

# Public submission

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**Supporting materials uploaded:** *Attached overleaf*

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# Independent Forestry Panel submission October 2024 – Tim Lockett

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

'Sustainable logging' has been proven a myth by [recent scientific research](#) published in the journal *Conservation Science and Practice* by Ward et al (2024). Logging increases bushfires and erosion, reduces the health of local rivers, encourages weeds, and reduces habitat for endangered species of insects, reptiles and mammals. Among these are iconic species such as koalas and greater gliders, which are facing local extinction in areas that have been extensively logged. Loss of local communities in turn contributes to a reduced gene pool across the state and decreased long-term viability of these species in the face of disease. There is no evidence to support the claim that thinning forests decreases fires; [quite the opposite](#).

The Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) is not trustworthy with regard to best practice forestry, as proven by [recent fines of \\$360k imposed by the Land and Environment Court](#) and an [analysis of FCNSW maps](#) showing that areas earmarked for inclusion in the Great Koala National Park are being logged at three times the rate of zones outside this area.

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

Not only do native forests offer the most biodiverse habitats in NSW, they are also among the most carbon-dense in the world and [play a key role in our capacity to reach state and national targets for carbon reduction](#). Forests also clean air, increase rainfall and promote pollination both in the forests themselves and agricultural areas that adjoin. Less obviously, forests have other economic value through their role in [producing compounds and chemicals for current and future pharmaceuticals](#), with a special concentration of these in the mid-north coast.

Native forests have enormous cultural value for Australians from all walks of life, holding iconic species central to Australian identity. They are places for Australians to connect with and marvel at nature, and to engage in outdoor recreational activities that boost physical and mental wellbeing. Forests have special cultural significance for Indigenous people, with First Nation communities among those leading protests against logging of Country, a good example being the Cherry Tree State Forest where objections from traditional custodians have led to a [prolonged court case](#). Alongside our beaches, NSW forests are also a key tourist draw-card, bringing in millions of dollars each year.

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

In 2022-2023, [ABARES reports](#) that plantation timber yielded \$2,147M compared with \$296M from native forests. More than 90% of sawn timber came from plantations for use in housing and construction, while native forest wood was used for low-value woodchips.

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

Plantations outperform native forestry on all economic and employment measures. [Frontier Economics \(2023\)](#) found that in 2019-2020, FCNSW received \$249 million in subsidies and grants whilst its native logging division made a loss of \$28m. In other words, the people of NSW are paying to destroy our biodiversity and cultural heritage and reduce its multiple environmental and economic services. Plantation softwood trees also grow faster and can be managed in ways that

reduce risk of fire. Softwood and composite timber products can substitute for all current uses of hardwood from native forest and plantations.

**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**

[First Nations Ranger Programs](#) have been a win-win for fostering regeneration both in Indigenous culture and Country, including the recovery of native forests. Indigenous cool or cultural burning, practised for millenia, is becoming incorporated into modern forestry management following evidence it [reduces the frequency and severity of bushfires](#).

**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**

In 2023, the [Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water](#) forecast that “forest land remaining forest land will see continued gains in the net sink in harvested native forests, particularly through the cessation of native forest logging in Victoria and Western Australia from 1 January 2024”. This benefit would be maximised by cessation of logging in NSW and other jurisdictions. [US research](#) has shown that old-growth forest stores more carbon than plantation, with implications not only for the sequestration services native forest provides but also the amount of carbon released if these forests are logged. Any carbon markets will need to be heavily regulated to prevent [exploitation and gaming of systems](#) that offer a false impression of progress on emissions.