

TASMIN WITKAMP

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

I strongly advocate for an immediate cessation of native forest logging and the development of a sustainable plantation industry. This logging is contributing to the extinction of endangered species such as the koala and the Greater Glider, making it crucial to urgently halt logging activities in their core habitats. Furthermore, it is important to note that logging in New South Wales is subsidized by taxpayers and incurs economic losses.

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

Koalas are increasingly at risk as Forestry Corporation NSW intensifies logging in critical koala habitats, despite efforts to establish a Great Koala National Park in the Mid-north Coast region. Currently, over 18,800 hectares of core koala habitat within the park assessment area are being logged or scheduled for logging, representing approximately four times the logging intensity of the rest of New South Wales. Similarly, Greater Gliders are facing significant threats, with more than 11,000 hectares of their refugia slated for logging. Key areas like Tallaganda, Badja, Styx River, and Tuggolo State Forests are particularly affected. Recent community surveys have identified 571 Greater Gliders and 154 den trees, highlighting high population densities in these regions. However, if logging continues, many of these animals are likely to be killed.

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

Ending native forest logging is a viable option, as Australia is nearly transitioned to a plantation-based timber industry, with around 90% of the nation's timber needs already met by existing plantations. The remaining 10% can be addressed by halting the export of unprocessed plantation wood and enhancing the management of current plantations. There is no necessity to log public forests for housing, as products from NSW logging operations primarily consist of low-value items like woodchips for export, pallets, and tomato stakes.

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

The cessation of native forest logging is entirely feasible, as Australia is close to fully transitioning to a plantation-based timber industry, with approximately 90% of the nation's timber needs already supplied by existing plantations. The remaining 10% could be easily met by halting the export of unprocessed plantation wood and enhancing the management of current plantations.

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 true value of our native forests lies not in wood production but in their essential roles in carbon storage, the water cycle, providing critical habitats, reducing fire risk, and offering

opportunities for recreation and spiritual connection. Additionally, logging in New South Wales is currently subsidized by taxpayers and results in economic losses.

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

Native forests are invaluable, with their worth determined not by accountants or profit-driven exploiters but by the life they support. We must end native forest logging and halt fossil fuel emissions without linking carbon offsets to this cessation, recognizing the vital role these forests play in addressing biodiversity and climate crises. Logging in native forests releases significant amounts of carbon, contributing to global warming. Halting logging allows forests to regenerate, enhancing their capacity to store carbon and support climate objectives. Additionally, forests are crucial for mitigating the effects of catastrophic climate events like bushfires and drought. It is unconscionable to postpone the end of native forest logging for the sake of exploring carbon and biodiversity markets. Protecting publicly owned forests should genuinely contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, rather than allowing state forest agencies to sell these climate benefits while delaying the transition away from fossil fuels.