

Public submission

TODD GELLETTY

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**Todd Gelletly's Submission to the
Future of the Forest Industry in NSW
October 2024**



An area of Red Gum State Forest thinned by our company.

I have been involved in Native Forest Harvesting all my working life.

Our business has been a producer of renewable energy since 1987. Starting off from humble beginnings cutting chip wood from forest residues for the sawmill in Cohuna, then wood for the boilers at the local milk and brick factories, to now being one of the largest producers of Red Gum firewood in Southeastern Australia.

Our business has 3 generations of involvement in the industry.

Our business employees over 20 staff and is part of a wider local industry that employs in excess of 130 local people which apart from agriculture our industry is the largest employer in the region.

I have been involved in the Red Gum Timber Industry since I was a kid helping my father on school holidays and have witnessed firsthand the evolution of the wider timber industry over the last 37 years to an industry that is one of the most heavily regulated, sustainable professional timber industries anywhere in the world. The untruths pushed about our great industry by the activists are upsetting and totally fabricated to suit their ill-informed agenda.

I have also witnessed firsthand the positive environmental, economic, cultural and social outcomes our industry produces for the forests and then the benefits that flow onto our community.

The products our industry produce are all from sustainable operations. Basically, every tonne we harvest grows back through natural re-generation and in a one year period over the forest estate in which we operate. So, it doesn't take too much intelligence to realise that this style of harvesting can go on for ever. You could say it's the ultimate in sustainability!!!! (If it is growing back at the same rate we harvest it, that makes it carbon neutral).

Native Forest harvesting operations in Australia are best practice, conducted under a strict regulatory framework, world leading and sustainable. The products are needed across many other industries that generate employment across the state of NSW.

The long-term future of the Timber and Forest products industry in NSW needs to be something state and federal governments strive to support and ensure their continuation.

Products produced from native timber harvesting operations have many environmental and economic benefits including storing carbon, are renewable, sustainable and create critical employment in many regional areas of New South Wales and across Australia.

We have good environmental outcomes in state forests and have sustainable timber products to supply Australians now and into the future. Timber is a top-class renewable material suited to many things plus Australian's love using timber.

This Panel will hear from many coming from far and wide as to why the native timber industry should be shut down, unfortunately many of the people calling for this to occur have no idea what they are talking about, evident recently for calls to shut down the native timber industry due to the threat to koala habitat. The facts are that the main threats to the koala as a species are wildfire, chlamydia, dog attacks, being struck by a motor vehicle and the expansion of the urban sprawl. Not one mention of native forestry harvesting operations, yet the so-called experts wish to close down a sustainable industry that produces carbon storing renewable products, as well as supporting regional employment and community well-being.

Having visited the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie personally, the effects of chlamydia and dog attacks and car strikes were there for all to see, ironically not one of the koala patients at the hospital was there from the result of native forest harvesting.

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

When you look up the word “Sustainable” in the Oxford Dictionary, the definition describes the utilisation of natural resources able to be maintained at a particular level without causing damage to the environment or depletion of the resource.

According to Timber NSW there is 7.267 million Hectares of Crown Native Forests in NSW. Production or State Forests make up just 2 million hectares of that, of which a further 1 million Ha (50%) is locked up for conservation. By law every tree harvested must be re-generated. The sustainable harvesting operations conducted in NSW State Forests is not deforestation, in fact it is actually having the opposite effect of aforestation. Of the 1 million hectares available to the industry to harvest each year just 0.3 of one percent is harvested. So on that basis it would take 300 years to harvest the 1 million hectares that is currently available to the native timber industry for harvesting. When you consider the fact that the selective harvesting operations are conducted in NSW native forests the outcomes for the areas harvested are always positive.

Table 1

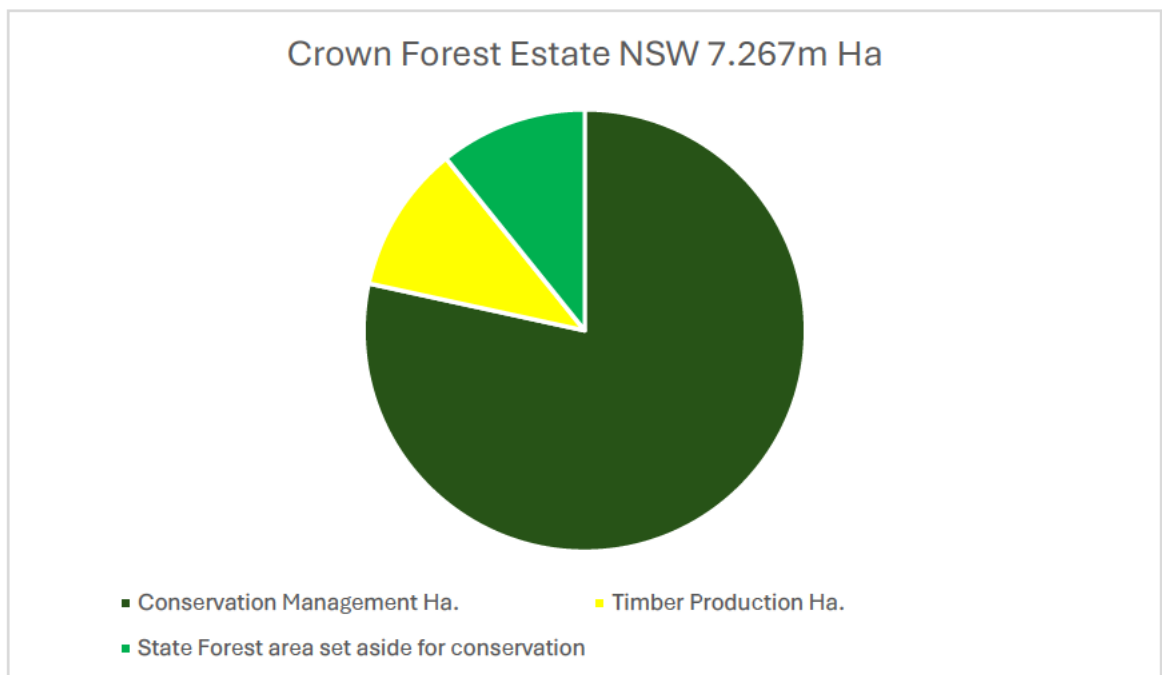
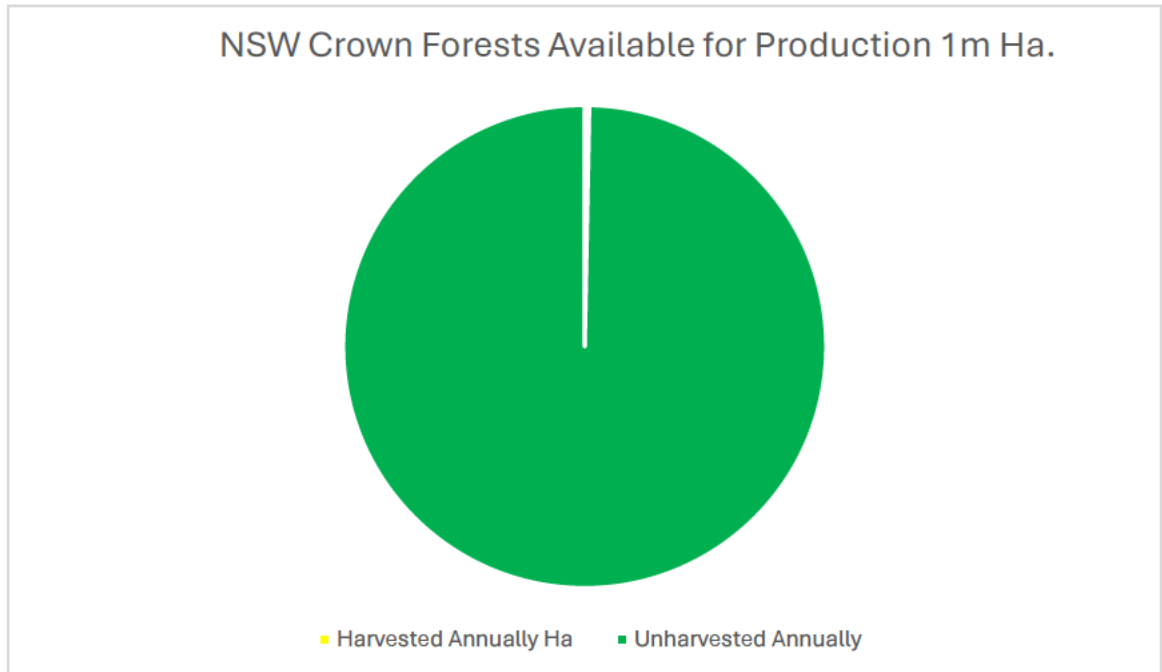


Table 2



Tables 1 and 2 clearly demonstrate the sustainable nature of the Native Timber Industry in NSW.

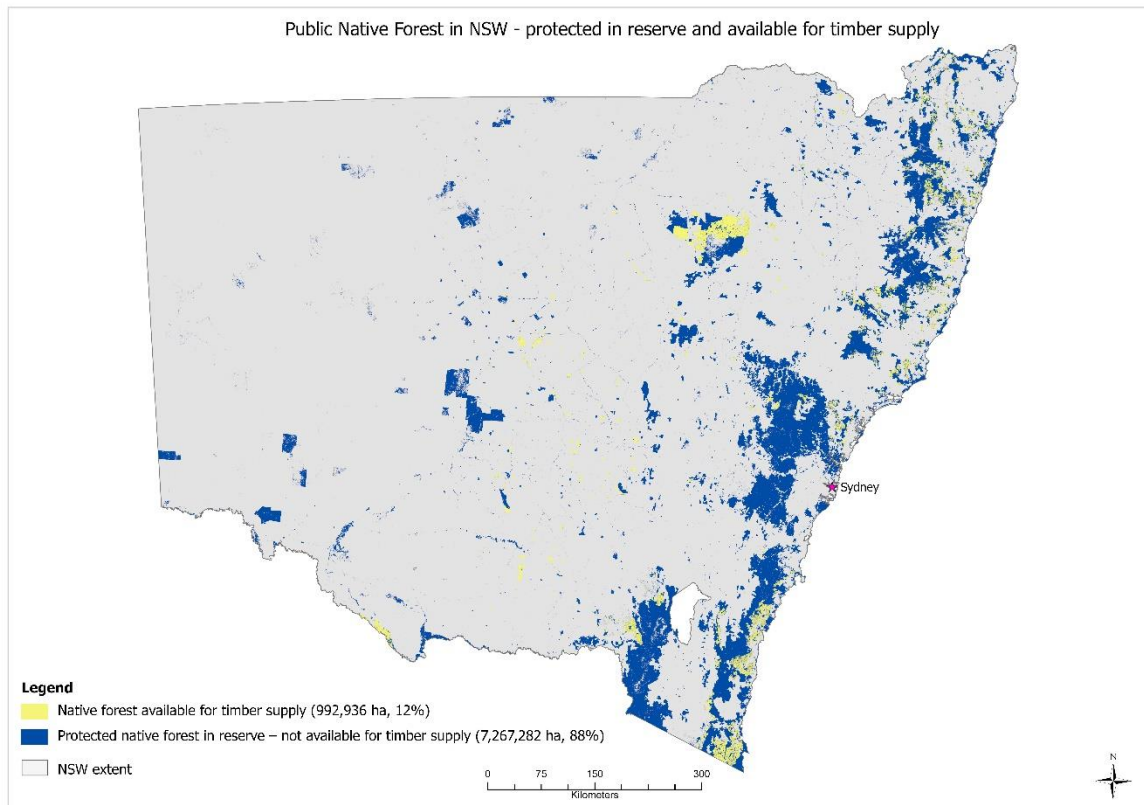
When you think more about the area shaded in green and yellow in Table 1 you must ask yourself a question. Why with so much native forest managed for conservation for such a long period of time are we still seeing native species added to the vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered lists? The answer is clear, that areas managed for conservation are simply not delivering on the promised conservation outcomes to protect native species appropriately. On top of these poor outcomes for our native species the outcomes for the towns, communities and regions surrounding National Parks are even worse.

The next question you have to ask is why aren't National Parks delivering on these outcomes? The simple answer is there is no management, they are simply locked up and left to their own devices.

In fact, you could argue that we should be reducing in size of the areas managed for conservation (88%) and increasing the size of the areas managed for selective timber production (12%) in a way that promotes the biodiversity values of our state forests.

In Table 2, I would like to point out just what is the result of the area shaded in yellow (that is hardly visible) means to the state of NSW. That tiny area shaded in yellow injects \$2.9 Billion in the NSW economy and it supports 8900 full time jobs.

Source Ernst and Young Report "Economic Contribution Study of the NSW hardwood timber industry" February 2023.



Map Source: NSW DPI Forest Science Unit.

The firewood industry in Red Gum is critical to the functioning of the local state forest and the longer-term sustainability of the industry and the management of the forest itself. It is also critical to our social license to operate. In terms of utilisation the Red Gum Timber industry leads the state of NSW. Fully integrated harvesting operations see the removal of all marketable forest residues down to 100mm in diameter. Daniel Tuan the General Manager of Native Hardwoods for Forestry Corporation NSW (FCNSW) has stated that the Red Gum Timber Industry has the best utilisation anywhere in the state of NSW. The residues produced are removed in log form and are taken up by two customers of FCNSW. These residues are then processed into firewood and sold locally, nationally and internationally with small volumes exported to countries in the middle east.

Why is the removal of residue for firewood important? The simple answer is that it removes available fuel for when a bushfire does break out. This was never more crucial during the black summer bushfires of 2019/2020 when our Red Gum State Forests had 5 fires break out.

According to FCNSW GPS mapping of the fires, it revealed that the total area burnt from the 5 separate fires combined was 20 hectares. Not 2,000 not 200 but just 20 hectares. Why? when the rest of the state experienced uncontrolled fires spreading to tens of thousands of hectares in size.

The answer is simple, there wasn't the available fuels for the fire to spread to a size where it couldn't be controlled. Why wasn't there fuel available? The fully integrated operations removing saw log and marketable residues in a single pass.

Other contributing factors are that the timber industry provides qualified firefighters and specialised equipment to assist with firefighting. Often on call on severe weather days, the industry is at the

ready to swing into action to assist FCNSW and the Rural Fire Service.



Our Log Skidder in action late on a Saturday night in April this year pushing a mineral earth break around the fire to contain it.

One such fire in November 2019 we attended and on a catastrophic fire rating day of 44 degrees and strong gusty winds, a skeleton crew of 5 timber industry members and one supervising FCNSW employee kept the fire contained within the containment lines. Experienced industry members working alongside experienced FCNSW staff was critical, but the overriding factor was the lack of available fuel for the fire to consume and grow to a size and strength beyond our capacity to contain it. How do I know this, I was there on the ground fighting the fire and we did an incredible job.



Our Crew in November 2019 on the morning after keeping a large fire contained on a 44-degree day and strong winds ready to get back into the firefight. That's me second from the left!!!!!!!

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

Red Gum State Forests are rich in Environmental and Cultural Values. Threatened Species are present, and the forest is rich in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values. I would say from the outset that the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) under which we operate has protection mechanisms within it to protect and maintain these critical assets of our diverse working forests.

The industry has moved with technological advances, with harvesting and timber extraction equipment now fitted with state-of-the-art GPS tracking and live mapping electronic equipment that greatly helps operators act with precision that wasn't available to industry in the past and that technology aids the protection of the environmental, cultural heritage and threatened species values. Crews are now very adept at downloading new maps and identifying features on a daily basis to keep up with newly identified features or harvesting exclusion areas of differing values whilst harvesting each day. Skilled FCNSW people plan and supervise operations daily to ensure protection mechanisms and clauses within the IFOA are strictly followed.

FCNSW work in conjunction with the Moama Local Aboriginal Lands Council when identifying features and areas of cultural significance.

Our own crew have notified FCNSW when necessary, in relation to threatened species and cultural heritage sites that they have identified during the course of the harvesting operations in the forest and are acutely aware of the importance of doing so. It is deeply offensive that activists and even some parliamentarians paint our skilled harvesting operators as environmental vandals.

Arbuthnot Sawmill in Koondrook was established in 1889, some 135 years ago. The Red Gum Forests in which they source their products from are still there, in fact the standing tree population is much higher now than when they first started floating logs down the Murray River by barge to their Sawmill. Now their trees are harvested with detailed planning and regulation under the IFOA, with state-of-the-art equipment tracked by GPS and live mapping, operated by people who care for the forest and the future of the industry. With strict auditing from the EPA and volumes reviewed every 5 years under clauses within the IFOA to ensure sustainability is at the forefront of any harvesting operation undertaken. We invite the panel members to come and see firsthand the truth of how we operate.

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

Since the 19/20 bushfires and Covid timber is in unprecedented demand. Consumers value timber as a sustainable material. And the consumer should be afforded the right to access and utilise timber sourced from sustainable renewable harvesting operations from NSW and take comfort in the fact that their timber is sourced from one of the most professional and heavily regulated native timber industries anywhere in the world. Native timber species have qualities needed for longevity.

Locally the Red Gum Timber Industry is located in the Southwestern Region of NSW

Executive summary

14 February 2023NSW Region	Gross Revenue (\$ million)	Gross Value Add (\$ million)	Employment (FTE)
North East	\$1,840	\$700	5,700
Southern	\$720	\$270	2,230
Western	\$260	\$100	820
Greater Sydney	\$80	\$30	240

Source Ernst and Young Report “Economic Contribution Study of the NSW hardwood timber industry” February 2023

The Key downstream sectors of the NSW hardwood timber industry include:

- ▶ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Wholesale trade
- ▶ Energy and mining
- ▶ Financial and insurance services
- ▶ Public administration & safety
- ▶ Accommodation and food services

Our region is critical in the makeup of the NSW native timber industry as in a relatively sparsely populated area of NSW the broader Western Region employs 820 FTE’s and contribute \$260m to the NSW economy. There is simply no replacement for the native timber industry in the Western Region

of NSW. There are no established plantations to fall back on and there is no economic incentive big enough to warrant the establishment of large-scale plantations of either hardwood or softwood. The land is now too expensive, the annual rainfall is nowhere near enough to maintain any form of plantation and the water required to irrigate them produces better returns annually in other crops such as rice, cereals and further downstream the almond farms are so efficient with their water. It is completely unrealistic to say that native timber harvesting can cease.

The reliance on our industry now as an employer in small regional communities has never been more critical. The local Red Gum Timber industry employs over 130 FTE's. The 2021 Census recorded Barham's population at 1569 people with an average age of 58.

Of the population aged between 20 and 64 years old, there were 725 people. This number is very important. Of the working aged people who live in Barham, the Red Gum Timber Industry employs just under 18% of that demographic of the population.

At our end 85% to 90% of our expenditure is done at a local level. Companies such as the fuel station the tyre service, the hardware and mechanical businesses in Barham and surrounds all rely heavily on the local timber industry. We employ local residents and they in turn have kids at local schools, they partake in local sporting and community-based clubs and associations which in turn generates support for other businesses in town such as the supermarkets, pubs and clothing stores and so on it goes. Every person in the timber industry is part of the community and it has been this way for longer than 135 years, and the forest now has more trees than it did when Arbuthnot's fell their first tree for its sawmill in 1889.

If our industry disappears our local economy will suffer a huge loss. The population will decrease dramatically as there isn't the available replacement employment in our region, job losses mean people have to sell up and move. This effects the schools, sporting clubs and the social fabric of our communities. The nearby town of Mathoura is a living example of the social destruction that a National Park has delivered to a once thriving community.

They say Australia was built on the sheep's back, well Mathoura is a community built on the back of the timber industry, their football side (est. 1909) is called the "Timber Cutters", their team mascot holds a broadaxe. Mathoura had their backbone ripped out by the introduction of National Parks in 2010. Once the backbone of their town was unjustly closed down the town's other businesses have steadily gone backwards with numerous once sustainable businesses now closed, never to open again, never to supply goods to others and never to employ towns people again.

Numerous droughts and drastic fluctuations with water availability to the farming businesses of the region have highlighted the critical importance of our industry as a reliable form of employment in the region. Farming businesses are so big and so efficient now that the jobs per hectare of agricultural land now are nothing like they used to be. Farms of 500 or 1000 ha were once considered large businesses, now it seems that its 5,000 or 10,000 ha. to be considered a large farm.

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

The 2019/2020 bushfires have heavily impacted the key pine plantation regions of Tumut and Tumbarumba in NSW. Areas along the South Coast of NSW have also been hard hit in the native forests with lesser of an impact on the North Coast.

Initially there was a large increase in the harvesting rates to salvage timber that could be utilised from the pine plantations. The salvage operations have now concluded. Contracts to be issued were to see a reduction from approximately 1.3m tonne of pine plantation harvest annually to approximately 850,000 tonnes annually from the Tumut and Tumbarumba region.

A reduction of 450,000 tonnes of log product, close to 34%. It will take decades to get the pine plantation estate back to the pre fire stocking levels so there will be an increased demand for native timber.

The building industry is facing critical shortages with delays of several months impacting building and construction companies. This is not just in Australia but there seems to be a global shortage of timber. The world needs forests and needs timber. Australia cannot afford to close down sustainable, renewable, heavily regulated native timber industries and then depend more and more until complete reliance on imported timber from countries that not just have less regulation than NSW but some counties have no regulation and are wiping out global iconic species such as the Sumatran Tiger and the Orangutans.

The impacts on other trades such as the electrical, plumbing, flooring, cabinet makers, landscaping, roofing and glazier trades that heavily rely on the construction of new homes in order to maintain their businesses. There are many other impacted trades that will feel the pinch of a timber shortage.

Demand for timber products is increasing as consumers see the benefits of utilising a sustainable, renewable product that also stores carbon.

The 19/20 bushfires in the Tumut and Tumbarumba region are of significant warning to the wider industry if we become reliant entirely on plantations as our only source of timber. The loss of such a large percentage of the plantation estate in such a short period (a matter of days) could see not only the timber industry brought to its knees into the future if native forestry is ceased in order to create National Parks, but also the building and construction industries as well. The whole social impact cannot be ignored – our people and our communities matter too.

Plantations are located in targeted areas and usually in close proximity to each other, the risk is that a wildfire could wipe them all out. Where will our timber come from then? Our construction and building industries would be crippled and so would tens of thousands of jobs. We would be waiting months on end for imported timber to arrive and the price would skyrocket bringing into question the ability to complete projects on budget and then build affordable housing for the average Australian. These risks are very real.

Look at the strikes at the wharfs in the United States at the moment (October 2024). Every extra day of the strike for puts a week worth of backlog on outward freight. Conflict around the globe over recent years has surged the price of freight and the Houthis attacks in the Red Sea are causing longer delays, large changes to the normal shipping routes, extended shipping times and of course increasing the cost of the goods to the end consumer. Global instability is a very real problem and with that it makes importing anything a risky process and costs the consumer more and more. In a

cost-of-living crisis we need to keep costs down at every turn. We can grow our own timber responsibly, sustainably and when the industry is allowed to function, we can be self-sufficient.

During Covid the price of a 20-foot shipping container to be freighted from England to Australia surged from \$5000 per shipping container to \$25,000.

All of our eggs would well and truly be in one very small basket for timber supply.

That is the last thing any business runs the risk of exposing all of its risk in one small sector. Many individuals are seeing the negative effects of heavy reliance on one large customer as many building companies go into liquidation ruining the great Australian dream of home ownership.

It's just too risky so why would we risk entire industries like the timber industry as well as the building and construction as well.

This is also true in relation to having a diverse native timber industry, the risk is spread right across the industry.

Let's just say we do turn all Native Forests into National Parks, we then have hazardous fuel loads in National Parks that are right next to high value plantations so the risk of wildfire wiping out the entire plantation estate into the future would be even greater than the devastating summer of 2019/2020. It would only take one lightning strike on the wrong day and what's left of the entire New South Wales timber supply chain could be lost, along with tens of thousands of jobs further down the supply chain. New South Wales has the largest state population in Australia. These possible outcomes are a very real prospect and matter considerably to our future.

Complete reliance on plantation timber is too great a risk to consider, an ongoing sustainable and diverse native timber industry is critical to the future sustainability of the timber and products industry across NSW and Australia.

What is wrong with Australians having affordable and reliable access to native timber products for a range of uses in their home and businesses including firewood to heat our homes and taking pressure off the electricity grid that into the future will simply not have the base load power to keep the lights on.

A sustainable, renewable and diverse native timber industry is critical to the timber supply mix for NSW. To achieve this the panel needs to make the strongest of recommendations to the Minns government that the native timber industry in NSW must be given long term security via their Wood Supply Agreements over a longer period with incentive to invest in their businesses and their regional communities. The broad range of diverse native timber industry businesses across the state must receive a secure path forward to achieve the government goal of a sustainable industry long into the future. The benefits from this secure path forward will flow straight back into local communities and the state governments coffers via increased spending and investment in our businesses.

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.

My strong belief formed from over 37 years in native forestry is that a State Forest is the best land tenure model for maximising the famed quadruple bottom line of positive Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social outcomes. The introduction of 107,000ha of National Parks to our region in 2010 has been nothing short of a disaster for Red Gum Forests and its surrounding towns and communities. It has completely devastated the township of Mathoura. If the Panel visits any area Mathoura should be number 1 on the list. Chris Crump, a 4th generation sawmiller and generous community minded member is so upset at the negative impact the oversized National Park has had on his town and is much loved Red Gum Forests.

Mathoura is small town in the Southern Riverina of NSW located between Moama and Deniliquin and along the Western border of what was the Millewa group of state forests and now the Murray Valley National Park. It is a short 35-minute drive from the tourism hot spot of Echuca Moama.

It was dealt a cruel blow in 2010 when the NRC and the Labor Government of the time handed down the "Red Gum Decision". Its widely known through political circles that that particular decision was a politically motivated decision to gain Green preferences. Ian Cohen from the Greens at the time stated in the NSW Parliament that Labor "had better deliver on the Red Gums or it could forget Greens preferences". It's recorded in Hansard.

The introduction of large-scale national parks to the region left just one sawmill operating in the town that was so heavily reliant on access to timber for employment and economic gain. That sawmill has now sold its allocation to the Arbuthnot sawmill in Koondrook, Victoria.

The township itself has lost many businesses, as the supposed saviour in the promised mighty tourist dollar replacing the economic input of the timber industry couldn't have been further from the truth. We all knew this from the start, but the Greens continue to tout the tourist dollar will replace any timber industry. The facts are it does not, will not and never will.

The Greens still claim Mathoura gets 2,500 visitors per day. Think about that number please. If this is the case why are local businesses closing their doors? There should be new vibrant businesses opening up all the time. Yet again the promised land of the mighty tourism dollar has let another town and region down.

Where are the numbers? In a 10 hour period that's 250 visitors per hour or over 4 people every minute. The local coffee shop would be run off its feet. The local pubs and cafés would be thriving.

To put this into context the Greens are saying there are 17,500 visitors per week (equates 910,000 visitors per year) to Mathoura. This is total fiction.

Tourism by the numbers

Blue Mountains **4m**

Taronga Zoo **2m**

Mathoura **910,000 ?????????????????????????????????????**

Thredbo Snow Resort **700,000 (winter time visitors)**

Norfolk Island **16,000**

According to some Mathoura is certainly popular but it's not listed in the top 10 or 20 tourist attractions in the state. Does anyone actually think there are more visitors to Mathoura than Thredbo gets in winter time?

I realise the city focussed politicians and bureaucrats lack any appreciation for regional communities. The Red Gum Decision was not warranted on any scientific, environmental protection or any other grounds, our forests and our communities were traded off for political gain and that disgusts me completely. This must never happen again and this time around I sincerely hope we are deserving of far more respect.

In relation to the Red Gum National Park debate back in 2009 I brought the following to the attention of the NRC Commissioner Dr John Williams. **At a public meeting held in Deniliquin I questioned Commissioner Williams as to the number of tourists and their spending needed to replace what was thought at the time a \$70,000,000 annual industry. At the meeting I gave Commissioner Williams the following information. To replace a \$70,000,000 industry with tourism to our region it meant that for 52 weeks of the year there had to be an additional 384 tourists per week each spending \$3,500 per week of their visit over and above the existing tourism numbers. I then asked him the question if he thought that a husband and wife with two kids would spend \$14,000 dollars on a one-week holiday to the region. He simply shook his head and said "No".**

Commissioner Williams knew that his dream of the tourist dollar replacing the industry was never going to happen, yet the NRC still delivered large scale National Parks in full knowledge the economic losses would never be replaced by the tourist dollar.

The Yanga National Park near Balranald was promised 50,000 visitors a year by Bob Carr, from my sources the park is lucky to see 3 visitors a week. Only 49,850 people per year short on what was promised as the replacement to local economic input of the timber industry. Look at the picture of Yanga National Park (2010) Looks like a great place to visit!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Yanga NP 2010

It is now a neglected overpopulated feral species inhabited dying forest. It was well managed before it became a National Park. The social, economic and environmental result of yet another politically motivated decision to turn a once healthy biodiverse well managed Red Gum Forest into an oversized and under managed National Park has failed spectacularly.

Do not condemn what remains of our sustainable renewable forest products industry locally to the same fate. Our forests and our communities deserve much better.



This photo was taken on July 24th 2012, over two years after the Land Tenure change from State Forest to National Park. If the NPWS can't even be bothered to change the sign, what hope have they got in managing them. I doubt if the NPWS has even been to either of these Parks let alone clear an existing Road for a fire break.

When Covid 19 caused the country to virtually shut down the tourism industry stopped dead in its tracks, many closing their doors for lockdowns and unfortunately some closing for good. What regional communities desperately need is **long term reliable employment** not the promise of the unrealistic dreams of a tourism mecca.

On top of all the challenges regional businesses have faced in the last 20 years Covid 19 wrought havoc on many businesses during 2020. Except the Timber Industry as we were classified as an essential service, we were able to continue to provide **consistent stable employment** and economic value to the community that underpins the wellbeing of our people and social fabric of our communities.

I can vividly recall driving home from work of a nighttime usually around 7 to 7:30pm and driving through the main street of Barham it was like a deserted town, not a light on not a pub or a café open and not even a car parked in the street, you could have been mistaken for it being 3am not 7pm.

I can still see the look of fear and trepidation on the faces of the business owners who had never faced so much uncertainty.

Covid 19 again showed just how critical the timber industry is to towns like Barham, Koondrook and Balranald as a form of reliable stable employment.

A closure of the Red Gum Industry would have immediate impacts on the sustainability of many businesses in the townships of Barham, Koondrook and Balranald. Families will suffer, children will lose their bread winners and poverty will spread into our communities unnecessarily.

Not only do National Parks fail the regional communities economically, they are failing the environmental, social and cultural outcomes promised by every known so called expert across Australia.

I like many others in our communities love our Red Gum Forests. We were insulted by the NRC when they ignored us and failed to respect the knowledge we possess of our communities, our forests and our economy and went ahead with oversized National Parks in Red Gum. We care greatly about these aspects and love the environment of the Red Gum State Forests that we carefully manage.

Well, I'm here to implore the panel to come to Mathoura to speak to the locals there to see the impacts just 14 years on from the introduction of National Parks. I would also encourage the Panel to visit our Red Gum Timber Industry just an hour up the road in Barham. I would personally like to show you through the local industry showing the panel an area we harvested only 2 years ago and the manner in which it has responded to the harvesting event. We could do it all in one day but an overnight stay in Barham would allow for a better look at both Mathoura and Barham. The second day would allow time to look at the below. It is a great example of the industry and community coming together to improve the long-term health of our local forests.

We have a great example of a longer-term benefit to our local state forests through the delivery of environmental water (EW). FCNSW and the local red gum timber industry have been engaged with The Living Murray (TLM), the Westen Murray Land Improvement Group, the Koondrook Perricoota Alliance, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Joint Indigenous Group (JIG) for many years now working together with great support from the local community in delivering EW to what is the floodplain of the Koondrook and Perricoota State Forests. This is a delicate balancing act between the benefits to the forest that EW brings and managing the impacts on adjoining landholders and the timber industry. FCNSW have 3 fulltime employees on the TLM. A TLM manager, a TLM project officer and a TLM field ecologist.

The TLM has been credited with strengthening cultural relationships, increasing positive cultural outcomes and provides an opportunity via the monitoring program for members of the JIG for employment on country.

The EW is delivered to targeted areas within the Koondrook, Perricoota State Forests along with the Little Forest and the Pollack swamp. The delivery of the water sees all the above organisations come together working with the community to deliver positive environmental, social and cultural outcomes which in turn brings positive economic outcomes as well. A small example of the economic benefits to the region is that recently a team of scientists and departmental staff from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holders office visited Barham and stayed for 3 nights. They stayed in local Motels, ate at local cafes, pubs and restaurants.

The delivery of EW is possible through the Koondrook Perricoota Flood Enhancement works That project was one of the largest environmental projects undertaken within Australia at the time in 2010. Fulton Hogan was the lead contractor for the project and contracted local companies to design, manufacture and the installation of approximately 30 water control structures across six sites.

The Koondrook-Perricoota Flood Enhancement Works are an environmental watering scheme constructed to mimic natural flooding events in these River Red Gum forests, which are part of the Murray Darling system.

The project saw four years of construction, planning and community consultation before the first flooding event. It is now an asset that will continue to contribute to the health of the forests and the diversity of wildlife, birdlife and aquatic life they support.

Flooding the forest

During the first flooding event in the late winter-spring of 2014, 26 billion litres of water inundated an estimated 4,500 hectares of priority wetlands, creeks, bird and fish breeding sites and forested areas.

This environmental watering event was designed to replenish the forest's extensive network of creeks and semi-permanent wetlands, restoring wetland habitats and providing critical water for native fish populations that rely on deep pools within the forest.

Flood-dependent understorey and wetland plants took advantage of the flows, native fish, macro invertebrates and tadpoles responded well to the nutrient-rich water and a diversity of birdlife was recorded in the forest following the flooding. Our forest ecologists continue to monitor the health of the forest and improve the environmental outcomes during future flooding events. **Source FCNSW Website.**



Since then, there have been other successful EW events that are increasing the health and biodiversity of the local state forests. The local group of state forests provide many visitors to the

region with an opportunity to experience camping, fishing 4-wheel driving and hunting along with the timber industry and grazing making the forest highly diverse and an adaptive asset to our community and economy.

The Sustainable selective harvesting operations and multiple use of the Red Gum State Forests mean that fuel loads are kept down, the roading network is kept open which by default creates mineral earth breaks to minimise the spread of fire and allows access across the forest roading network when fire does break out.

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 panel would be best served by engaging Dr. Fabiano Ximenes from the NSW DPI Forest Research Unit to comment on this topic.

As previously stated under our IFOA the biodiversity of our state forests is protected. The industry and FCNSW work together under supervision and have the EPA audit the harvesting operations to ensure compliance with the IFOA.

The local timber industry as part of its wood supply agreements with FCNSW are required to make available several qualified firefighters annually. Our business has 4 fully qualified forest firefighters and supplies critical equipment such as a log skidder to make firebreaks and water/fire truck to assist FCNSW when fire does break out. We have assisted FCNSW at numerous fires since 2019. We do this at our own cost and are highly skilled at assisting FCNSW and the RFS in minimising the spread and impacts of bushfire. It is an extremely dangerous thing to do to fight a fire in a Red Gum Forest.

The early thinning program has been very successful in red gum. It has created up to 50 full time jobs and has been the catalyst for local business investing millions of dollars into harvesting haulage and processing equipment.

Climate change was one of the drivers of the NRC in locking up oversized Red Gum National Parks in 2010. Prof. ██████████ stated that our forests may never see flood water again. Well in the spring of 2010 we received one of the biggest floods on record that kept industry out of the forest until May 2011. Since that big flood in 2010 the local Red Gum Forests have had a very wet 14 years. Again in 2011, 2012, 2016, 2021, 2022, 2023 and January 2024 we have had large volumes of flood water enter our forests. With EW delivery in between our forests have an excellent period of flooding. So since the dire prediction from a Professor, (who claims expert status yet had never set foot in a Red Gum Forest prior) that we may never see flood water again we have actually had 4 of the 7 biggest floods on record since river regulation in the 1950's. Perhaps I should send Prof. ██████████ the Dan Gardner book titled "Future Babble". The book states that blindfolded monkeys throwing darts at a board are more accurate at predicting the future than experts. I could think of a few more "experts" that this book should be sent to!!!!!!!!!!

Locally we are looking at a trial of Bio Char to utilise some log jam residue from the forest, waste from the rice industry and green waste from local council transfer stations. The trial is not yet up and running and it is in the early planning stages with a cost benefit analysis being drafted. Perhaps there is an opportunity to look at Bio Char into the future as an industry to best utilise forest residues across the state where there is no alternate higher value use for the residue. This could create an

entirely new industry that can assist fuel load management with the added carbon benefits to many industries downstream.

In relation to climate change risks the panel must take note of the following points.

1. If climate change risks increase the frequency and severity of bushfires then we must do something about managing the forests fuel loads regardless of land tenure. Simply locking up more large areas into National Parks is the worst possible management tool that could be implemented. And continuing to leave the millions of hectares of current national parks unmanaged is not the best management practice.
2. More frequent and severe bushfires will not achieve the Green's utopia of carbon storage in native forests. Once trees reach a certain age or maturity, they stop absorbing carbon and actually start emitting it back into the atmosphere. Fabiano Ximenes research papers back up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that managed (not locked up for conservation) forests which supply timber and are regenerated and regrown are the best way to maximise Co2 uptake.
3. A more wholistic approach to fuel load management such as cultural burning, cattle grazing, thinning, fire track maintenance, technology to assist fire detection and the reduction of the severity and spread of bushfire.
4. Have the ability to identify fires as it breaks out, have the necessary feet on the ground and equipment at hand to suppress, control and extinguish bush fires quickly before they grow to a size that can't be controlled.

Every time we lock up another National Park in Australia, we create more and more demand for timber produced illegally overseas placing critically endangered species such as the iconic Sumatran Tiger's and the Orangutan's at greater risk of extinction.

Recent bushfire history in Australia suggest that areas locked up for conservation are actually locked up for devastation instead, the opposite of the desired intention.

I formally invite the Panel to visit our region at the earliest convenience. I look forward to the opportunity to meet the Panel in person and speak about our forests and our communities. The Panel would get a great insight into the impacts of the introduction of National Parks has had on a community that has relied upon the Native Timber Industry as well as a greater understanding of just how sustainable the Native Timber Industry is and the positive Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social outcomes that flow on from the industry.

Todd Gelletly

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Red Gum Timber Industry Representative to the Koondrook Perricoota Alliance.

Timber NSW Board of Directors.

Passionate Community Member.

37 years hands on experience in Native Forest Management.