

**Submission
No 114**

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

Name: Ms Juliet Dingle

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I have worked in conservation and threatened species management for 15 years. I have visited many state forests in NSW and there is always a distinct absence of wildlife. Logged forests have less mature trees and do not provide the habitat (for example, tree hollows) of undisturbed forests. Australia is experiencing an extinction crisis, mostly due to the destruction and modification of habitat. NSW has so little undisturbed forest left. Recent illogical changes to NSW biodiversity and private land clearing legislation have resulted in an increase in habitat destruction on private property to the detriment of biodiversity. The public logging industry has been unsustainable since its inception. The unsustainable logging of native forests not only harms biodiversity, it increases fire risk, reduces carbon storage, damages water resources and undermines eco-tourism opportunities.

Within the next 5 years I would like to see an end to public native forest logging and transition to 100% plantation-based timber industry. Some timber products are being replaced by products manufactured from recycled materials and I believe this, together with local timber engineering, will become a growing industry, and provide more employment than the current public forestry sector. The most ecologically significant state forests should be transferred to the NSW National Parks estate accompanied by adequate funding for the management of recreational use as well as weeds and pest animals to help the return of biodiversity. Ending native forest logging and expanding the conservation estate will benefit NSW growing community and have far reaching benefits for the environment, economy and future generations.

Ending native forest logging will protect ecosystems and threatened species, which are under immense pressure after the Black Summer bushfires. 1.8 million hectares of habitat and feed trees were destroyed during the fires (Collins, L, Bradstock, R, Clare, H, Clarke, M, Nolan, R and Penman, T. 2021. The 2019/2020 mega-fires exposed Australian ecosystems to an unprecedented extent of high-severity fire', *Environmental Research Letters*, 16:4, available <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abeb9e>). Small patches of unburnt or lightly burnt forests that are threatened by logging are crucial refuges for NSW struggling wildlife. The Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (CIFOAs) regulating Forestry Corporation NSW's (FCNSW) logging operations were not developed to account for the scale or severity of the fires experienced during the bushfires. Immediately following the fires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed amended rules for logging to provide additional protections, yet FCNSW abandoned these additional protections and returned to logging under the previous rules (CIFOAs), spelling disaster for NSW forests and wildlife. An EPA review released in September 2020 (<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/-/media/epa/corporate-site/resources/forestry/review-of-cifoa-mitigation-conditionsfor-timber-harvesting-in-burntlandscapes.pdf?la=en&hash=6360E080DB80E7BEF935A1A4A6BDDAB46BBFD0A7>, p. 26) found: "Fauna populations surviving in fire refuges in state forests are at risk of elimination by timber harvesting under the normal CIFOA which could prevent recovery, and cause catastrophic population decline in species such as the Koala, Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider." Future generations will be mind-boggled by such arrogance for the environment. NSW will experience increased extreme climatic conditions conducive to intensive, extensive bushfires. Logging intuitively heightens bushfire intensity as there is less shading canopy, less wildlife to turn-over and assist decomposition of the leaf-litter, therefore less moisture-retention and more combustible fuel. Unburnt native forests and every tiny unburnt patch must be protected against logging.

Native forest logging is not economically sound. The native forestry (hardwood) division of FCNSW is runs at a financial loss. The high cost, low return of hardwood harvesting is only offset by FCNSW's softwood plantations, which generate most of the corporation's annual earnings. FCNSW's revenue is set to decline \$100 million, or 25%, from next financial year, with predicted losses of about \$15 million a year from 2022 to 2024.

(<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/forestry-corp-facing-massive-revenue-drop-after-recordbushfire-season-20210121-p56vxa.html>)

FCNSW is a government owned corporation, so the NSW Government is liable for keeping it afloat. Absurdly, taxpayers are subsidising the destruction of NSW native forests and extinction crisis. In an attempt to remain economically viable, FCNSW has adopted more intensive logging, encroaching even closer to sensitive areas such as waterways. NSW waterways are dying from, among other pressures, excess run-off, erosion and siltation caused by logging native forests. Forestry industry job losses are avoidable by ending native forest logging. In fact, a plantation-based industry with more processing in Australia could greatly increase regional forestry jobs. The plantation industry in NSW employs 11,600 people. Only 800 people are currently employed in native forestry. NSW exports low value products like wood chips, and imports high value products like engineered timber. Jobs could be created in NSW in the sectors of engineered timber and recycled product alternatives.

There are also jobs in managing forests for tourism, recreation, and carbon storage. Increasing tourism in regions with state forests will create significant economic benefits. A recent study by the University of Newcastle found that turning state forests on the north coast of NSW into a Great Koala National Park would create nearly 10,000 full time jobs and increase total economic output for the region by \$1.18 billion over 15 years (<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/7108978/plan-to-create-australias-first-national-koala-park/>). Many other great opportunities exist across the state to transform state forests into tourist attractions, including new walking tracks, horse-riding trails, boardwalks, lookouts, campgrounds with amenities and scenic driving routes, bringing in revenue for facility and forest management as well as local communities.

NSW forests are a crucial carbon sink. As unlogged forests age, they store increasing amounts of carbon in their roots and trunks. Logging forests releases carbon that has been stored over the lifetime of the tree. For this reason alone, all forests must be protected. Undisturbed forests mitigate the very climate change behind the Black Summer bushfires. I hope the NSW parliament starts to value the value of native forests, other than for exporting as woodchip, and assigns adequate legal protection of dwindling habitat to help slow the extinction crisis and climate change.