

# Public submission

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**Organisation:** *Valley Watch Inc*

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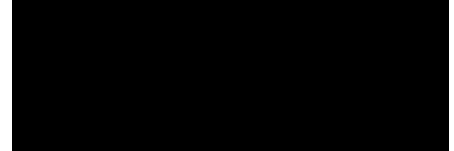
**Location:** *New South Wales*

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

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## RE SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT FORESTRY PANEL

Valley Watch Inc. is a local not-for-profit organisation which has been operating in the Lower Clarence area for the past 30 plus years. Our mission is to advocate for a healthy and biologically diverse environment and to preserve the quality of life in the Clarence Valley.

Australia is ashamedly a global leader in mammal extinctions. If Governments are serious about reversing the decline of nature, then Valley Watch members consider one of the first things that needs to be done is to stop allowing native forests to be logged at the current rate and with such destructive practises now used by the industry.

Federal and State Environment Ministers hosted the Global Nature Positive Summit in Sydney last week which aimed to drive investment in nature and strengthen activities to protect and repair our environment. Yet Govt owned, and taxpayer subsidised Forestry NSW is driving extinction by overlogging and mismanaging our publicly owned forests.

Whilst Valley Watch Inc is pleased to contribute comments to the Independent Forestry Panel, our members are disappointed to note that the panel does not consist of any ecological or Indigenous representation. Instead all panel members seem to have a vested interest in Forestry operations.

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

Evidence provided by many environment groups, community, scientists, all question the sustainability and future of NSW Forestry both physically and economically.

Economically Forestry NSW would not exist without the millions of dollars in subsidies paid by the NSW taxpayer. This fact has been pointed out for many years to Governments who prefer to ignore the overstated timber supply available, the timber supply contracts that cannot be met, the ever-increasing EPA fines from continual breeches in environmental laws by NSW Forestry. Lets get honest about how much is Forestry NSW costing taxpayers?

Economically we need to assess the value of our forests standing. Native forests are critical for the health of our waterways. What is the cost of poor water quality on drinking water?

A recent example in the Clarence Valley resulted water restrictions were put in place following logging near the Little Nymboida River. Of course this was denied by Govt agencies at all levels who preferred to lay blame on the Black Summer Fires despite evidence that the local landscape was well recovered in the three years since. Local Communities spoke up and have photographic evidence of the NSW Forestry clearing in the immediate area of Little Nymboida River before the rain event.

Forests also improve and protect the quality of our waterways by preventing erosion, breaking down pollutants and providing shade. How much does the loss of a forest, which filters clean water to our river systems truly cost? Additional Filtration Plants, Effects of Fishing/Prawning/Oyster industries, Effects on other agricultural industries, Recreational Fishing, Loss of soils into our waterways, Erosion - How do you value a forest? How much is the loss costing communities and taxpayers?

Forests create water vapor flows, which creates rain. Evidence now points to even limited destruction of forests can change the whole climate of a region and we have seen the photographic evidence of aftermath of Forestry NSW destructive techniques.

The current large-scale loss of our forests increases fire risk by destroying the canopy that keeps forest damp. Logging disrupts the humid microclimates of forests, making them more susceptible to fire. With climate change predictions of more severe hot, dry weather periods, we are just adding fuel to the fire – especially with the way public native forests are left after the carnage of Forestry NSW. There is now conclusive evidence that logging native forests increases the risk of bushfire, not reduces it. What is the true cost of increased fire risk and loss of habitat?

How much are our publicly owned native forests worth as carbon stores? What is the cost of emissions from destruction of forests?

What is the value of a wood chip? Why are our precious forests exported as woodchips? What percentage of our native forests are exported as woodchips? What is the cost of burning our forests electricity? When you consider the loss of such a precious resource, add in the freight costs and then just waste it - how can you consider Current Forestry Operations Sustainable let alone the future of forestry operations to continue in NSW.

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

The health and structure of our public native forests has diminished after many years of intensive logging with little regeneration outcomes. Many are weed infested, dried out, lack the diversity they once had and are full of invasive species. The mismanagement of our Native Forests is a national shame.

Native forests in NSW hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people who have ongoing connection to forest landscapes which are an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge.

Cultural practices, fire management, indigenous employment, tourism, bush medicines and bush foods, pollinators and of course safe habitat for diminishing species are all outcomes of better managed Public Forestry Estates.

There are 269 nationally listed threatened species in NSW and the landscape scale significance of native forests means that native forest logging compromises many ecosystems and habitats throughout NSW.

The Global Nature Positive Summit needs to work on transitioning the management of NSW Public Forests and the preservation of species to increase tourism and connection to the land. This needs to be a high priority.

A recent example of ongoing extinction crises happened locally in the Candole State Forest. The nest of an endangered Coastal Emu with less than 50 individuals in the wild remaining was discovered whilst the forest was being intensively logged. Forestry NSW were happy to continue logging with a woefully inadequate 100m exclusion zone around the nest – until there was a massive backlash from traditional custodians, ecologists, and community. Forestry NSW ceased operations, but the damage was done – too little too late – the forest is left decimated by Forestry NSW's enormous machines of destruction.



Clearing around the emu's nest in Candole State Forest.

We need a long-term strategic management plan and significant investment into the regeneration of our publicly owned State Forests. These forest environments can become the State's natural recreation areas, taking the pressure off the National Park Estate and giving so much more than woodchips.

The election promises by NSW Government for The Great Koala National Park have been pathetic and strategically delayed whilst the guts of this area is being intensively logged at a rate never seen before in Forestry NSW history of operations. This has been highly condemned by the local communities – continual protests are costing the Government dearly both in resources and reputation. The issue has a large media following on the North Coast of NSW and more and more support persons are joining together to protect our forests with each passing day.

It is noted that Indigenous Management Programs such as the Githabul Ranges have been hugely successful at managing the recovery and health of native forests. With high unemployment on the North Coast of NSW there is significant opportunity for Indigenous young to reconnect and learn cultural ways.

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

Estimates that logging in native forests accounted for only 9% of the total log production in Australia in the year 2023 need to be considered. Estimates that Native forest logging contributes only 2.4 million of the total 25 million cubic metres for that year need to be considered.

Claims that half the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported are alarming and disappointing.

Claims that Hardwood logs taken from plantations made up 8.5 million cubic metres, and just 8% of these logs were saw and veneer logs. 87% of hardwood plantation logs were exported as wood chips.

It seems once again that hardwood as a resource is . Add this to the destruction of the forest to obtain a wood chip and the true cost of freight and one has to question the viability and the need.

Why can't plantation sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods substitute for all current uses for native forest and plantation hardwoods?

Why can't hemp products be used instead?

The market and demand for native forests is declining rapidly, the recent example of Essential Energy moving away from power poles harvested from native forests is just smart move to a more sustainable path in the future.

People want more sustainable solutions.

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

Mixed plantations - not monocultures should be prioritised.

Taxpayer's subsidising Forestry NSW is creating a non-competitive unfair market.

Most log production already comes from Plantations.

Use of Hemp.

Hardwood from Native forests should be treated as a luxury and selectively harvested with care under stricter conditions.

The perceived lack of product has seen steep slopes logged and the head waters of pristine river systems threatened – systems which will never recover.

**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 need to look at the true value of a Native Forest cannot not be underestimated at this point in the Extinction Crisis, Climate Change and Sustainable Future that we are all craving.

Ecological Value for the whole of NSW including water quality, air quality, carbon, cultural, community, tourism, habitat needs to be considered rather than Forestry NSW inadequate and unprofitable business model.

The location of NSW publicly owned forests effects many towns and residents, and the people of NSW should not be paying millions of dollars in subsidies to Forestry NSW to destroy these valuable assets.

Forests need protection, timber workers need jobs, home buyers need more sustainable timber sources and alternatives.

Private investment in biodiverse plantations can play a huge role in the immediate halt to native forest logging. This should be the starting point in a the Government's proposed Nature Positive Plan.

**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**

It has been well documented the worth of a forest as carbon storage. The carbon market is one all Australians can benefit from with our NSW Publicly owned forests.

Logging of forests is estimated to release 3.6million tonnes of carbon every year, where regenerating previously logged forests will make a significant contribution to meeting our emissions targets.

The NSW Government has a responsibility to contribute to reducing our emissions and our Publicly owned Forests are a way that can start this process today.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment.

Regards

Helen Granleese  
President  
Valley Watch Inc