sustainable'.

The only viable option for a sustainable forestry industry is one based solely on plantations. All forms of forestry activities should stop in public native forests.

2. Environmental and cultural values of forest including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

The decline of a multitude of forest dependant species, including threatened species such as Koala, Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider, can be attributed to past and current forestry practices. Even if future practices are improved, they inevitably involve the modification or destruction of existing forest habitat. This is an outcome that we cannot afford.

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

The vast majority of wood products can be sourced from plantations, including for uses where hardwoods are preferred. Continued access to relatively cheap hardwood products is no justification for the loss of native forests, especially as alternative products are already available for challenging applications such as wharfing, power poles and propping.

The low level of demand for boutique purposes such as fixtures, furniture and veneers can be met through recycling and appropriately stocked plantations.

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

Our preference is that no logging be permitted in any native forests, regardless of tenure.

We strongly support a transition to complete reliance on softwood and hardwood plantations for the supply of wood products in NSW. We also support the expansion of the plantation sector provided that new plantations are established on previously degraded lands rather than by clearing native vegetation.

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

The highest potential public purposes of public native forests are biodiversity conservation, the provision of ecosystem services such as clean water and air, and maximising the capacity of nature systems to capture and store atmospheric carbon.

Areas of State Forests that contain legitimately established plantations should be retained as State Forests under the management of the Department of Primary Industries.

The major and repeated breaches of environment regulations by NSW Forestry Corporation model demonstrates that it provides a totally unacceptable model for administering these public assets.

All State Forests that contain native forests should be gazetted as National Park, Nature Reserve, State Conservation Area or Regional Park under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. We support these reserves being formally declared for Aboriginal joint management under the relevant provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*.

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.

The scientific consensus is that ecologically intact natural systems have a critical role to play in sequestering and storing atmospheric carbon, the primary driving of climate change. An intact, well-protected NSW forest estate has a major role to play in addressing these threats to our collective future. We recognise the importance of carbon capture and storage, however the lack of integrity in current carbon and biodiversity trading schemes inspires little confidence that such schemes should be expanded to include public native forests.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Robin Gunning
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