

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

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

As the current forestry practices are so unsustainable, I will start with the definition of sustainability as decisions are being made ignoring the actual meaning.

To be sustainable is the ability to sustain an activity,

- the role of government in addressing key economic, environmental and social challenges to the industry and whether opportunities exist to further support the industry

With the current unsustainable practices and outcomes from decades of harvest using outdated and poor quality data the forestry industry will run out of supply but also further deplete water quality, soil resilience, biodiversity and community usage of these publicly owned forests. When you are running out, it means you are unsustainable and should change tact, it doesn't mean you increase your level of unsustainable practices to cover the poor management in the short term. The secrecy and efforts to hide what is actually being decided shows contempt for the owners, neighbours and anyone who has a better option. The current admission of the State Forest NSW that they earn a total of \$28 per hectare logging native forests on the north coast of NSW down from over \$225 in the 2016/17 financial year demonstrates that the timber value is now so low it is far more valuable to the community to not be logged until there is sufficient value. It also demonstrates how unsustainable forest management is currently. The community comments from a public meeting in Boambee recently show that this amount is too low to even contemplate continuing logging and shows how out of touch with financial values the current forestry regime is. The damage to roads, waterways as well as the increased risk of fires adds to the loss of iconic species on which tourism makes over 50 million dollars each year in the Port Macquarie LGA for just the Koala. This on its own demonstrates how the logging program is restricting jobs now and future growth of NSW is hamstrung by the unsustainable practices in the forestry industry. The value figures for the entire north coast region far exceed the 50 million per year value for tourism just for the Koala and the idea that you could even mention sustainability when current practices are driving numerous species to extinction shows how far from the community sentiment state forests currently are. There is clear evidence the Koala will go extinct with hundreds of other species if we don't change forestry unsustainable practices. The ONE report state forests quote over and over to show the Koala population is not influenced by Logging operations has been shown have too low a survey size to be able to be

extrapolated to other areas of forests without the connectivity the study area had. This reports conclusion is in direct contradiction to other studies and as such should be checked before it is relied upon for harvest decisions. To continue to try and extrapolate this data to other areas is misleading and should stop immediately. The current governance has failed to provide the necessary research and makes decisions on out of date and using poor science which is demonstrated in the declining numbers of species directly against state forest predictions over decades. This is also demonstrated by the decrease in supply of quality timber. The policy makers have failed to provide the required research to make the decisions to determine which forest should be logged. The contempt for NSW community jobs and health is shown through the most recent regional Forest Agreement (RFA) usage of data from over 20 years ago for the last RFA. As this original data was somewhat flawed, the outcomes predicted have not eventuated and management should adapt the program to counter this. This has not happened and there has been little new studies, not repeated and not peer reviewed and as such any decision can not be made in confidence. The failure of the governance to understand basic sustainability principles does not put the timber industry in a good light. As a builder, I am angry that the supply of my favourite products have stopped as they do not exist after years of unsustainable logging operations in an area that could be managed for timber sustainably if science was used to inform the decision making, currently not happening. The quality of the products that are still available is poor at best and wasted. The current governance is so poor, the potential future timber supply is now being reclassified and sent to be pulped or burnt instead of being managed for the construction and other industries in Australia. Cutting smaller and smaller trees is such a waste as anyone who knows trees and maths will know the larger trees have far more usable timber than smaller trees. There are very few large trees left due to the unsustainable management of NSW forests. The decisions have been made for the benefit of the companies involved for short term gain, the people who own the assets are having them degraded and access restricted.

The governance is so poor currently that the area proposed for logging in the Bellingen Shire in NSW is so high there will be no mature state forests left to be harvested in approximately 20 years. This clearing rate has been estimated as 10 times greater than the clearing rate currently in the Amazon. For anyone making the decisions to approve this, it is clear that sustaining the industry is not part of their priorities or they are so misinformed, there should be an inquiry. It should be noted that the current approval time for these large forests is approximately 48 hours. With little scientific study,

with species that hibernate and even sleep for longer than this, it is impossible to complete the required analysis to make decisions on a sustainable basis. The results of poorly managed forests, loss of timber resources and large declines in species in and around state forests add to the frustration of business people like myself who can see the products I have used and love to use, disappearing and becoming so low in quality, they are unusable for my work. With poor or no data, rushed decisions made on incomplete data, poorly managed forests now often mono cultures of poor quality timber species, mono cultures that have had the habitat for gliders, large birds, koalas and many more species removed completely, it is hard to see how the State forests are going to be managed well without a complete removal of everyone who has made decisions to get to this point.

- relationships between manufacturers, retailers, exporters and logistics companies and opportunities to enhance supply chains

Firstly, if there is no profit and the logging is just a self justification process, other uses of the forests until maturity should be investigated. Particular focus on slowing and reversing the current loss of biodiversity and creating jobs through tourism and other uses should be investigated.

The relationships between all groups seems to be breaking down and will continue to degrade as the resource is being unsustainable managed. The focus on profits is not helping the supply or improving relationships. The relationship of state forests with the owners of the land, the community is becoming further fractured as the evidence of the waste and poor management of NSW values continues to be revealed. The poor fire management is also damaging the relationship. It should be clearly defined who is involved with timber and who is involved with wood chips and pulp products. These are two completely different streams with different impacts. The later is limiting any opportunity for future sustainable management as it is damaging the ongoing value through logging on immature trees. This is particularly inefficient and unsustainable and further depletes our timber resources.

Relationships will further fracture when there is an understanding that negative climate impacts from the burning of pulp and pellets is limiting the sustainability and future of timber production as well as jobs, tree growth rates, biodiversity and the health of the community. The cost for the community is very high for this and when the information that this leads to no or highly limited financial gain there will be further fracturing of the relationship between anyone who values our forests more. Figures of 20 cents per tree is

unbelievably out of touch with the communities idea of what state forests gets for the damage it does to the community values.

- projections for softwood and hardwood supply and demand over the next 30 years and data reporting in relation to timber supply Sustainability does not have a time period included and as such it is assumed this is in perpetuity. Projecting over the next 30 years will lead to a miscalculation of what may or may not be sustainable as it has in the past. A 100 year time period is suggested. Despite this, the current practices are so unsustainable there will be few areas of native forests that are mature if the current practices are maintained. Over this short 30 year period, numerous species will be sent extinct due to the poor management of NSW state forest reserves. Large areas of habitat have already been converted on state forest land to a different vegetation community with less biodiversity and if this is to continue, the loss of species in Australia which is the second worst in the world, will accelerate. No other developed nation has the poor and unsustainable outcomes Australia has. State forest management has played a large role in this situation. This should be clearly stated in any state forest management plan.

- the impact of external influences on industry, including the effects of drought, water and fire, habitat protection, and policies regarding climate change and plantation establishment Climate change is already changing the composition of species in state forests, the ability of species to maintain there position, growth rates of species, fire regimes, flooding, droughts and too many more to list. All of these have a negative effect on the ability of forests to regenerate and thus the sustainable supply of timber. It should be clearly understood and stated, there will be a decrease in output from state forests from climate change and thus there should be an expectation that supply will decrease in all interested parties. The decline in species will also limit areas that could previously been available for harvesting. The unsustainable practices over the decades will limit output and the continued unsustainable practices will further exacerbate this effect. The opportunity cost of maintaining the forests with trees (carbon banking) can already be foreseen to outweigh any forestry output in the near future if not already. The short term and unsustainable harvesting is already out weighted by other opportunity costs with there being far more jobs and prosperity from more sustainable uses but as the forestry harvest management does not take this into account. The data is leading to poor outcomes for the community, timber supply and other values that

sustain community health and lifestyle, climate change will make this worse and increase its effect over time.

- the environmental impact and sustainability of native forest logging

The outcomes show logging in NSW of native forests is unsustainable. This is demonstrated in the change in forestry output, financial outcomes, species population declines and other values such as Aboriginal heritage site destruction. The impact of forestry could be minimal but it requires a longer time period for planning, actual assessment of values and appropriate approvals (not happening) and realistic timber quantities predicted. The overestimation of timber supply volumes and the contractual obligations is a big part of the reason for the unsustainable management outcomes. Any business that tries to force output above what is actually there will fail. State forests is only operating in its current viability due to being funded externally by the community which demonstrates again how unsustainable current forestry in NSW native forests is. The manipulation of language, ignorance of the most basic principles for protection of water quality, species numbers and community resilience and the secrecy is disgraceful. The private native forestry situation is so determined to hide what is happening, councils can not regulate ANY clearing as they are not privy to the forestry database and legal exemptions stop ANY investigations. The legislation enables forestry and private native forest agreements to not follow even the most basic of sustainable provisions and is one of the main drivers for the loss of the Koala. The Koala SEPP is turned off as are numerous other legislative protections designed to incorporate sustainable practices but the forestry logging practices can not comply with these as they would become unviable again further demonstrating the unsustainable practices of forestry and an admission they can not reach sustainability under the current logging rate.

- best practice in other jurisdictions in relation to the sustainability of the timber and forest product industry.

Best practice? The approvals being pushed through in such a short time frame on which no one can comment or even do any assessment demonstrates contempt for best practice. There is no regulation, limited if any assessment of what values are there before the clear felling, old data, decisions made in secrecy, outcomes demonstrating the poor management with increased loss of species, fire risks, flooding risks, sedimentation, road damage etc, there is not enough data to demonstrate best practice. The state forest offices often have no phone numbers, there is no ability to influence the process

the message banks are not followed up, the decisions are made in secret selling our public assets as if they were private for such little amounts it shows contempt for the community, I am really not sure how you can say anything about best practice currently knowing how the current management has left us with a far poorer product poorer habitat, muddied water, fire escapes and damage, roads and bridges damaged with NO compensation, for private company profit. The governance have restricted the community access to their land, created a legal system that excludes the community from being involved or being able to content any decisions and worst of all excluded the community from the decisions of how to manage this resource into the future. You can try and deny this, but the problem with being so unsustainable, eventually you run out and can' t hide. Boral as the biggest/only winner from these backdoor deals will at that point leave. I do note there contract is up in 2029, which coincidentally coincides with the harvest plan where there will be less than 5% of state forests with mature trees left in many shires in NSW. Shame on the people who have mismanaged some of the most productive forests in the world to limit timber supply, limit usage by the community and stop any other industry that would create many more jobs and be far more sustainable. Please stop using sustainability as a catch phrase when the decisions for the management of the NSW native forests is not being made along the most basic sustainability principles.

Thanks
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