

Public submission

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Submission ID: 205045

Organisation:	N/A
Location:	New South Wales
Supporting materials uploaded:	Attached overleaf

Submission date: 10/13/2024 5:45:35 PM

Topic 1 Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Sustainability is central to everything our business does because without healthy forests on private land we would not have a business.

While private land native forestry is different to most other hardwood forestry businesses in NSW, it is highly regulated. The Local Land Services work closely with the EPA to manage everything we do.

All of our harvesting operations are controlled by the Local Land Services and the EPA.

Before any harvesting begins on private land, the land owner has to submit PVP and PNF forestry plans.

Then the Local Land Services visit and look at the site, to make sure any Aboriginal heritage sites, endangered species such as koalas and any creeks and so on are placed into exclusion zones that our harvesting teams do not go near.

If the PVP and PNF plans are approved, we are given GPS data that marks out the restricted and excluded areas for that job and all of our operators have this data before they start work. This means what needs to be protected is protected.

While we are working on differently owned land for each job, the focus is still very much on sustainable operations. If someone does make a mistake while working on private land, the EPA and LLS will prosecute them for sure and the penalties are high.

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

It is really important to protect animals, birds, plants, streams and Aboriginal cultural heritage sites wherever they are.

Do no harm is the company motto that our people are trained to take to work with them every day. If in doubt, our staff will not proceed until they have checked with our office. If necessary, we will ask the LLS to advise us on what to do.

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

Located just outside Bulahdelah, Bluebat Sawmilling specialises in harvesting and milling hardwood grown on private property and assisting our customers with required documents and the sales and marketing of the sawn hardwood products.

Our business has been operating for more than 30 years. We work in partnership with other parts of the Hurford Group, who own part of Bluebat, to supply particular types of timber, depending on what we are harvesting at a particular time.

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50% of our timber goes to other parts of the Hurford Group and the remainder goes to Sydney and South Australia.

We have 3 full time staff and another 4 casual employees. Around half of our staff live locally and the others are commuting to work from [REDACTED]

Our staff have a variety of skills, including timber identification and grading, marketing and sales, the operation of harvesting machinery, machinery maintenance and forklift operations.

Most of our staff have young families and some of them have mortgages to pay. Work in the country is hard to come by. What would our staff do if they lost their jobs? I don't know? It would be extremely difficult for them to find another job locally and these are motivated people who have worked hard all their lives.

Bluebat support local businesses as much as we can. 70% to 80% of our operating costs are paid to local businesses, around \$100,000 each year. The only time we do go shopping out of town is when we cannot get what we need in Bulahdelah. We buy machinery parts and specialised services for our equipment from outside the local area if we cannot find it locally.

We would like to upgrade our plant and equipment and we will do so when there is a little more certainty about the future of the industry in NSW. We are not confident about the future of the industry. Everything seems to be up in the air. We need certainty around long term access to resources before we can invest. This is an uncertain business environment we are operating in today.

Bluebat sponsors the local agricultural show, the timber and oyster festival and we donate to the special children's Christmas party each year. We also support the Bulahdelah Fishing Club.

For our business, the demand for hardwood timber for new homes being built in Sydney and Newcastle has been increasing noticeably. Especially in the past couple of years.

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

At the moment forestry on private property is fairly small in our area but I think this type of forestry has the potential to grow in the future. However huge pressure will be placed on private forestry if state forests are closed off. We do selective harvesting, which means we choose which individual trees to harvest and 30 to 40 years later that place is regrown and we can usually go back and harvest again.

In different areas of the state the trees have different growth rates depending on the tree species, the soil types, the amount of rain and average temperatures but the way we operate is sustainable and we think properly regulated.

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

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We are always looking for, open to and thinking about ways of improving private native forestry operations.