

**Submission
No 139**

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

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Submission: Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry

Dear Friends,

I am just a private citizen.

I would like to draw your attention to two document titles.

1. John Vidal. March 18, 2020. *Destroyed Habitat Creates the Perfect Conditions for Coronavirus to Emerge*. *Ensi*a. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/destroyed-habitat-creates-the-perfect-conditions-for-coronavirus-to-emerge/>
2. Goldberg, T., Gillespie, T.R., Rwego, I.B., Estoff, E. & Chapman, C.A. 2008. *Forest Fragmentation as Cause of Bacterial Transmission among Nonhuman Primates, Humans, and Livestock, Uganda*. *Journal of Infectious Diseases* 2008 September; 14(9): 1375-1382 doi: [10.3201/eid1409.071196](https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1409.071196) Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2603117/>

Both these articles are scientific peer reviewed articles explaining research findings that as habitats and forests become fragmented, there is an amplification effect of pathogens, both virus and bacteria, that can transfer to humans, and the huge risk humanity is taking by allowing further denigration of forests and habitats as a further potential for creating future pandemics similar to Covid-19.

The bio-security document *New South Wales Biosecurity Strategy: 2013-2021* affirms “60% of emerging infectious diseases in humans have originated in animals, and the vast majority of these diseases have been from wildlife. The increasing pressure of human populations encroaching on areas previously populated by wild animals suggests that **this trend is likely to continue...many people do not understand the link between promoting healthy ecosystems and minimising pest, disease and weed risks**. Healthy habitats are more resilient to these threats. Raising community awareness of biosecurity issues in natural environments will help promote the role the community can play in protecting NSW from pests, diseases and weeds” (DPI 2013, pp. 17 & 22), Retrieved from https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/838661/NSW-biosecurity-strategy-2013-2021.pdf

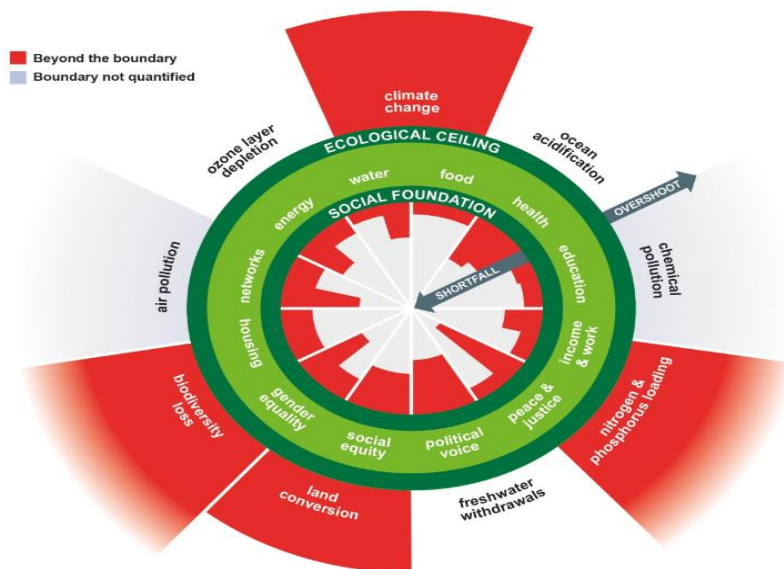
In Australia the Chlamydia infections of Koala populations is attributable to habitat fragmentation. A few years ago, Tasmanian Devils were suffering from **Devil facial tumour** disease (DFTD); a contagious form of **cancer** in **Tasmanian devils**; again attributable to forest and habitat fragmentation.

New Ebola outbreak declared in Guinea (WHO Report) 17 February 2021; retrieved from <https://www.who.int/csr/don/17-february-2021-ebola-gin/en/>
A study of the geography of Guinea in Africa again reveals forest and habitat fragmentation.

In 1997, State Forestry were subject to Commonwealth of Australia rules under “*The Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative [CAR] Reserve System for Forests in Australia*”. This document provided the framework for all States in Australia, to reserve areas of forest from being logged. Retrieved from https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/rfa/publications/nat_nac.pdf “The [CAR] Criteria are applicable to all forests, and associated woodlands, within each region for which an [Regional Forest Agreement] RFA is to be developed” (*The National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS, 1997*.Forward).

But what happened ? Somehow, these laws were regressed, so that the NSW Forestry Corporation appears to no longer be subject to the CAR Reserve system, and reserve systems are now only carried out on a voluntary basis on private land. (See <https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/>). Whatever the financial benefits to NSW Forestry Corporation by this arrangement; the enormous burden of costs to the Commonwealth that Covid-19 has placed on the economy, may I feel, be far and above any economic benefits to NSW Forestry Corporation. Granted Covid-19 did not start in Australia, and we do not generally consume forest animals. However this does not make us immune from pathogen amplification. It is not unknown for forest workers to get ticks, leaches, mosquito bites, and occasional bat droppings on them, - all possible sources of animal/human pathogen crossover.

The diagram below is sourced from Raworth, 2017, *Doughnut Economics: Seven ways to think Like a 21st –Century Economist* p.51.



The diagram above is based on the work of Will Steffen et al on Planetary Boundaries. The red portion of the diagram above the “Ecological Ceiling” indicates planetary boundaries humanity is currently exceeding, that while not curtailed, is pushing humanity as a species toward extinction (See Will Steffen et al. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/347/6223/1259855>). As you can see, biodiversity loss

and land clearing currently exceed the allowable ecological ceiling, supporting the research cited above on the potential further rise of pandemics from pathogen amplification in habitat and forest fragmentation.

The European Commission has recently taken up this cause of creating and restoring healthy habitats that will be more resilient to pathogen amplification threats caused by forest and habitat amplification (see the link below to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030). We would do well to emulate their ambitious program within our own country.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/eu-biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

Therefore, in light of all of the above, I recommend that the 1997, “*Comprehensive; Adequate and Representative [CAR] Reserve System for Forests in Australia*” needs to be fully restored in its entirety – no exceptions - as **mandatory Law**, with **hefty** fines for State and forestry workers that disregard these rules and guidelines.

To allow further habitat and forest fragmentation by allowing weak legislation and policy would be unconscionable and out of step with the needs of our planet for our very survival as a species.

Regards
Michael de Mol
Private Citizen.

Ps please kindly withhold my address and phone number if this article is published.
Michael de Mol