

Summary.

Climate change is likely to affect the forests of south-eastern NSW. A major factor in lowering the forests' ability to adapt to climate change is any disturbance which decreases the biodiversity of their ecosystems.

Submission

One of the greatest threats to biodiversity in south-eastern NSW is the continued logging of native forests. Undisturbed native forest ecosystems, or those that have wholly or partly recovered from past logging, have a larger range of habitat and consequently plant and animal species than that found in "managed forests". They are therefore more resilient to changes brought about by climate change, such as drought and fire.

A recent article in *Landscape* Vol 24 no. 2 discusses the significance of coarse woody debris upon biodiversity on the forest floor. The removal of this component of the forest ecosystem by logging prescription practices is just one of the processes leading to huge losses in biodiversity. Another in the south-east is the result of post-harvest fires causing a drift in eucalypt species away from the slower growing ones such as woollybutt and mountain grey gum (both favoured by koalas) towards the faster growing and more fire-resistant silvertop ash (favoured for woodchips).

Even when the logging is classed as "thinning", the removal of the older trees delays by decades the development of tree hollows, a major source of bird and mammal diversity. These develop in most eucalypts only after 200 or more years' growth.

Of particular concern to this Branch is the threat to oyster growers from imminent logging in the catchment of Wapengo Lake, namely Murrah State Forest. This lake is currently famous for its pristine waters and the quality of its oysters. Assurances from Forests NSW that their prescriptions include erosion control measures become meaningless in the event of runoff from storms that are predicted to become more intense under the influence of climate change.

A solution to managing the effects of climate change on our native forests would be to remove logging from them and to rely on plantation eucalypts for hardwood.