

**Submission
No 149**

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

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SUBMISSION to The Inquiry into the long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry

Introduction – [plus Term of Reference (g and d)]

“THE FIRES (black summer) CHANGED EVERYTHING”

I live on the South Coast of NSW, in the Eurobodalla, an area and vicinity acknowledged now to have experienced the worst effects of the worst fires ever to be experienced in Australia, in living memory. I lived through the months of the fires descending slowly down the coast on us – then coming up the coast from the South as well. I lived through the horror of the inferno day here – where suburbs became dangerous fire traps and we were nearly loaded into the sea to save our lives, but for a wind change.

The NSW Upper House inquiry into the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry in NSW is a critical opportunity to **“use my voice”**, to ‘shine a light’ on the devastating impacts of native forest logging and, I hope, to help shape a vision of a sustainable timber industry WITH a healthy State forest heritage.

(g) The environmental impact and sustainability of native forest logging, including following the 2019/20 bushfire season

(d) Transparency and data reporting of timber supply

I became aware of the devastatingly poor state of our loggable forests when I moved down to the Batemans Bay area in 2017/8 from the Southern Highlands. I started to walk the forest and became horrified by the dryness, the clear struggle of the trees, and the eco systems, to survive the harshness of their environmental - man-made conditions. The silence of birds in many forests and butchering from logging events that can only be described as horrific, careless butchering of trees with scant interest in forest welfare or sustainability of an industry. I saw State forest logged 10 years ago, clearly not recovered about to be logged again. I started to make it my business to find out why this was happening, why checks and balances, that I naively assumed in trusting my government were in place, were not working – for man, forest or creatures.

It is a sad truth for me to lay it out in my comments below. I realised a logging moratorium was needed while a community and political debate occurred to find a sustainable and descent way forward.

You see, I **“found my voice”** in the pre-fire period when I approached my Council, and may others, to alert them of my concerns and about our unpreparedness – of ‘going about our business as though nothing was happening out of the ordinary!!! I was told ‘we are used to bush fires in Australia’. I wrote submission to both the NSW and Federal bush fire inquiries – it is traumatising to recall it and I refer you to both of these submissions to gain the ‘lived experience’ for me and my family. (I give my permission for you to access these two documents.)

My experience of the impacts of native forest logging, then, have been very personal and life-changing, for to my disbelief and horror, native forest harvesting operations continued following the great fire, in fire ravaged as well as in the small areas around here of un-damaged forest from fire. I'm SO DISAPOINTED and ANGRY about this and the lack of leadership being displayed by the NSW Government on these matters - and I vote liberal!!!!

Logging is 'in your face here' – the trucks, the carnage seen regularly on forest walks that undermine eco-tourism opportunities. Adding to this misery, we have had 4 huge flooding events over the last 12 months since the fires through the effects of climate change, as well. So, there is significant damage also to water resources. This combination has tragically smashed biodiversity. I'm deeply concerned that logging our beautiful long-growth trees, in addition, fragments carbon storage. Further, in taking these trees, carbon stored by them is released to the environment adding to emissions.

The impact on community rural living is great and distressing – this once iconic and beautiful forested coastline from the Gong to Eden is in desperate need of protection - over 95% of these forests were burnt in the fires.

So, currently what is going on as 'normal business' is the biggest mess I've had the misfortune to witness as a professional person who has worked in many strategic future-proofing endeavors across a number of sectors. This Inquiry, I pray, brings a thorough, informed (led by the science) CHANGE of DIRECTION.

Therefore, my submission

Main Terms of Reference (ToRs) responses

(b) The impact of external influences on the timber and forest products industry, including but not limited to drought, water, fire, regulatory structures, habitat protection and local, state and federal policies regarding climate change and plantation establishment

- See comments above as well
- I submit the shameful ecological impacts of public native forest logging must be at front and centre of this inquiry.
- The Forestry Corporation is now in breach of most of the required standards of practice and must be re-organised culturally with a clear understanding in values and practice that it does NOT have a social license to log native forests.
- Parliament needs to hear a broad call for a credible plan for a sustainable timber industry that protects biodiversity, supports jobs and helps mitigate climate change. Our native forests are worth more standing.

(c) Projections for softwood and hardwood supply and demand over the next 30 years

- Plantation forestry already handles the soft wood industry sustainably and financially is not topped by government. There is EVERY reason to expand this industry to include so

called hardwood supply. Current hardwood is supplied unsustainably in native State forests and this must stop. To add insult to inquiry, the industry is not viable financially and requires government handouts. So, my taxes are used to supplement an industry I am diametrically opposed to!!!!

(i) Best practices in other Australian and international jurisdictions in relation to the sustainability of the timber and forest products industry, including social sustainability, community and Indigenous engagement and multiple uses of the forest estate

The 19-20 bushfires hit NSW state forests hard – impacting both biodiversity and timber supply. Forestry Corporation NSW continues to log precious native forests and regularly breaches environmental conditions. Communities in timber regions don't have certainty for the future. The current situation is unsustainable and, therefore, UNTENABLE.

Best practice promotes the following points in achieving a sustainable future for this industry:

- An end to public native forest logging NOW.
- Immediate expansion of the plantation estate, with a goal of a 100% plantation-based timber industry ASAP.
- Government transition plans for communities impacted by transition out of native forest logging – these need to start NOW with expansion of the plantation estate.
- Transferring the most ecologically significant state forests into the national parks estate NOW.

In addition, there are wonderful prospects to boost tourism in regions with state forests, to provide a significant additional economic opportunity:

- 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 (iv).
- Many other great opportunities exist across the state to transform state forests into tourist attractions.
- This could include the creation and maintenance of new walking tracks, horse-riding trails, boardwalks, lookouts, campgrounds with amenities and scenic driving routes, bringing in revenue for forest management and local communities.

(h) The environmental impact and sustainability of native forest logging, including following the 2019/20 bushfire season

1.8 million hectares of habitat and feed trees were destroyed during the fires (ii). The forest which remains must be protected. The patches of unburnt or lightly burnt forests that are threatened by logging are critical, often tiny, refuges for wildlife.

Unfortunately, the rules that regulate Forestry Corporation NSW's (FCNSW) logging operations, the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (CIFOAs), were not developed to account for sustainability in fact, and are completely remiss in terms of the scale and severity of the fires experienced during the Black Summer bushfires.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did develop some amended rules for to soften logging and levels of negative impacts, trying to provide additional protections immediately following the fires, but FCNSW abandoned these additional protections and has returned to logging under the over-weak previous rules (CIFOAs).

This spells disaster for our forests and wildlife. Disastrously, the EPA review (September 2020) 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."

Concluding comment – TOR (a, c, e and f)

(a) The nature of, and relationship within, the value chain between the timber and forest products industry, logistics companies, manufacturers, retailers, exporters and their relationship with timber supply and environmental management, and opportunities to enhance supply chains.

(e) Opportunities for the timber and forest products industry and timber dependent communities and whether additional protections, legislation or regulation are required in New South Wales to better support the forestry products industry and timber-dependent communities, including opportunities for value adding

I EXPECT this inquiry to take stock of the evidence provided to make a landmark shift in thinking and purpose, to provide a foundation for informed and long-term decision-making to safe-guard OUR forests – they ARE the forests of the people and must be future-proofed in this light. The forests are no longer a business commodity - the are now too rare and too vulnerable.

The TASK of this Inquiry is:

- to LEAD with a TRANSFORMATIONAL Vision and future through taking FULL account of – in fact 'shining a light on' the unprofitability AND the devastating impacts of native forest logging,
- to PROVIDE an ACTION Plan for an immediate transition - BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE – to a TRULY SUSTAINABLE and PROFITABLE timber industry.

The community I live within WILL support and BENEFIT from this approach this with sustainable jobs that do no (or little) environmental harm, within a sustainable forestry industry, with our remaining native forests left to recover and gain some resilience to withstand the ONCOMING negative impacts of Climate Change, given the paucity of leadership on this critical SURVIVAL matter in Australia.

[Lets' benchmark – Scotland is already 97% powered by renewables!!!!!!]

- State forests near and around me will better service my community, and our visitors, as protected reserves. In this way, ending native forest logging and substantively expanding the conservation estate, will benefit my local environment, community and economy.
- For example, increased local amenity from recreational green spaces, as noted more tourism dollars, less logging trucks on the roads and a generally more peaceful feeling of being one with nature, Caring for Country.

(f) The role of the government in addressing key economic, environmental and social challenges to the industry, including funding and support to encourage improvements in forestry practices, training, innovation and automation, workplace health and safety, industry and employee support, land use management and forestry project

Native forest logging, as noted in the points above, makes no economic sense:

- The native forestry (hardwood) division of FCNSW is loss-making. 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. (ii)
- FCNSW's revenue is set to decline \$100 million, or 25 per cent, from next financial year, with predicted losses of about \$15 million a year from 2022 to 2024. (iii) Now, as FCNSW IS a 'government owned corporation' the NSW Government is liable for keeping it afloat. This means folk like me - taxpayers - are SUBSIDISING the DESTRUCTION of our native forests, and PAYING to drive species to EXTINCTION. I DON'T WANT MY TAXES DOING THAT!!!!!! CLEAR???????
- Even worse than all this, to try to stay viable, FCNSW has adopted more intensive logging, encroaching even closer to sensitive areas such as our precious waterways that are also already under significant stress from droughts and flooding events. This, IN TURN, puts more pressure on our environment than ever.
- This is an ABSURD situation and an absolute OUTRAGE in the face of the FACTS.

Ending native forest logging does not mean job losses

- Forestry industry job losses ARE avoidable. Right now we export low value products like wood chips, and import high value products like engineered timber. A plantationbased 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.
- There are also jobs in managing forests for tourism, recreation, and carbon storage.

AS noted, 1.8 million hectares of habitat and feed trees were destroyed during the fires (ii). The forest which remains MUST be protected. Ending native forest logging will protect ecosystems

and threatened species, which are under immense pressure after the bushfires. Let alone the ongoing threats of Climate Change.

[Climate Change isn't an ideology and it isn't politics – its FACTS and our FUTURE. IT must be a priority and EFFECTIVELY MITIGATED dealt with across all levels of Government /across political persuasions - in line with the SCIENCE. Anything less, in fact, becomes legally suable under neglect, abrogation of responsibility, conflicts of interest etc.]

Further, our forests are a crucial **carbon sink** – they must be protected to reduce climate pollution:

- As forests age, they store more and more carbon in their roots and trunks. Unlogged forests continue to do this work for free. Destroying forests releases carbon that has been stored over the lifetime of the tree, contributing to climate change.
- Our public native forests are worth more standing. It's time to put an end to destructive logging of state forests and transition to a sustainable, plantation-based timber industry.

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- i) <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
- ii) 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>
- iii) <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/forestry-corp-facing-massive-revenue-drop-after-recordbushfire-season-20210121-p56vxa.html>
- iv) <https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/7108978/plan-to-create-australias-first-national-koala-park>