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

In every state in Australia native forests are diminishing. New South Wales is no exception. Continuing to log our native forests reduce them. While there are often claims that the native forest is being replanted after being logged, the extent of native forest area continues to diminish. Forests replanted after logging do not have the same diversity of vegetation and tree species. There is a way to ensure a sustainable forest industry. Plantation timber planted on NOT FOREST AREAS can satisfy the state's, and the nationals' timber requirements. Plantations work. Twenty-five percent of the wood harvested in the world currently comes from plantations, while plantations represent only three percent of the world's forested land. Plantation timber is also more attractive for many timber uses; it's all the same age, grown in the same conditions and it makes a much more consistent product for pulp and paper production than the varied timber of a healthy mixed native forest. A four-fold increase in plantation production worldwide could allow greater protection for native forests, which are all in decline.

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

Australia is already a world-leader in the extinction business, we're in fourth place after the U.S., French Polynesia and Mauritius. With critically endangered species we're on the podium, coming third. Unless we take serious steps now we'll lose even more of our endemic species. And these are animals and plants which have become totally extinct. We also have lost of animals which are now locally extinct in areas once considered part of their range. Retaining all of our existing native forests is an important step in trying to save those critically and threatened species. As a non-indigenous Australian I can't comment in a knowledgeable way about the impacts of continued timber-cutting in native forests on indigenous cultures. As a keen bushwalker I have seen how continued native forest logging has diminished the bush, and it is depressing on long walks to where (yet again) logging has cut into what was previously a mature forest. Mature forests are also better at sequestering carbon than newly planted trees. While we should be planting more trees for many reasons.

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

As mentioned before 25% of the wood harvested in the world currently comes from plantations, while plantations represent only three percent of the world's forested land. Plantation timber is also more attractive for many timber uses; it's all the same age, grown in the same conditions and it makes a much more consistent timber product and is preferred for pulp and paper production than the varied timber of a healthy mixed native forest. A four-fold increase in plantation production worldwide could allow greater protection for native forests, which are all in decline.

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

Plantations are THE ONLY way to produce wood products now and into the future. And these plantations should not be displacing existing forests (that is, existing native forests should not be logged and replaced by plantations). Plantation should be planted on current unforested agricultural land, expanding the range of forested areas within the state, rather than replacing existing native forests.

The extent of timber plantations should ensure that it can supply all structural timber needs into the future. This is possible and it must be the aim of anyone seeking to continue a forestry industry.

I have read complaints and statement that stopping native forest logging would risk jobs within the forestry industry, but this is not true. If the forestry industry is properly placed onto a seriously sustainable footing, then that can only come from plantation timber

When Labour Governments moved to protect native forest in the past “Hawke, Wran, Gallop, Kirner, Beattie, Carr” they knew that they were protecting irreplaceable natural values and resources. Even as late as the early 2000s however, the role of forests in climate change mitigation was little known. It was certainly not a matter of any significance in public debate. More lately it has become clear that the continued logging of Australia’s native forest is also a flat out disaster for climate change policy. A kind of vandalism, it uproots and smashes intact ecosystems, destroys habitat, kills wildlife on the spot and leaves half the logged biomass on the forest floor. It releases very large amounts of the carbon that the forest had been storing above and below the ground into the atmosphere.

Moreover, a forest logged in this way will take centuries to regrow. It cannot replenish the carbon it had stored in time to make a contribution to carbon net zero “by 2050”.

The economics of native forestry is senseless. The overwhelming proportion of sawn wood in Australia already comes from more efficient timber plantations. There are examples and studies to show that forest ecosystem services “intact wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, clean air and water and recreational opportunities” have a higher value than logging. Yet State Forestry agencies in New South Wales and Tasmania are still heavily subsidised to support the production of low value wood chips, paper pulp and firewood. Already 90% of higher value wood is derived from plantations and with a bit of investment in innovative processing and recycling, the tiny proportion of high value appearance grade native timber could also be produced without the need to log native forests.

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

Not simply designated “State Forests”, but all of Australia’s forests are some of the most biodiverse in the world. They are home to more than 18,000 plant species and more than 2,000 animal species.

Logging destroys the habitat of our forest fauna, including removing food sources and nesting sites like the naturally formed hollows that are abundant in old trees. The science shows that logging reduces biodiversity and threatens some species with extinction.

If we want to prevent the Sixth Mass Extinction from occurring in Australia, forest protection must be a priority.

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

Modelling of possible pathways for Australia to meet the 2050 emissions reduction targets of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change carried out by the authoritative organisation Climateworks, shows that Australia needs to reduce emissions from buildings, transport, industry, energy and agriculture by 56-68 percent by 2035 compared with 2005 levels. With determined action this could be done.

But the abatement of future emissions will not be enough.

If Australia is to achieve its existing greenhouse reduction targets it will also need to remove unprecedented amounts of carbon from the atmosphere – to counterbalance hard to abate emissions from sources such as cement production, long-haul trucking, aeroplanes and some agriculture. Ending native forest logging could make a significant contribution to achieving this imperative.

On the one hand the Climateworks modellers are clear that necessary targets cannot be reached without carbon removals. On the other hand they acknowledge that there is no effective technology for carbon removal from the atmosphere: there will be none for decades yet, if ever. So we need to be clear about a common sense proposition. Carbon can only be removed from the atmosphere and stored by natural systems: there is no present alternative. The conservation and restoration of nature across the landscape is an integral part of effective climate change abatement. And carbon is removed and kept out of the atmosphere best by mature natural forests with large numbers of big old trees. Older forests store carbon at far lower risk than younger forests. Australia's tall forests are among the most carbon rich in the world.

New methods of environmental accounting are available which better reflect the economic value of forest ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and retention, on State and Commonwealth balance sheets. As logging stops, greenhouse gas benefits show up in the national accounts as a matter of course under this system. Abatement is cheap and efficient.

But forests have not lost their essential role in the conservation of species – far from it. In the early 2000s it was well understood that forest protection would benefit the populations of the many native species then known to be in decline. Today we live in the aftermath of the climate change-induced mega bushfires of 2019/20 – an epochal event that incinerated billions of animals and accelerated the risk of the actual extinction of a range of species, koalas and gliders among them.

The main thing holding back a collapse of biodiversity and ecological processes that sustain the forest environment are the relatively small, intact and still resilient forested areas that remain unlogged or lightly logged, unburned or lightly burnt. These refuges are keeping the forest landscape alive. If they are logged a wave of extinctions will likely follow.

The Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments have adopted “zero extinction” environmental policies. On the other hand, the native forest industry depends for its existence upon regulatory exceptions and evasions. It is exempted from the threatened species protection provisions of the Federal environment legislation. As a practical matter, everyday native forestry operations can rarely survive the rigorous application of existing harvesting rules.

The continuing exemptions and the policy of “zero extinctions” are incompatible and it is not altogether easy to understand why Labor Governments allow this contradictory situation to persist in most of the eastern States. When the industry was formally ended last year in Western Australia and Victoria there was no significant public reaction at all.