

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AWU and CFMEU

INDEPENDENT FORESTRY PANEL: MR PETER DUNCAN AM (CHAIR)
THE HON. MICK VEITCH

INDEPENDENT FORESTRY
PANEL SECRETARIAT: CLARE MILLER
OLIVER COPE

AWU and CFMEU: ALISON RUDMAN (NSW SECRETARY,
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TONY CALLINAN (NSW SECRETARY,
AWU)
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LOCATION: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: FRIDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **MR DUNCAN:** Maybe I can formally open the meeting and just to clarify, Clare, are we recording, transcribing this meeting? So just to let everybody know that that's happening.

MS MILLER: Yes, that's right.

10 **MR DUNCAN:** Look, the Independent Forestry Panel was set up probably about six weeks ago to do one specific thing and that's really stakeholder engagement and I'll read the purpose out to the letter so that you know, it is to lead and report on key stakeholder engagement and to provide advice to government as the Forestry Industry Action Plan and supporting business case are developed over '24-25. So we've really focused in the last six to eight weeks on stakeholder engagement. There's still some
15 meetings to go yet.

So we are heading to a report to government, even in the preliminary sense, [REDACTED] and if you go on to the website that's linked to this work, the Independent Planning Commission, with Clare and Oliver involved as the secretariat,
20 have put all the documents that we have received up on that website. We've actually had about 1,700 submissions. Many of them probably think we're doing a lot broader piece of this Forestry Industry Action Plan than we are, but we are going to try and give the government an independent, unbiased sort of stakeholder engagement response. And as you'd imagine, forestry has been probably a very contested space for 50 years
25 at least.

So in six to eight weeks is a real challenge for us to do that justice but we're doing the best we can and we've been going flat out and a lot of people will want to meet with us and we just haven't had time. But we are trying to meet with peak groups like
30 yourselves and others. So Timber New South Wales, the Environmental Alliance, Forestry Alliance, those sorts of people. People you'd well know.

And I suppose my focus today for me and I'm sure Mick and Mary, if she were here, she's an apology, by the way. She got called off to something else. We'll give her an opportunity to see the transcript. Really understand your view of the industry and your views of forestry so that we can put that into the stakeholder mix. So it's really about us listening to you rather than us talking and – but we would like to ask some questions along the way if something comes up. So I don't know, Alison or Tony, who wants to lead away?
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MR CALLINAN: Yes, look, if I just make a quick point and then I'll let Alison and Manu do the sort of technical side of it. But obviously from the AWU's perspective, forestry, whilst it's a key industry, lots of jobs, very important to regional towns, there's a whole lot of services our members provide there, not the least of which is the
45 firefighting aspect of the services that they provide. They are the experts in that field, one of the small group of experts.

So I think that's often missed by a lot of people, that there's a whole lot of services that forestry employees, AWU members, provide that needs to be maintained and actually we say needs to be built on into the future. We've seen some really significant fire events. We're coming into summer again and we've been – our members are highly
5 trained specialists in that area. It's not often recognised but without an ongoing viable fire industry, that's just one example of some of the services that will be missed out.

But Alison and Manu can talk in more detail around figures and dollars and numbers and jobs and everything else. But it's not just about the end product being timber that's
10 used and cutting trees down, there's a whole lot of other stuff that goes on in forestry that I think is often missed would be the main point I'd want to make, Peter, that there's a whole lot of highly valuable, highly skilled workforce and we need viable forestry industry to maintain those services to the community, otherwise somebody else is going to have to pick up the tab for it, right?

15 **MR DUNCAN:** Yes, that's right.

MR CALLINAN: Yes, over to you, Alison and Manu. I'll take a bit of a backseat here.

20 **MR DUNCAN:** Thanks, Tony.

MS RUDMAN: No worries, Tony. Thanks for that and I mean, I'd wholeheartedly endorse what Tony had to say. I think the point that I'd just add to it is that as well as
25 obviously the very formal firefighting work that Tony's members do, also having people out in the forests engaged in active management provides informal fire watch.

So if you look at where there are fire cameras across New South Wales currently and the cost of installing those, if you were to suddenly remove people from working in
30 those forests every day, you'd have real issues and we've certainly seen this in Victoria, both around forestry and around fire, but also around things like the maintenance of roads.

So suddenly they're finding that towns – someone tries to go to the next town to get whatever supplies they might need and that road has actually degraded. But they're
35 often not getting that information in real time in the way that they were when people were in those forests. So it has a real impact, not just in terms of the kind of jobs that are directly impacted but also in terms of the communities that rely on that real coverage and that view of what's happening in this part of our country.

40 I think there are a couple of points that are really worth getting to about the value of this industry because I know that there is a lot of mythology around the actual value of this industry and I have to say that given that this is an industry with 2.9 billion in revenue just in the hardwoods sector, the argument by anti-forestry activists that this is
45 a low value industry does not hold water. If there is that much money for people to make, the idea that they are turning it into tomato stakes or whatever the latest story is just doesn't hold water.

The point was made to me by some of our members and I think it's really important is that their commitment is getting the maximum value out of the whole tree. And so there are things that they do now to make sure that nothing is wasted but as the science develops and we've seen that, as the science develops, those will move into higher value products. It's not about what the product is, it's about making sure that no part of that tree is wasted because a lot of our members come from these towns. I mean, Mick's obviously still around Tumut, I spent many years now. We live in these towns because we care about those environments but we need a future for people, not just places and things.

And so that probably gets me to my next point, which is that the government's own research in Northern New South Wales, when we look at the hardwood sector, shows that timber workers make on average twice what tourism workers do. So sometimes there's this discussion that "Oh yeah, yeah, we'll shut down all the timber industry but it's okay, they'll go into some sort of other job." Not all jobs are created equal. Some jobs push people into a race to the bottom, particularly in a cost of living crisis. Other jobs support families, they grow towns and they grow communities and we're really proud of the fact that timber jobs do just that.

There are also I think – and this often gets missed and you will have all seen it and Mick, I think when you did the inquiry in the upper house, there was a lot of "No, it's this number, no, it's that number" and people don't always spend the time trying to get grips with why there's a difference in the numbers that are being counted in terms of jobs. And there are two numbers that are worth us looking at. So the first is actually the amount of jobs involved and to be honest, this comes down to a really simple thing of the way that census data is collected does not always break out the specificity of the work being performed.

So we know that there is work that can only be performed in relation to timber but is being captured in the census under transport work. But it also comes down to the fact that a lot of people doing this work are in the regions where we have incredibly poor connectivity. I mean, good luck if you're living anywhere between Tumut and Wagga, you're probably not doing your census at home on census night. And where we know that particularly First Nations people are underrepresented in census data but have traditionally been quite a big part of the timber industry because of the very real concerns that they have about the safety of participating in those sort of forums.

Then the second issue though that is really useful to get to grips with is not just the raw number but also the impact. So you might know that there is a hardwood timber mill at Pentarch, Narooma, down the South Coast?

MR DUNCAN: Yes, yes.

MS RUDMAN: They've got 18 jobs there and now people go "18 jobs, no big deal" but there's only 2,700 people in that town. 18 jobs out of 2,700 people is quite a significant set of jobs. Whereas if you were thinking about Sydney, where they're sitting somewhere around 5 million people at this point, 200 jobs going out of Sydney would have less impact than those 18 jobs going out of Narooma.

Then I think it is worthwhile getting to those issues around, “Oh, but they’ll take other work. They’ll go into other work.” It’s not like for like and that’s not what we’re seeing in places in Victoria. I’m happy to provide the panel offline with some of the towns we’ve seen, I wouldn’t want to seem like I’m criticising our members but realistically they’re not getting into other work and they’re not always moving to get that other work because it’s really hard to move if that means taking yourself away from four generations of your family who have all done the same work.

10 Where we see things with members who are perhaps currently doing timber haulage, even if they’re able to get the equipment and they’re able to get new trailers and whatnot, there’s a really practical issue, they’re suddenly moving from doing local runs through to having to be on really more like long distance driving. And so that has an impact on their families, it has an impact on their caring responsibilities. It’s not a case of you just go, “Oh, I was driving this in my truck yesterday, now I’m driving something different.”

I think there is also a risk particularly when we look at the trend in the public sector over again the past 50 years or so of assuming that just because there will be increased work in the public sector, that automatically all jobs just transfer across. There’s a real risk in assuming that. Of course, that is something that we believe should happen but it wouldn’t be a safe way to assess people’s workplaces.

25 And then I think the underlying kind of fallacy in the way that all of this is approached is people talk about all of these industries but they miss the logical reasoning. They miss that reasoning of is it but for the timber industry that those jobs would already be there? And no, most of those jobs do not require the end of the timber industry in order to be there but they’re not there. So they’re not going to magically spring up just because the timber industry is gone. If the government wants alternate industries in there, there is going to be a significant cost of active intervention to create those industries. So the idea that this is somehow a cheap thing to do and then other work will just spring up in its place, it’s really hard to maintain that reasoning. It just doesn’t actually make sense.

35 It also has a critical impact upon other government targets, particularly around housing. So I know particularly yourself, Peter, would probably be aware of the work that Housing Australia, the government department, did a few years ago around builds and builds that rely primarily on timber, where they were saying that each house is worth nine jobs across the economy and three jobs directly. So there’s an opportunity here, a real opportunity but there’s also a cost if the government were to decide to go down this path. So having had a look at what is on offer in Victoria and I’d want to really truly know that the Victorian industry is significantly smaller, as I know both of you would well know, than what we’re dealing with in New South Wales.

45 Currently on offer and I’ll be frank, I don’t think it’s enough because we’re not seeing the important social outcomes that you would need from it, is just over 200,000 for any worker under 45 years old and 250,000 for everyone else. So those are not insignificant figures and those are not insignificant figures that are still causing other

job issues. But their industry is smaller and they've also had to spend over 25 million in kind of support and administration for this process. So it's not a case of you just get to shut it down. There is a very real cost if that was what was to be pursued. So I know I've talked on a bit. Manu, did you want to pick up on some of that?

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MS RISOLDI: Yes, absolutely. Thanks so much, Alison, for that. I think supportive of absolutely everything that Alison and Tony have just said, acknowledging as well that we've spent a bit of time talking about the value of the industry, which is integral. But reflecting on the cost of what would happen in New South Wales if you were to shut down forestry in its entirety in a reasonably quick decision by the government. We'd be looking to the Victorian context, just as Alison mentioned, but in Victoria we're looking at across the board about one and a half billion dollars to shut the industry down over the course of the last three years, as they've done.

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15 That money, and I think it's really important to reflect on this, is not costed anywhere by the New South Wales government, there's no budgeting in place to pull that money out of anywhere. So I mean like from the perspective of workers, if we're going to have a plan that sees the cessation of timber, we need to have a discussion about how much it will cost and what the government is willing to pay to shut down and get rid of these jobs because that is a much larger pool of money than what's been set aside, even if you're looking at one of the contexts like the Great Koala National Park, for example, where only \$80 million has been earmarked.

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25 And I think, I don't want to speak on behalf of Tony and Alison, but probably in this example we can see that that is not enough money, even in that one quarter of New South Wales, to pay for the job losses that potentially might be occurring in that boundary space and so if we're looking to that context, we're already behind, even in that example.

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30 In our focus group that we did alongside some of the industry panels, we spent quite a lot of time focusing on forestry management and the expansion of forestry management in New South Wales. I think from an AWU perspective, that's really, really important to us. A lot of our membership, unlike the manufacturing division, is not in the manufacturing of timber products, it's instead in the public sector space, it's in Forestry Corporation and as Tony's already mentioned, these are highly skilled workers that protect regional communities across the firefighting season.

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40 But equally they work in conjunction with contractors, a lot of whom are members of the manufacturing division, to use the heavy equipment to protect communities with and fight fires for. And again, harking back to the Victorian context because we can learn a lot from what happened in Victoria, when you quickly shut down an industry and you don't account for the fact that you will lose those contractors and all of their heavy duty equipment, it means that like Victoria now isn't in a position to fight fires.

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45 And what we've seen on the South Coast is that Victoria is calling up our members and our firefighting capacity and begging our members to go down south to protect them during the summer bushfire season. Now, that's not a feasible or workable scenario for the future. We need to protect New South Wales emergency response

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system and that is a huge part Forestry Corporation workers. So really what we're wanting to focus on is an expansion of forestry management, both to support the industry, acknowledging that everyone engages in that process, but also because we know that these are some of the best paying jobs. In the Great Koala National Park context we've seen that in some of the timber towns up there that are most impacted by the suggested boundaries, people are earning twice what the median income is in the rest of the town.

So I think this idea that the timber industry doesn't have a value for regional New South Wales is just completely unfounded and not true. It's really unfortunate seeing some of the discussions that happen outside of these spaces because I think there's a real misunderstanding about the importance of the timber industry across a whole different set of reasonings, but not least of which that without them, whole towns would go without protection over the summer bushfire period.

But also not just over summer, but acknowledging what Alison and Tony have already touched on, this idea that our forestry management are working across the year. Without that role, who knows how big megafires could become. So I think we're in a really critical phase now where we need to acknowledge that shutting down the industry would have consequences in areas that government might not necessarily have first thought when they were first embarking on these discussions.

MR DUNCAN: Okay. Are you open to some questions?

MR CALLINAN: Yes, could I just make one more point, Peter, if I may before we get into any questions.

MR DUNCAN: Yes, Tony.

MR CALLINAN: I just think that it's often the emotional side that gets in the way of the facts here. The actual amount of native forestry is miniscule in New South Wales when compared to the amount of forestry land there is. The timber taken, you know, the numbers are all out there, it's a very small amount of timber that's taken each year in these areas and there's lots of research around we can have koalas and forestry too. It's not a one or the other choice here, right, we can have native forestry, we should be promoting further investment in plantation, we should be improving the current forestry management practices and growing all of that, doing it all at once because we can have it both, it's not a one or the other.

And then the next problem I foresee in years to come is once we hopefully have lots of investment in additional plantation hardwood, the koalas don't know the difference between a planted tree and a native tree, right, and we're going to have everyone saying, "We can't cut down the plantation trees. They've got koalas in them." Like, let's be realistic here, I've talked to our delegates that have been out on programs with heat seeking drones, looking for koalas. Yes, they're out there but it's not like we're going to walk up a cement path like you do at Taronga and see them in a tree. There's tens of thousands of hectares with a few koalas and forestry can be managed and we

can have that and a koala park. And I think unfortunately some people would have us believe it's a one or the other choice here but it's just plainly not.

5 **MS RISOLDI:** Sorry, and can I also just throw in one other thing because it's remiss
of the unions not to mention this, but as Tony mentioned, it's such a small proportion
of native forestry that's harvested but also we're some of the best regulated harvesters
in the world. The idea that we will not need timber in New South Wales is not true, so
why would we not use our natural resources that we regulate so well that have such
10 good union well-paying jobs, when we will end up having to get timber from countries
like Borneo that have very unsafe practices where workers are not paid very much
money. I think that's a part of the discussion that's completely missed, particularly by
environmental groups who would not want to be advocating for poorer condition jobs
essentially being sent overseas. That's not something that New South Wales should be
15 advocating for but if we get rid of all of our timber harvesting, that is absolutely
what's going to happen.

MR DUNCAN: Okay, point well made. Mick, have you got any questions at this stage?

20 **MR VEITCH:** I've always got questions, Peter. There's just a couple of things, so
Tony and Alison, you spoke about the bushfire work and bushfire prevention, which is
critically important in the regions, but can you just talk us through the other aspects of
the work that's undertaken in the forest by your members? So things like biosecurity
work, you know, weeds and pests, or more importantly for me the road maintenance as
25 well. So can you just – what's the scale of that? What does that look like at the
moment?

MR CALLINAN: Yes, so I can't give you an exact number, Peter, but Manu talked
about not just our members in forestry but also contractors, right. If you're not running
30 large logging trucks up and down these roads, then they don't need to be maintained
and it's pretty clear – I don't want to seem like I'm laying the boot into National Parks
because we've got a lot of members there that do maintenance as well, but you can
basically – like if I blindfolded you and took you up a road in a forest and one up a
national park, you'd know the difference.

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The forestry is just maintained to a much higher standard and again often not known
that our members at forestry plant more trees than they cut down. Right, who's going
to be out there planting the trees if there's no forestry workers? And we've got
firefighters in national parks as well, right, so both of those agencies provide services
40 but in different ways. But it's hard, I don't have a number to put on it or a number of
people but it's a crucial service that's provided. I don't know if Alison's got any more
detail around that.

45 **MS RUDMAN:** Yes, so I mean I can probably speak less to kind of the planning side
of it, which is the work that Tony's members and particularly some of the guys down
the South Coast during the Black Summer bushfires were really, really critical to not
only making sure that fires were kind of detected and that towns were protected but
also to having kind of the foresight to go through and grab seedlings from those

different forests so that we're in a position that those forests have not gone up for good, that they're able to restore that. Some of the practical work that our members do in between is using their equipment and it's equipment that Forestry Corp doesn't currently have, it's not currently sitting on their ledger, but using their equipment to go through and create those fire breaks and create those fire trails.

I mean, I know there was a lot of discussion and Mick, you'd remember this because in our part of the world we lost like 30% of the resource during the fires. And there is a lot of talk about the fact that it's probably good management to make sure that you've got plantations kind of in amongst native forestry so that there are some natural fire breaks created there. But we've got this amazing footage and again I'm very happy to provide it to the panel, probably won't provide it generally because it's something that members have provided to us, but at times they literally are driving along ahead of the fire, trying to be the first ones there to get a break in.

So obviously the ideal is always to be able to do kind of preventative work but it's not in those situations where the worst has happened. Sometimes those guys who firefighting is not their skillset, they're there because they know how to harvest, are literally tearing along ahead of the fire, going if we can just get far enough ahead and get a break in the landscape, maybe we can save the rest of this forest.

MR CALLINAN: I might just share a quick story, Alison, if you don't mind. One of our delegates from down near Griffith, excuse me, I only know his nickname, we call him [REDACTED] but not sure where that comes from but so he's a firefighter in his 50s and he stood up at a delegates conference and told a story about how what upsets him most about his job is they don't get any recognition. They're not allowed to be promoted for what they do.

And I asked a question because we took a group photo and he stood with his hand over his logo on his shirt and I said, "What are you doing, [REDACTED]?" and he said, "I'm not allowed to have this logo in a photo." And he told a story about how he abseiled out of a helicopter behind the fire lines, rescued an elderly lady and gentleman out of their house. They said, "We're not going." He said, "You've got 10 minutes and this house is going up in smoke. You're going." And he's a big man, so he got them in the helicopter and the lady started crying, she said, "Oh, forgot the dogs." So he backed out of the helicopter, went down, by that time the fire was there. One of the dogs had been burnt, badly injured, and he had a photo, he showed me, coming up into the helicopter with a dog under each arm.

Then he started crying and I said, "What's going on?" I said, "Do you need some mental health support?" Right, and we've got a campaign to fix that. And he said, "Oh, no, I'm all right now." I said, "What do you mean now?" He said, "Oh, I've only tried to kill myself twice in the last three years." And these are the type of people – and he described as when the RFS and the red and blue lights, he calls them, when they're running away from the fire, we run into the fire. That's [REDACTED] story, right. These are our members and that's the type of work they do. Like Alison said, they're ahead of the fire, our members are in amongst the fire. So you don't replace that type of service any time soon, that type of commitment.

MR DUNCAN: Okay.

MR VEITCH: Can I – I’ve just got a couple of others, Peter, if I could just touch on.

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MR DUNCAN: Yes, of course.

MR VEITCH: So you all spoke about – my words, not yours – but you spoke about sort of the failings or the flaws in the Victorian industry adjustment package and we’ve heard about some of the issues, I guess, with the river red gum industry adjustment package. Could you just talk us through what those issues are and why they are issues, I guess, is what we really would like to know.

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MS RUDMAN: Yes, absolutely. So look, I think there are a couple of things and the first is that I don’t think enough money went into it, to be honest. I don’t think people recognise that often when they were shutting these jobs down, they were putting people for years, perhaps even decades out of work. I think it was also a really poor understanding of the social infrastructure that sits around these jobs. I mean, we’ve got a member in a town up north who had a very serious workplace injury and there was no dispute about pay or anything, like he is fine in terms of pay, but the poor bloke is absolutely decimated because this was his whole life. This was where they had the betting club on the footy, this was where he went for kind of social interaction. And so I think that part really got lost.

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I also think there was a really, really poor understanding of what services are actually available and not for a want of trying by the unions but there was very much this kind of cavalier, “Oh yeah, you know, you’ll get mental health support.” And people were saying, “Well, like how do you do that?” and they’re like, “Oh well, you’ll go to your GP.” And we don’t have members in a single town that I can tell you who are waiting for less than a month to see a GP and this is when they are ringing, saying, “I’m at crisis point, I’m really unwell.” So the idea that they were just going to somehow toddle off to a psychologist because “Oh, maybe we might pay for it” just didn’t stack up.

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And then I think there was some really flawed logic around what jobs are there. I mean, the reality is that the timber industry does not get in the way of there being other jobs in regional Australia but other jobs aren’t there. So the thought that those are going to spontaneously spring up because of the goodwill of the market, particularly when you’ve then kind of removed all the business infrastructure that is already there just doesn’t make sense.

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MS RISOLDI: Mick, can I also just add and I don’t want to whittle the Victorian response down to one major problem but I also think there was a really narrow understanding of the industry broadly and I think it’s why Alison, Tony and I talk in great detail about the fire response of most of these agencies, is because I actually don’t think the Victorian government really wholly appreciated what they were doing when they shut down the industry, which is why you saw towards the end of last year local fire commands coming to New South Wales and asking for contractors because I

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just don't think that issue was front of mind when they were putting together their response to this.

5 **MR VEITCH:** Yes, which brings me to my last question, Peter, well at this point last question, which is the regional perspective of forestry in New South Wales. So I'm not
10 being critical here of the fact that the Great Koala National Park discussion has clearly focused people around the North or Mid North Coast, but there are issues around forestry in the south. There's the plantations, softwood plantations down our way around Tumut and then there's the river red gum out west. So can I just get your views
15 around the value of forestry to each of the regions? Well, what is the very specific issues in each of the regions? So what's the specific nature, not issues, the nature in each of those regions that make the regions very special?

15 **MS RUDMAN:** I'm happy to have a first crack at that if that's okay and then Tony and Manu, if you want to jump in. I mean, perhaps starting closest to home in Tumut and just Tumut and Tumbarumba, not taking in Addy or Batlow, any of the ones
20 around there, but if you look at the last census data, in Tumut and Tumba, one in 10 people aged over 14 years old works in the top three processors. So your Visy, your Hyne, your AKD. I think that alone speaks to the value of the industry there.

20 If I were to keep one issue there, it would be that when things are good, it's really good, it's amazing work, but they are stuck in a little bit of a boom bust cycle. So I think a really practical step that the government could take there is implementing a bit
25 like they have in Tasmania, the New South Wales Wood First Policy. So it's not about stopping up projects, but it's about saying if it can be built with New South Wales timber, it should be built with New South Wales timber. And that would work to just stabilise some of those boom busts that then in turn can make it difficult to maintain staff.

30 I think if you were then to move on from there, you've probably got Bombala next, where really practical issue in Bombala is that those roads around there, forestry is just not given enough resources to maintain it properly. So as soon as you get two days of rain, everyone's out of the forest for two weeks. That's the really practical area around there. When you had down to Eden, obviously you've got timber mill happening there
35 as well as the kind of more traditional setup that they've had, again they're really impacted by these issues of both resource supply and then of course the ever changing kind of regulations where I think you will have heard from other people that there is deep frustration at the unique new way that the EPA has decided to approach their regulatory role.

40 And we're considered that that is really stepping outside of what's appropriate. We're concerned that instead what should be happening is a comprehensive review of how that native forestry occurs, not this kind of death by 1,000 cuts approach because it's having people working, not working, working, then told they can go back to work
45 because we've cleared the two couple that you're working on now but we don't know, you were meant to move to another one next week, so we don't know what that's going to be.

I would say probably similar issues happening as you head up the coast where you've got your kind of your Narooma and then you've also got a group around Nowra that's also a bit more hardwood happening there. There's also some good kind of end user product work happening there. I think as well as obviously the resource supply issues
5 for them, the other issue is that they're all quite nervous because certainly during lean times, it's not uncommon to see trucks going up or down the highway.

And so I think there's kind of this view in parts of the government that you just kind of turn off the tap in Northern New South Wales and that no one else is going to notice.
10 But the reality is that will have a cascading effect throughout those towns. Then I guess when you get to Northern New South Wales, I think that obviously there's resource supply, there is the issue of the koala park being proposed. I also think there's quite a poor understanding within government around the structure of those wood supply agreements.

15 So I think there's a view that however – whatever the loss of timber is that comes from creating a koala park, I think they seem to think that it'll apply equally and they don't seem to understand that there's kind of a cascading priority list. And Peter, you'd know this stuff well, but that actually it won't be that everybody cops say a 10% cut, it
20 will be that some people there's simply no timber by the time you get down to the bottom of that priority list.

So if I had to kind of summarise some key interventions that I think impact across those areas, I think (1) it's about government procurement and about helping stabilise
25 demand. I think that plantations are part of the equation as well. I would also say that particularly down south there is private native forestry available there and we need to get rid of dual consent because the idea that we're going to have local landholders, so our farmers, wanting to go through the whole process that they do with Local Land Services and then going, "Oh, but also whatever the make up of our council is, we'll
30 deal with their capricious new demands as well."

There's not enough forestry coming out of those places to make it worth engaging with those bodies, particularly where councils simply don't have the expertise to be making a decision on the availability there. And then I think that the third thing is that
35 we need to start picking up on the research of people like Dr Bill Jackson from Forestry Australia. Very eminent academic in this field who talks about – and importantly in this field not someone with a natural sciences degree now claiming expertise in forestry. But he really talks about the fact that there needs to be much more cross-tenure management and then having a smart plan for what we do with the byproducts of that.
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And I think right now we need to be really clear that the majority of forestry is managed around the end use, not actually about how do we have a great environment and great trees. So you've got a chunk over here with Local Land Services, you've got
45 a chunk with Forestry New South Wales, you've got a chunk with National Parks and Wildlife. Some of it springs up sometimes on Crown lands and no one's actually going like, "Hey, what's our approach?" Instead, we're managing it for end use.

MR DUNCAN: Okay. That research, Alison, have you got links to that? That might be –

MS RUDMAN: I'm very happy to have that sent to you.

5

MR DUNCAN: If we haven't already seen it, it would be good to have it in the mix.

MS RUDMAN: Yes.

10 **MR DUNCAN:** I'm assume that some of that's public, which would be useful.

MS RUDMAN: Yes, absolutely.

MR DUNCAN: Mick, anything else at this stage?

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MR VEITCH: No, I think that's good, Peter. That's covered off on the regional stuff.

MR DUNCAN: Yes. Just to build on a couple of things, you talked about Victoria a bit and you discussed it with Mick as well. The 1.5 billion cost over the last three years, has there been any work done to sort of evaluate it yet or is it too soon? Evaluate the sort of outcomes, if you like, of that structural adjustment program down there.

20

MS RUDMAN: My understanding is that there's currently interviews occurring but that there's no analysis available yet.

25

MR DUNCAN: Is that the government doing that or someone independent or –

MS RUDMAN: My understanding is they've got one of the consulting houses doing it on behalf of the government.

30

[REDACTED]

35 **MS RUDMAN:** Yes.

MR DUNCAN: And they validated a figure very similar to what you've said. I was interested in what the industry player would get 200,000 if you're under 45 or 250 over 45. But obviously there must be some other parts of that package going to downstream businesses.

40

[REDACTED]

45 **MR DUNCAN:** This is other parts, is there? Yes, so that's sort of all part of the 1.5.

MS RUDMAN: Yes. I guess for us, we can speak with most expertise about the workforce component. So we really try and focus on that.

MR DUNCAN: Yes, focus on that. No, I understand. Okay, yes, I was interested in almost the skills piece you talked about and forest management skills and how that could – if there were change, how that could occur to try and retain that expertise.
5 Obviously it's very important, particularly when you talked about fires, roads and all the other things. Is there any view about what's happened in other states with that skillset or we just lose them to the industry or are we seeing them go into the conservation area? Have you got any feeling for that? Probably a hard question to answer at this stage. It's all pretty new, isn't it?

10 **MS RISOLDI:** I think we'd have to go back and take this offline and then come back to you because I'm honestly not sure.

MR DUNCAN: Yes.
15

MR CALLINAN: I'm the same, I'm not sure what other states – what's happened there, Peter.

20 **MR DUNCAN:** Yes, okay. Yes, and it is all pretty new in a relative sense, so it makes it pretty hard to unwrap at this stage. I don't think I've got a lot of other questions at the moment, Alison or Tony or Manu but it's been helpful. It's been really helpful to get your view of it. Maybe for both of your points of view, how many people do you feel work in the industry, both your direct members and downstream? Have you got a number? What's your number?

25 **MR CALLINAN:** We've got a few hundred members but I wouldn't know in the entire industry, right. Yes, Manu or Alison have the higher level details than me, I'm dealing with the members issues.

30 **MR DUNCAN:** Yes, okay.

MS RUDMAN: So I'd say a lot more work's gone into quantifying hardwood than softwood because of course –

35 **MR DUNCAN:** Yes.

MS RUDMAN: –there are some issues when you start trying to quantify softwood of does frame and truss count, do timber frame and truss count as part of that supply chain. Now, I would argue that it does.

40 **MR DUNCAN:** I would as well, it's a sort of downstream industry, isn't it?

45 **MS RUDMAN:** Yes, absolutely. And I mean, to be honest, in terms of carbon outputs, it's simply the best way to be doing frame and truss is by using timber. In terms of softwood, I know that there's a figure of just under 9,000 that certainly makes sense but I think we are always really careful to go it's about how you count it. So I think there's been this view that there are these wildly different numbers on it but I actually don't think they're wildly different because there are – I think they're wildly

different because people measure them and count that work really differently and unless you understand some of the issues around how do you actually get to the correct ANZSIC code for the work that's being done, you're probably not counting it properly and to my mind, that's the issue.

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I mean, I know that we often have quoted it as – I had the unfortunate pleasure of needing to address Shoalhaven Council at one point on this and got bailed by somebody in the carpark afterwards, going, “There are only seven people employed in forestry in the entire Shoalhaven Council area” and I sat there, going, “Well, without even having to look at it, I know that we have one site that has 55 members down the road.” So but what they do is they try and play tricky games with it and they try and claim that whoever the full-time Forestry Corp people are in that region are somehow the only people doing timber work. So I think there is a way to get to a relatively good number using those ANZSIC codes, but you do have to break it down to the four digit codes.

15

MR DUNCAN: Okay.

MS RUDMAN: But even that, I'd really urge the government before they made any choices on that to check that in both directions. So yes, use that high level data but recognise that the census has some very real issues in the region. And then look to also for particular sections actually use surveys, use workplace surveys in order to validate other numbers broadly similar.

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MR DUNCAN: Okay. No, I understand. It's not an easy area and you're quite right, it's what you put in and what you don't put in, yes. Manu, have you got any view of that?

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MS RISOLDI: We have firm numbers from Forestry Corp about the number of not just field officers but everyone they employ across the state. I feel, if my memory is correct, it sits at around seven hundred and something. I can get those numbers to you but again, that's not indicative of the entire industry, that's just the patch that the AWU would look after.

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MR DUNCAN: It's their side, yes, yes.

35

MS RISOLDI: Yes.

MR DUNCAN: Both sides. We are talking to Forestry Corp and I'm sure they'll be able to provide the numbers. I don't have a lot else at this stage but we may need to come back. Clare, is there anything you can think of that we haven't covered?

40

MS MILLER: No, nothing else.

MR DUNCAN: Mick?

45

MR VEITCH: Just very quickly, Peter. Yes, there was. I forget who it was now, I think it might've been Tony, I think, but someone touched on the EPA and the

regulatory arrangements. Can you again just quickly but what are the issues about the way that the EPA go about their work and we've had it suggested to us in a couple of forums that potentially maybe someone like the Natural Resource Access Regulator, for instance, might be another model that is better equipped to work in the forest sector. We're not saying we support that one way or the other, of course, but I'd be
5 been on your views.

MS RUDMAN: I think that makes a lot of sense. There are kind of three concerns from our perspective. The first is that the review process for the CIFOA, it is the
10 appropriate way to deal with changes to the regulations that surround forestry work from the EPA. The EPA is not engaging in that. The second is that a lot of the decisions being made seem to be quite capricious. The work's okay one day, it's not okay the next, then it's okay the day after that. It's making it really, really difficult also from a union perspective, I'll be really honest, because we are stuck trying to
15 assist members through a thousand tiny fights and constantly worried that something's going to get missed instead of being in a position to actually have a systematic, well thought out review of how that work is being performed.

And then the third thing I would say is that I do have some concerns. There are
20 processes within the EPA model that at various points require stakeholder ministers to be engaged, to make an active signed off decision, and I am concerned that some of the decisions we're seeing are starting to take a very lax view of that regulation. And so I do think there needs to be a genuine consideration of is that the right place for the regulation of forestry to sit because they're not coming at it with a comprehensive
25 view of how the industry works. They're not coming at it with a view that this isn't about good jobs or a good environment. We can and should have both. And so I think they've just shown themselves to not be the most capable of dealing with the serious issues in this industry. Sorry, Tony, I'm not sure if I cut you off.

MR CALLINAN: No, you put it much nicer than I would. I've got a much different
30 view on the EPA, like I've got to be completely honest, it's just emotive for them, right. If you let the timber mill decide how many trees we're cutting down, we'd have a whole lot more trees cut down. We don't do that. Why are we letting the environmentalists shut down an entire industry because there's a glider or a koala
35 somewhere, right? Should have a proper process to review.

We should make sure the animals are protected and we're only selecting the right
trees. We've got thorough processes but the EPA don't seem to act on that. They just
40 want to sort of go round behind closed doors and go, "Bang, here's a stop work order" and we're going to end up in court for the next six months while our members are sitting around, not knowing whether they've got a job or not. Should be a proper process, I think. It's just they've got very little credibility with me, put it that way.

MS RISOLDI: And on that, like really clear timeframes because I think particularly
45 on the Tallaganda State Forest issue that was in relation to some greater gliders that were found dead, there were rolling stoppages for forestry workers and contractors there for like six periods of 40 days and it got to the point where contractors didn't have enough money to stand up their workforces again and it's just not fair to the

workforce that come in to work every day, not knowing whether or not they're going to get like time in the forest. The consequences that that has going into a summer period about how we're managing forest, like if you're not managing a forest for a period of four months, what does that do to vegetation? What are the consequences for the broader community?

So I think sometimes there's this view that the EPA doesn't have impact, like, in all other spheres of life. I think it really does and the Tallaganda State Forest is a really great example of that. also as well from a work health and safety perspective, what we saw down there, which is reflected up north, is you get vigilante enviro groups that go and they try and implement the orders of the EPA and it falls on to our members to have to protect not only the environment that they're looking after but also themselves because there have been instances of violence that have broken out between workers on site and the environmentalist groups.

And I mean both unions are of the opinion that it really falls to the government to make sure that if orders are being put in place by the EPA, that workers are protected at their worksites. It's all well and good, like everyone has the right to protest, we're not having a crack at that, but the fact that our members who have got no formal training in deescalating these kinds of instances of violence, it falls to them to fix this and that's not on either.

MR DUNCAN: Yes, we've heard a bit of those sorts of views along the way. Thanks, Manu, and thanks, Alison, Tony. I think we've covered most of the things we need to cover. We might come back to you if we do need something further but we've got a pretty tight timeframe. I think probably one of the areas – we talked about regional but one of the areas we didn't cover here was Aboriginal sort of management and engagement but from what we've heard, both Parks and Forestry do a reasonable amount of that. But from our point of view, our work, we probably haven't covered it as much as we would've liked, just because of a time constraint. But there's opportunities there for further engagement and sort of involvement in the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal contractors in land management, we think.

MS RUDMAN: So I think there are definitely opportunities there. Again, there are some local land councils who have done some quite developed work on that and when I send through that research, I'm very happy to send through those details because we have been approached by chairs of land councils and that who are really concerned that they'll lose the right to engage in what for them is a cultural practice on their lands. And so very happy to link you up, I just wouldn't want to name them in a public forum.

MR DUNCAN: No, I understand.

MS RUDMAN: Yes.

MR DUNCAN: Alison, we'll treat it confidentially, that particular information. But that would be helpful actually to know who those people are, that would be really helpful.

MS RUDMAN: Yes.

5 **MR DUNCAN:** Because we have been trying to reach out but just in the short
timeframe it's just not practical.

MS RUDMAN: Yes, absolutely.

10 **MR DUNCAN:** All right. Look, really appreciate your time and we'll see where this
all gets to. It's a very complex issue. Very complex.

MR CALLINAN: Yes, thanks, Peter and thanks for the opportunity –

15 **MS RISOLDI:** Thank you.

MR CALLINAN: – to talk to you guys. Appreciate it.

MR DUNCAN: Okay. All the best.

20 **MR CALLINAN:** See you, Mick [cross-talk].

MR VEITCH: Thanks, Manu, Alison and Tony. Thanks.

25 **MR DUNCAN:** All the best. Bye.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED