

TASKA RIGBY

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

My concerns about native forest logging highlight several critical issues related to sustainability and biodiversity. The overestimation of harvestable timber by the Forestry Corporation can lead to unsustainable practices that compromise long-term forest health.

The decline in yield from public native forests, along with the loss of mature trees, directly impacts wildlife that depend on hollows, threatening the survival of species in NSW. Additionally, the environmental consequences such as increased fire risk, erosion, and waterway pollution further underscore the need for more sustainable forest management practices.

Addressing these challenges is essential for preserving ecosystems and maintaining biodiversity, as well as for ensuring that our forests can continue to provide vital environmental functions.

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

I believe there are important points about the ecological, cultural, and social significance of healthy, unlogged forests.

Mature forests play a vital role in climate regulation, rainfall generation, and air quality, directly impacting both local environments and broader ecosystems. The loss of these forests affects not only the 150 threatened species directly linked to them but also disrupts essential processes like pollination, which is crucial for both agricultural and natural landscapes.

Moreover, the recreational and health benefits of native forests contribute to community well-being and foster a sense of pride and connection to the land. For First Nations peoples, these forests hold deep cultural and spiritual significance, embodying traditions and practices that have been maintained over generations.

With 269 nationally listed threatened species in NSW, the landscape-level implications of logging can jeopardize numerous ecosystems and habitats, further emphasizing the need for sustainable management that respects both environmental integrity and cultural heritage. Protecting these forests is essential for the health of the environment and the communities that depend on them.

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

I believe the below points illustrate the declining role of native forest logging in Australia's overall timber production. With only 9% of total log production in 2023 sourced from native forests, and a significant portion of that being exported as woodchips, it raises questions about the sustainability and necessity of this practice.

The fact that hardwood logs from plantations are primarily used for export and that softwood products can effectively replace native hardwoods underscores a shift in market demand. The move by Essential Energy away from using native forest timber for power poles further highlights this trend.

As demand for native forest timber continues to decrease, there is an opportunity to transition towards more sustainable practices that prioritize the preservation of these ecosystems while

meeting industry needs through alternative materials. This shift could benefit both the environment and local communities, ensuring the health of forests for future generations.

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

With plantations already accounting for 91% of log production, prioritizing the use of harvested logs from these sources as saw and veneer logs instead of exporting them as wood chips could enhance value and sustainability.

Subsidizing native forest logging not only distorts the market but also undermines the competitiveness of the more profitable softwood plantation industry. This misallocation of resources can hinder progress toward more sustainable practices.

Additionally, selectively harvesting high-end and luxury native hardwood products from private land under strict conditions can help balance economic interests with environmental stewardship. By focusing on sustainable practices, we can support both industry needs and the preservation of native forests.

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

The ecological and economic advantages of unlogged forests, including improved water quality, enhanced tourism opportunities, and significant carbon storage, underscore their importance to local communities and the environment.

It's concerning that the native forest hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation operates at a loss, often funded by public money. This financial burden raises questions about the sustainability and justification of logging practices that threaten biodiversity and critical habitats for threatened species.

Moreover, the value of public native forests is maximized when they are allowed to function naturally, contributing to ecosystem health and resilience. Successful initiatives like the Githabul Rangers demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating First Nations knowledge and management practices, highlighting a pathway toward restoring and maintaining the health of these vital landscapes. Prioritizing these approaches could lead to better outcomes for both the environment and local communities.

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

I believe mg points highlight the significant environmental impact of native forest logging in NSW, particularly regarding carbon emissions. The estimated release of 3.6 million tonnes of carbon each year is substantial, and ending this practice could have a meaningful effect on carbon reduction equivalent to removing 840,000 cars from the roads annually.

Logging not only releases carbon but also reduces the stored carbon in forests by more than half, which undermines efforts to combat climate change. By allowing previously logged forests to recover, we could enhance their capacity to sequester carbon and contribute to meeting emissions targets.

Moreover, as climate change increases risks to forest health and exacerbates threats like catastrophic fires, unlogged forests prove to be more resilient. Preserving these natural ecosystems is crucial for both mitigating climate change and enhancing the adaptability of forests to future environmental challenges.