

**Submission
No 23**

**INQUIRY INTO LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND
FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS
INDUSTRY**

Name: Rebecca Graham

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Dear Members,

Dorothea Mackellar knew well the beauty of the Australian bush.

“Green tangle of the brushes,
Where lithe lianas coil,
And orchids deck the tree-tops
And ferns the warm dark soil.”

Perhaps every Australian has heard her poem “My Country” at least once. Many of us have also walked through the bush and felt a sense of awe. Yet, in the 113 years since she penned those words, our native forests have been treated largely as natural resources to be exploited. Their worth has been measured in what we can take out of them: timber, and the industry it created. Such a vast land; no doubt, it seemed inexhaustible. It is time to reappraise such a false and outdated measure of value. Over decades, due to such complacency, our native forests have shrunk to the point where the survival of many unique Australian species is under threat, and ecosystems are in danger of collapsing. The devastation wrought by increasingly fierce and frequent bushfires, and climate change, is putting even more pressure on these environments. We are witnessing firsthand that healthy native forests are fragile, and irreplaceable. There are alternative opportunities for sustainable industry in plantation forests. We cannot just keep cutting our wild forests down. Our iconic wildlife depends on them. We need the clean air and water that forests produce. Although intangible, the cultural value of these truly wild and ancient places is enormous. The economic future of Australia, especially the tourism sector, requires protecting our natural resources, not laying waste to forests for short-term profits. In brief, Australian native forest is worth much more intact. The decision to keep it that way is our moral duty, to all the people of Australia, now, and future generations.

Faithfully,

Rebecca Graham