

Public submission

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Canberra Bushwalking Club

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Dear Independent Forestry Panel Secretariat

Please accept the Canberra Bushwalking Club's submission into the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW.

The Canberra Bushwalking Club (CBC) was founded in 1961 and with over 420 members, represents an active cross-section of the local community that is dedicated to preserving beauty and diversity of our natural environment and is committed to working across all layers of government to provide a voice on issues affecting bushwalkers.

Australian native forests play a critical role in our environment from both an ecological and social perspective.

Many of the CBC activities take place in native forests within regional NSW and we feel that it is important for all our futures that these are preserved.

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

- Current forestry operations are making a significant contribution to escalating rates of habitat and species loss in NSW.
- Moreover, forestry practices cause unnecessary and damaging disturbance to forest ecosystems. Forestry activities go far beyond the removal of vegetation, and include roading, modification of water courses and exposure and disruption of soil structure. The adverse environmental impacts of these activities range from habitat loss, reduced water quality, landscape scale habitat fragmentation, introduction of pests and weeds to reduced capacity for carbon sequestration and storage. None of these adverse impacts can be considered 'sustainable'.
- The only viable option for a sustainable forestry industry is one based solely on plantations. All forms of forestry activities should stop in public native forests.

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

- The decline of a multitude of forest dependant species, including threatened species such as the Koala, Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider, can be attributed to past and current forestry practices. Even if future practices are improved, they inevitably involve the modification or destruction of existing forest habitat, an outcome we cannot afford.

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

- The vast majority of wood products can be sourced from plantations, including for uses where hardwoods are preferred. Continued access to relatively cheap hardwood products is no justification for the loss of native forests, especially as alternative products are already available for challenging applications such as wharfing, power poles and propping.
- The low level of demand for boutique purposes such as fixtures, furniture and veneers can be met through recycling and appropriately stocked plantations.

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

- The CBC preference is that no logging be permitted in any native forests, regardless of tenure.
- CBC strongly supports a transition to complete reliance on softwood and hardwood plantations for the supply of wood products in NSW. CBC also supports the expansion of the plantation sector provided that new plantations are established on previously degraded lands rather than by clearing native vegetation.

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 highest potential public purposes of public native forests are biodiversity conservation, the provision of ecosystem services such as clean water and air and maximising the capacity of nature systems to capture and store atmospheric carbon.
- Areas of State Forests that contain legitimately established plantations should be retained as State Forests under the management of the Department of Primary Industries.
- The major and repeated breaches of environment regulations by NSW Forestry Corporation model demonstrates that it provides a totally unacceptable model for administering these public assets.

- All State Forests that contain native forests should be gazetted as National Park, Nature Reserve, State Conservation Area or Regional Park under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

- CBC supports these reserves being formally declared for Aboriginal joint management under the relevant provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

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 scientific consensus is that ecologically intact natural systems have a critical role to play in sequestering and storing atmospheric carbon, the primary driving of climate change. An intact, well-protected NSW forest estate has a major role to play in addressing these threats to our collective future.

- While recognising the importance of carbon capture and storage, the lack of integrity in current carbon and biodiversity trading schemes inspires little confidence that such schemes should be expanded to include public native forests. Moreover, it would be entirely self-defeating if credits generated through the protection of public native forests were used to enable excess emissions by unrelated industries.