

Public submission

SUE (SUSAN) PRESTON

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Forests are commonly referred to as the lungs of the world. Old growth native forests are especially so. Our Australian old growth native forests not only act as vital carbon sinks, they are a source of food and dwelling places for birds and animals unique to Australia and are places that inspire awe and wonder in people.

Even if they were not special, magnificent and worthy of being preserved in their own right, the role they perform in the ecosystem and the biodiversity they preserve should be more than sufficient reason for their protection and preservation. Their significance to Australia's first people and place in their culture, and their importance as places for people to enjoy and learn from also underlines their significance. Our shared planet is already suffering hugely from the effects of climate change. Further loss of native forests can only exacerbate this. Once we have cut down our old growth native forests, they will be gone, taking into extinction the flora and fauna that co-exist with them.

Science has already shown that our native forests are important for preserving water quality and regulating the flow of water, lessening the impacts of flooding and erosion. This is yet another reason for preserving them. Science has also shown that logging in native forests releases very significant quantities of carbon into the atmosphere, magnifying the deleterious effect of climate change. Preserving native forests and allowing them to grow and thrive can only help to mitigate against some of the worst effects.

Australia already has plantations of sustainably grown trees for timber. Turning resources towards improving and extending these will be better for the environment, provide sustainable employment and leave the native forests to remain key habitats for our flora and fauna, drawcards for tourism and preserve their cultural significance.

As I am sure is clear, my plea to the Forestry Industry Action Panel is to stop logging our native forests, to preserve and fully protect the amazing, unique and fragile asset that is there for us all to enjoy and to put its focus on utilising timber from sustainable plantations.

I belong to a wildlife rehabilitation group, in my case working with Grey-headed and Black Flying-foxes. The effects of habitat destruction and climate change on these keystone native species is already very clear and their survival is threatened. Native forests are essential for their preservation, just as they are essential for the pollination and long distance seed dispersal that is their niche in the ecosystem. It takes years for trees to flower and fruit and provide food for the insects, birds and animals that rely on native forests. For the sake of the planet, for the health and well-being of us all, it is important that logging in our native forests ceases and that the timber industry turns its attention to sustainable plantations of hardwood and softwood timber.

Sue Preston