

NAOMI SHINE

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

Native forest logging as it has been conducted for decades is not in any way sustainable and is devastating the functioning of our water catchments, first nations cultural connections, habitat for wildlife, landscapes resilience to fire, pharmacological potential, and the wonder and beauty of relatively intact ecosystems. Sustainable means to me, that it's possible to continue doing something over a long period or indefinitely and the resources remain available. 400 year old trees need to remain standing and more trees need to be on the trajectory of getting to 400 years old and beyond.

The forests of the east coast of Australia are incredibly biodiverse and can be referred to as 'biodiversity hotspots' and 'globally significant forest'. The best use of these incredible assets are for the education, leisure, cultural and healing activities of humans and continuing habitat for unique and wonderful wildlife.

I have had the great fortune of surveying and visiting forests with ecologists, botanists, environmental scientists and other experts. I've seen threatened fauna such as Glossy Black Cockatoos, Koala, Greater Gliders, Marbled frogmouth as well as threatened flora. I value these experiences in State Forests as the highlight of my life as a citizen scientist and as a person. But I can see that when logging has occurred in an area, there is no habitat left for these threatened species, particularly those reliant on tree hollows, and that the area is radically altered for plants as well. I can see how current logging practices make forests more fire prone and more prone to catastrophically hot fires, as the canopy is gone or broken up, drying everything out.

I participated in surveying forests after the 2019-2020 bushfires and so witnessed something of what happens in different fires. A cooler, low level burn swept through Royal Camp State forest, but it was still hot enough to cause the unburnt leaves higher in the canopy to shrivel and fall from the trees in the weeks following the fires. The surviving Koalas in that particular population would have been very hungry and would have only survived in unburnt areas nearby. We put out water troughs for Koala and other wildlife there. Near Rappville in Northern NSW, past the sawmill, we saw a large area that had been burned catastrophically. I saw trees that had fallen in the blaze, gone from being alive to lying on the ash covered soil, in the shape of a tree trunk, but fully turned to ash, like a cigar left to burn in an ashtray. I could touch the carcass of the tree and it crumbled softly between my fingers. I was dumbstruck; looked like a tree, but was now soft, silty ash. I saw a number of trees that exploded in half, probably due to an area of pooled gum in the trunk, the lower half of the trunk still standing, the other parts of the tree above that point, flung afar and wholly burned. There was not a tree, plant, animal, or microbe left alive that I could see. Towards the edge of this catastrophically burned area, we found a couple of Koalas that had died in the fire. The forest was eerily quiet.

It is worth ceasing native forest logging and focussing on plantations in the interests of protecting landscapes, forests and people, as much as possible from such destruction. It is not sustainable, nor acceptable, to make state forests more prone to fire for decades to come as current logging practices do.

The capacity of the logging machines is worrisome to me. The machines are incredibly engineered and one logging machine can do a quick, efficient job at turning a standing tree into a log ready for the truck and some 'waste'. The machines are good at laying waste to large areas of forest in a short space of time. To me, this is akin to mega-trawlers, fishing whole schools of fish out of the oceans and so overfishing and depleting fish stocks rapidly. The logging machines are too good and are part of the 'extinction logging' problem. Such machines are suited to plantations, but not native forests that form part of the web of life including wetlands, hollow and seed bearing trees, and shade and protection for water catchments. Healthy mature forests provide ecosystem services that result in rain, water in catchments and clean air for us all.

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

Healthy and unlogged forests are critical to the whole environment and both First Nations and non-First Nations culture and identity

Forests, particularly healthy mature forests, generate rainfall, cool the landscape and clean the air
150 threatened species in NSW are directly impacted by logging native forests

Mature and unlogged native forests are critical for pollinators and play a key role in pollination across the landscape, both inside and outside of forests

Native forests provide recreation and improved health outcomes to locals and visitors alike and are a source of community pride and connection to place

Native forests in NSW hold significant cultural and spiritual value for First Nations people

First Nations people and communities have ongoing connection to native forests and forest landscapes are an integral part of cultural practice and knowledge

There are 269 nationally listed threatened species in NSW and the landscape scale significance of native forests means that native forest logging compromises many ecosystems and habitats throughout NSW

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

Logging in native forests accounted for only 9% of the total log production in Australia in the year 2023. Native forest logging contributes only 2.4 million of the total 25 million cubic metres for that year

Half of the logs taken from native forests in 2023 were turned into woodchip and exported

Hardwood logs taken from plantations made up 8.5 million cubic metres, and just 8% of these logs were saw and veneer logs. 87% of hardwood plantation logs were exported as wood chips

Hardwood sourced from native forests or plantations are no longer necessary for any of the uses identified in this section

Sawn and treated softwood logs and composite timber products made from softwoods can substitute for all current uses for native forest and plantation hardwoods

The market and demand for native forests is declining rapidly, the recent example of Essential Energy moving away from power poles harvested from native forests is just one example

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

Plantations already provide 91% of Australia's log production

A higher proportion of harvested logs from plantations should be prioritised as saw and veneer logs, rather than exporting them as wood chips

Subsidising the logging of public native forests by the Forestry Corporation is non-competitive and distorts the market away from the more profitable softwood plantation industry

High-end and luxury native hardwood products should only be selectively harvested on private land and under strict conditions

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

Native forests that are not logged have real and tangible benefits to the entire ecology and economy of NSW

Native state forests cover an area of 2 million hectares in NSW and impact on a diverse set of living conditions for many towns, from water quality in reservoirs, to greater tourism industry opportunities, and carbon storage and abatement

The native forest hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation operates at a loss that runs into tens of millions of dollars, at the expense of the NSW public. It also additionally receives tens of millions of dollars in regular equity injections

The people of NSW should not be paying millions of dollars to destroy the biodiversity of our own state and critical habitat for threatened species

Public native forests have a much higher economic value when they are allowed to function naturally and without logging

First Nations Ranger Programs have been hugely successful at managing the recovery and health of native forests. Programs like the Githabul Rangers have shown how First Nations knowledge and management can restore the natural and critical function of forests in the landscape

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

Native forest logging in NSW is estimated to release 3.6 million tonnes of carbon every year
Ending native forest logging would be the equivalent to removing 840 thousand cars from the roads per year

Logging in a native forest reduces the amount of stored carbon by more than half of the original value

Ending native forest logging will allow previously logged forests to regain lost carbon and make a significant contribution to meeting our emissions targets

Climate change is driving increased risks for forest health and continued logging in native forests is exacerbating that risk

Forests that have not been logged are more resilient to the changing climate and catastrophic fires that are occurring as a consequence