Independent Forestry Panel

Public submission

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

Your submission

1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

The sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW hinges on maintaining a balance between economic, environmental, and social needs. The NSW forestry industry contributes $2.9 billion annually and employs over 8,900 people directly. While highly regulated, with public native forests undergoing selective harvesting, meaning no clear felling occurs, only 0.5% of the forest is harvested annually. Transitioning to hardwood plantations, while discussed, is considered economically unfeasible at present, due to the ecomonic limitations. Expanding the diversity of timber sources while sustainably harvesting native forests will also be essential for long-term sustainability.

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

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NSW forests are home to numerous threatened species, including the koala. Current forest management practices, including planned and supervised selective harvesting, aim to minimize the impact on koala populations by protecting critical habitats such as riparian zones, rainforests, and old-growth forests. These operations comply with existing regulations designed to balance environmental preservation with sustainable industry practices. Aboriginal cultural heritage values are increasingly integrated into forest management, with initiatives promoting Aboriginal-led models. These efforts ensure that forests continue to support both biodiversity and the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities. For decades Coffs Harbour Hardwoods and the forestry industry has supplied durable class 1 species like Ironbark, Grey Gum, Tallowwood, and White Mahogany, which are crucial for maintaining heritage structures such as bridges like the Pyrmont Bridge in Darling Harbour Sydney also wharfs, and buildings. This long-standing support of the heritage industry highlights the economic and cultural importance of sustainable forestry practices.

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

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

The demand for timber products in NSW is driven by several key sectors, including housing, construction, mining, transport, and retail. Durable hardwood timbers are particularly significant, as they are essential for utility poles, marine piles, and high-quality housing products. Electrical authorities are reliant on timber poles which are in high demand at the momement with the ‘electrification’ of our ecomony. Coffs Harbour Hardwoods has serval major contracts to supply

utility poles in NSW and Victoria. The North Coast of NSW serves as a vital resource area for these hardwoods, known for their strength and durability. With a growing population and

increased urbanization, the housing market continues to see significant demand for timber, which is valued for its versatility, sustainability, and aesthetic appeal. In the construction industry, timber is crucial for framing, flooring, and finishing materials. Its use is supported by an emphasis on sustainable building practices, with many developers opting for responsibly sourced timber to reduce their environmental footprint. The mining sector relies on hardwood timber products for structural support, while the transport industry uses timber for pallets, crates, and other shipping materials. In retail, timber is favored for furniture and display units, contributing to an eco-friendly image. However, a reduction in native forestry operations would heavily impact the availability of hardwood timber, which is essential for infrastructure, transport, and mining. As these sectors expand, the demand for sustainably sourced durable hardwood timbers will likely increase, highlighting the importance of responsible forestry practices that ensure a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. I invite anyone on the panel to come and visit our site at Glenreagh NSW to view how the wonderful timber products are manufactured from telegraph poles, to flooring and decking.

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

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

The future of softwood and hardwood plantations has some place in the sustainable timber supply in NSW. However, while plantations are often considered a potential solution for meeting growing timber demand, they present significant limitations. Softwood plantations can provide supply for construction and housing, while hardwood plantations are very limited in supplying high-quality products such as telegraph poles, marine piles, bridge girders, flooring, and decking. These products have better quality coming out of native forest harvesting. Plantations alone will not suffice to meet the timber industry's needs. The industry must be geographically diverse, as this supports a range of businesses and communities while allowing certain sites to regenerate. Replanting efforts are essential in this context, helping to restore harvested areas, maintain ecosystem health, and ensure a continuous supply of timber. However, plantations are limited by factors such as land availability, low financial returns, and the long growth cycles required to produce commercial timber. Private Native Forestry (PNF) is seen as crucial for meeting hardwood timber demand but cannot replace public native forests. PNF enables landowners to manage their forests sustainably while contributing to local economies. PNF practices focus on maintaining biodiversity and ecological health, ensuring that native forests can be harvested responsibly. This approach complements plantation forestry by providing a diverse range of timber products and enhancing the resilience of forest ecosystems.

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

5. The role of State Forests in maximising the of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes and options for diverse management, including Aboriginal forest management models

State Forests play a critical role in balancing environmental, economic, and social outcomes in NSW. These forests provide a sustainable source of timber while contributing to biodiversity conservation, water quality management, and carbon storage. State Forests also support local communities and industries, offering employment opportunities and contributing to the economy through timber production, tourism, and recreation. Coffs Harbour Hardwoods alone employees 100 people. In addition to timber production, State Forests deliver a wide range of environmental benefits. They protect critical habitats for wildlife, including threatened species, and safeguard vital ecosystems like riparian zones and old-growth forests. Responsible forest management ensures that biodiversity is maintained while providing resources for economic development. The social value of State Forests is equally important. They offer recreational spaces for the public, contributing to health and well-being, while also being a source of cultural heritage, particularly for Aboriginal communities. Increasingly, Aboriginal forest management models are being considered as part of diverse management strategies. These models incorporate traditional knowledge and practices, offering a holistic approach to forest management that aligns with long-standing cultural values while promoting sustainable land stewardship. Options for diverse management of State Forests could include integrating Aboriginal-led forest management models, expanding community involvement, and enhancing conservation efforts in areas of high ecological significance. These approaches would enable a balanced focus on delivering environmental, economic, and social outcomes, ensuring that State Forests remain valuable resources for current and future generations. State Forests provide timber to the timber industry whom are a critical employer in regional areas, providing stability to local economies

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
Forestry management in NSW is aligned with ecological sustainability, making vital contributions to carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection. Forests act as carbon sinks, capturing and storing carbon dioxide, and support biodiversity by preserving diverse ecosystems and habitats. While the role of forests and sustainably harvested wood products in mitigating climate change through carbon markets is recognized, there remains an opportunity for greater acknowledgment and integration of these benefits to fully leverage their impact on climate goals. Sustainable forestry practices are critical in reducing the risks associated with climate change, particularly the threat of catastrophic bushfires. Techniques such as thinning and ecological burning help to manage fuel loads, decrease fire severity, and protect surrounding ecosystems. These practices also maintain the ecological health of forests, enhancing their resilience to climate-related stresses like droughts and extreme weather events. By mitigating bushfire risk, sustainable management not only protects biodiversity but also ensures forests continue to serve as robust