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

The current forestry operations where they are based on native forests have predominantly been unsustainable for decades. This is best demonstrated when rainforest logging was ceased in the early 1980s due to a diminishing resource and the cost to government which far outweighed the benefits to the community. The existing forestry operations based on native forests have been unsustainable for at least two decades with infringements on standards set in Environmental Protection Agency licence agreements of the 1990s with subsequent relaxations to permit continued logging in an unsustainable way.

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

Forestry operations based on native forests are encroaching on the remnants of once larger native forests. It is difficult to find the exact details on the impacts on the NSW natural biodiversity due to forestry operations both within the state-owned estate and on private lands. It is known that over 50% of NSW native forests have been lost due to varied forms of clearing. Some ecosystems theoretically have been protected within national parks estate although these are continuously being threatened by lobbying to permit commercial projects with this estate and hence need continued vigilance by the community to ensure the continued protection of these ecosystems. Forestry environmental protection activities have been downgraded over recent years with increased logging on steep slopes, larger coupes and a lack of respect for riparian zones. The result is a further degradation of the environmental values of state's forests as pressure continues to be applied to encroach into less sustainable areas. It has been found continued logging across NSW is having impacts on 150 threatened due to 50% or less of their intact habitat remaining. The current situation of native forest logging is analogous to that of the NSW rainforest logging which ceased 40 years ago, partially to protect the remnant forests of which there was less than 5% remaining. The same logic must be applied to the remaining native forests to ensure the environmental values of the remnant forests are maintained.

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

There is an ever increasing demand for timber products in Australia yet It is my understanding that little of the timber from native forests is used in housing construction with most of the framing material being Australian structural plantation pine. The use of a third of native forest production (2021-22 government figure) for woodchips does not seem to be the optimum use of a diminishing resource. With 46% of Australia's timber product export being woodchips it is heartening to understand that the NSW contribution was down, although mainly due to the impact of other than commercial reasons. Given the demand for timber within Australian and the import of more timber products than Australia exports the retention of out saw log timber should be paramount. Approximately 14% of timber harvested is native forest. The phasing out of the native forest timber industry is occurring naturally and should not be supported by government

just to sustain local employment at the expense of the environmental values of our remnant native forests.

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

Softwood and hardwood plantations are essential to ensure the continued supply of timber products. The cause of the decline of a timber industry based on natural native forests has occurred because there has been a lack of action to ensure the timber 'crop' has kept pace with its harvest. No other agricultural industry would consider harvesting at a rate exceeding its rate of planting of new crop stock. The timber industry has done this for decades and now questions why it cannot continue at its traditional rate which has proven not to be possible causing the current industry crisis. The 'farming' of native species has traditionally not been successful. Such examples are blackbutt and hoop pine planted decades ago in Whian Whian State Forest that were never large enough to harvest prior to the transfer of the forest to national park. The traditional method of growing native species in state forests has resulted in slow growth rates which have not kept pace with logging rates. With the majority of timber production now coming from soft wood plantations, if a requirement for hardwood species which are generally slower growing, is required the industry must become smarter in how it approaches hardwood plantations so that growth rates can be allowed to match the timber need.

Topic 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

With many of the state forests now being logged in an unsustainable manner from both a timber production and the protection of ecosystems, dramatic changes will be required to maintain both. There may be some state forests that can continue with plantation hardwood production while following an unbiased ecological assessment, the balance should be managed for the protection of the natural environment ensuring the sustainability of native species of plant and animal. There is little proof that the two can be managed in the same space. There have been too many instances of noncompliance in management practices with the resulting penalties applied for the existing management to continue. The environmental constraints applied are generally inadequate to maintain the natural aspects of the forests resulting in the endangerment of the viability of many species of plant and animal. The industry has demonstrated over decades that it cannot be trusted to comply with acceptable standards. This is probably due to the decline in the resource due to the rate of logging of native forests being in excess of the tree growth rate, resulting in the industry continually wanting to encroach on areas that should be protected, increasing coupe sizes and generally needing to not perform in an optimum manner to maintain profitability.

As has occurred in many jurisdictions in Australia and internationally, native forest logging must cease. Strict adherence to logging in waterway riparian zones and on steep slopes must occur. Logging in ecological important areas must be prohibited. This may result in many existing State Forest areas not being suitable for forestry practices and hence the management of such areas should be transferred from the Forest Corporation.

Topic 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

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

Climate change will influence a number of natural disturbances that threaten forest health. These include insect outbreaks, invasive species, wildfires, and storms. Some disturbances, like a wildfire, take place quickly. Others, like changes in animal or plant populations, happen over decades to centuries. The change in climate as the belief that tropical conditions will move south, the weather become warmer and weather extremes more frequent and regular will impact on the existing forest types and the viability over an extended period of some forest types. If the predicted dryer and warmer conditions occur, then many forests will become less productive as growth rates decrease. This is likely in the exotic pine plantations. Some of their effects may be temporary, allowing a forest to recover. In other cases, a forest may suffer lasting impacts. The increase in carbon dioxide may be beneficial to tree growth.

The known ability of forests to sequester carbon will decline if logging rates continue at current levels as the area, density and size of mature trees reduces. Hence, the stored carbon in the existing state forests will decrease thereby reducing the value of these forests in reducing the impacts of climate change.

With the current forestry management, the biodiversity of a native forest is reduced and the objective of the management is to maximise the production of timber species trees. Given that on completion of logging in an area the area is burnt and the growth of timber trees encouraged to the detriment of other species. The resultant forest is an even growth type of the preferred species with a loss of diversity for plants and hence the fauna that relies on a diverse ecosystem. The burning of forests after logging has an immediate negative impact on the release and hence increase of carbon into the atmosphere. The subsequent growth of the new forest only redeems the carbon over decades especially in native forests that tend to be slower growing than exotic softwood forests.

Climate change is expected to affect forests' ability to provide key ecosystem services, including carbon storage, clean air, water supply, recreation, and wildlife habitat. One of the most important ecosystem services forests provide is absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in roots, soil, aboveground tree growth, and the forest floor.

Climate change can affect carbon storage in several ways. For example, it may bring more frequent and intense rainfall to some regions. Heavy precipitation and flooding can erode forest soils and cause stored carbon to be released back into the atmosphere. Damage to forests from more wildfires, insects, and disease outbreaks can also release stored carbon.

Forest watersheds also moderate extreme weather impacts, such as flooding from heavy rainfall, on downstream communities and ecosystems.

Droughts, wildfires, rising temperatures, and reduced rainfall due to climate change can all limit a watershed's ability to provide these services. For example, more frequent or severe droughts could reduce streamflow in some forests. Less streamflow means less water may be available for people to use. Reduced streamflow can also affect some plants and animals, such as fish that migrate to certain streams to reproduce.

Your attention is drawn to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences summary Potential effects of climate change on forests and forestry in Australia which while over a decade old highlights many of the issues.