

**Submission
No 98**

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

Name: Dr Maggie Wheeler

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Dear Committee Members

I am lodging this submission in the hope that our native forests will receive the protection that they require to continue their existence for more than a few years. They have had enormous damage done to them by the weakening of protective legislation, by allowing the clearing of native vegetation, thus reducing suitable habitat for native fauna (as well as flora), and by the catastrophic events brought on by climate change, such as the fires of 2019, along with highly inappropriate management of the burnt forests following the fire.

Obviously I consider that the forests have a greater right to survive, than the loggers have a right to log. There is no way on Earth that the forestry methods that I have seen in north east New South Wales can ever be considered to be sustainable, and I have seen clearly during my lifetime the deterioration of forest areas and quality in this part of New South Wales. One example springs to mind was the logging of an area in Cherry State Forest, west of Casino, where logging tracks had been constructed directly down a very steep hill, causing erosion, too many trees had been taken for the area to recover into a forest ecosystem ever again, and rare plants had been ignored by the logging equipment. In addition there was a plot next door that had been logged (presumably in a similar manner) approximately ten years previously, and all that remained of the previous forest system were the occasional standing tree, with an understorey consisting entirely of lantana.

Another horrific practice so far as I am concerned is the logging of recently burnt areas. Following a hot fire, most of the eucalypts will die, even if they have epicormic buds, since they also will die if they heat up too much. All that is left then is the seed that falls to the ground and escapes the bulk of the heat. If however loggers come in and disturb the soil, the seed will not be able to establish, and after they take the burnt trees, it is most likely that the area will revert to 100% weed growth. Another ecosystem hits the dust, and leaves fauna, such as the now threatened koalas without suitable habitat. Rather than logging these areas, that are full of threatened flora and fauna, which invariably suffer greatly when the area is logged, they should be proclaimed as part of the National Parks Estate.

There are many people employed in the logging industry, however the vast majority are in plantations, with only 800 people employed in logging native forests. These people could be re-employed if not in the plantations, then in private practices cutting trees for people when they have become too large in urban areas or around houses.

To say that current logging contracts must be filled is not an acceptable argument if the future of the ecosystems are at risk, which they most definitely are. There is plenty of scientific evidence to show the dramatic decline in their size and condition, as I'm sure that you will see in other submissions. Contracts can be bought out, or other arrangements made where there is a will to do something positive, and not just for the economic bottom line. I note that most of the terms of reference are concerned with the economic impacts of not logging native forests, even though they are now only a small percentage of the whole loggable forests.

What is the real cost of logging native forests? A very small profit in exchange for the loss of life and habitat for many species, who mostly will have nowhere else to live.

Best Regards

Maggie Wheeler