

Lyn Orrego

Speaking notes for interview: NEFA with IFPanel via Zoom November 6 2024 4:00-4:30pm

Intro

My name is Lyn Orrego. I have been campaigning to protect public native forests for more than 35 years. I grew up in Sydney being taken to the Blue Mountains every school holidays.

I am a retired High School English teacher and was a Councillor on Nambucca Valley Council for 8 years.

Topic area 1: ecological sustainability and Today's logging style

I was the Nature Conservation Council representative on the Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) Committee during the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) during 1998-2000. I worked, and succeeded, in having the word "ecological" always inserted before "sustainable" so that it was "ecologically sustainable" forest management that we embraced and was required. This was carried forward into the legislation.

The term "sustainability" on its own is not accepted by myself, by scientists nor by the legislation as what we should aim for or achieve. It must be rephrased to "ecologically sustainable".

Logging can be said to be 'sustainable' if the cutting can continue without taking into account its negative impacts. However, it is only 'ecologically sustainable' if the forests themselves, their dependent flora and fauna, their water generating capacity and myriad other ecological values are also sustained, while that logging takes place.

Today's style of intensive logging is not ecologically sustainable. Today's industrial logging (which by the way is still misleadingly called "selective") uses giant plantation harvesters that need large clearfelled areas for their long-reaching mechanical arms to work in to even cut one tree and be able to swing it over to the pile for debarking, marking, loading.

These machines work on a front clearing as they go. This is extremely damaging. The canopy is taken, **the forest is taken**. Apart from destroying habitats of forest dependant species, it leaves vast areas of denuded forest floor exposed to the elements, drying out, **primed** for sediment transport into waterways, weed invasion and bushfire.

FC through their Harvest Plans acknowledge the impacts of this new type of logging by setting down prescriptions which try to get operators to limit the pie shape of the clearfell they need to operate in, to as small an arc as possible. This still is far too large and doesn't help anyway as it is repeated on the cutting front.

Once the canopy is gone, the light pours in and lantana beats any eucalypts coming back. Here on the north coast the lantana forms tall, dense, literally **impenetrable areas**. Somewhat like blackberries on the south coast I would imagine.

Under the thick lantana are hazardous skeletons of tree crowns and limbs. I once had to walk through one of these areas in Oakes SF that was taller than I was and literally could only advance a step or clamber at a time after cutting a slim crevice or tunnel to get through. It took hours and lots of scratches.

Most FC Harvest Plans show black patches and the legend says “Impenetrable areas”. These are maps of where regeneration has failed and lantana has exploded. They need to be used to guide rehabilitation efforts to bring back the native forest not continue logging and create more of them.

2. Topic Area: Env Values

So much taxpayer money, expertise, scientific reports validate that the environmental and community values of native forests far outweigh any timber values (which can be met from plantations especially softwood plantations) The list of these values is long but includes:

Homes for threatened fauna and flora – and not yet threatened forest fauna and flora

Water quality and quantity / whole of catchment health

Soil and landscape stability

Rainfall generation

Carbon sequestration

Climate change mitigation

Tourism and recreation destinations

Human health and mental health

All of these values increase over time as native forests recover, and are let grow old.

When I walk in an intact native forest I feel good. When I walk in a logged area, even logged a number of years prior, I do not. Its simple. Intact native forests are living cathedrals, they are alive and I connect to and am uplifted by that life when I am under the canopy.

Topic area 4. The Future - Transition fears

I have a terror of the government announcing a transition policy attesting to the protection of our public native forests when their intent is to keep, even ensure, logging continues, for every day of that transition time, even years. Terror, because the logging part of the policy will not be stated (except perhaps in some confidential form to the industry) and the public will believe the policy, believe the government cares about protecting public native forests. This is what has happened since March 2023 in the Great Koala National Park Assessment Area where I live and it is devastating to the forests, all their non-timber values (as outlined), communities and to the lost legacy opportunity for this government which, instead will be remembered as the government that didn't save the koala nor the forests they evolved with over millions of years. This is a danger for the forests and for the government but it can be turned around if logging of the public native forest estate is ended now.

We have more than enough quality government-generated data and evidence to warrant this. Bob Carr placed a moratorium over most of the CRA area while the process to determine the reserve additions was happening. This was a gesture that brought peace but it showed genuine intent. It was action , not just words. Saving our public native forests would save millions of dollars, save the koalas and many other threatened species and save this government's awful reputation out here in the regions. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns and requests.

I commend my personal written submission to you as well as that of the North East Forest Alliance and Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.