

Virginia Young

National Liaison Officer & Director
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Dear Virginia

Re: Upper House inquiry on the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry




I write on behalf of the Great Eastern Ranges (GER) connectivity conservation initiative to express certain observations and concerns we hope you might make to the Upper House hearings on the future of the forest industry this week.

Specifically, we encourage you to highlight the impacts that continued forestry practices have on volunteers involved in restoring habitat for wildlife in the aftermath of the 2019-2020 Black Summer megafires. A diverse and widespread network of community volunteers has been working tirelessly since early 2020 to protect wildlife and restore the habitat on which they rely. Community volunteers number of the thousands and their work ranges from rescuing and caring for injured wildlife to restoring the habitats to which they are ultimately returned. Their interests must be taken into consideration alongside others regarding the future of forest industry in eastern Australia.

GER was established by the NSW Government in 2007 to link and restore protected areas and other natural lands across eastern Australia. The lands we work in comprise a complex network of naturally interconnected habitats span 3,600 kilometers along the length of the east coast – an area referred to as the 'GER Corridor' (<https://ger.org.au>).

Our establishment was in large part a strategic response to mitigate the impacts of climate change by protecting and restoring the integrity of natural ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide such as wildlife movement and adaptation, genetic variation, carbon storage, water cycling and clean air. Responding to natural disasters such as bushfire is therefore very much a part of the work we do,

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while the forests that are subject to the current inquiry are the primary areas of interest to our work.

From the outset, GER has worked with landholders, local communities and a diverse range of national, state and regional organisations to achieve a vision we all share – to protect and restore the integrity of biologically rich and naturally resilient habitats for wildlife. For over a decade, GER's network of community partners have delivered tens of millions of dollars in public grants, leveraged by untold millions in private contributions and volunteer labour. We have grown to involve more than 250 organisations, including farmer groups, public authorities, Aboriginal organisations, research institutions and eNGOs, that mobilise an army of volunteers that number in their thousands.

Private funding has been donated and mobilized for work on private land on a scale unseen by any of those involved. This public outpouring of support has inspired countless stories of hope and enabled the return of a sense of place to many who were left devastated in the aftermath of the fires. Forests in some areas are recovering, however immense tracts of forest remain devoid of the rich life they held before the fires. The continued logging of those few remaining intact area and lightly burned forests on public land that remain stands in devastating contrast to the need to protect and build upon those areas that remain.

It is essential for both the survival of our unique wildlife, and Australia's reputation globally for stewardship of nature both now and in the future, that this community effort be acknowledged in any discussion about the many issues surround the future of the NSW forestry industry. Efforts on private land rely heavily on decisions made regarding the public lands they seek to complement and reconnect. For that reason, and on behalf of our network of community partners, GER calls upon all involved in the Upper House hearings to be aware of the impact its decisions will have on community motivation for years to come.

I wish you well in this week's endeavours and remain ready to provide additional information should you require.



Yours sincerely,

Gary Howling

Executive Director & CEO

Great Eastern Ranges Limited