

Submission
No 166

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 28 May 2021

Partially
Confidential

The Portfolio Committee Bo. 4 - Industry
Legislative Council NSW

28 May 2021

Dear Committee

Inquiry into Long term sustainability and future of the timber forest products industry

I write to express my concerns about the current management of the forest products industry (“the industry”) in this State, and that it is unfortunately being managed in an unsustainable manner.

I write from the perspective of a NSW resident and tourist, who spends substantial time in, and visiting NSW’s native forests and ecosystems and neighbouring regional communities.

Among other concerns, I am concerned about:

A. The logging of native forests following the recent disastrous “Black Summer” bushfires”. It was reported in March 2021 that a forestry agency review had found that bushfires had reduced the amount of available timber by as much as 30%, at a time when those bushfires had already had a terrible impact upon ecosystems, and endangered plant and animal species, across the state.

B. The logging of native forests in a way that exacerbates the risk of, and severity of, bushfires.

C. Generally, the logging of native forests on public land when the number of endangered plant and animal species continues to grow, and the reported numbers of individual species including iconic species like koalas, continues to decline.

I respectfully, but strongly encourage the Committee to recommend:

1. That there should be an urgent review of the rules for logging forests impacted and burnt by bushfires, including the recent catastrophic Black summer bushfires.
2. Changes to logging of native forests to minimise, not increase, the risk of bushfires and indeed severe or catastrophic bushfires, particularly in light of the enormous quantity of scientific opinion and research that NSW, and south eastern Australia, will be subject to (a) rising temperatures, and (b) diminishing rainfall.

As noted by Professors Philip Zylstra, Associate Professor Grant Wardell-Johnson and Professor James Watson, among other scientists in this field in a recent opinion piece published in “The Conversation”:

“..Research shows forests became dramatically less likely to burn when they mature after a few decades. Mature forests are also less likely to carry fire into the tree tops.....Despites decades of opportunity to show otherwise, the only story for eucalypt forests remain this: logging increases the impact of bushfires. This fact should inform forest management decisions on how to reduce future fire risk.

We need timber, but it must be produced in ways that don't endanger human lives or the environment..”

The people of NSW (and Australia) do indeed “need timber”, but fundamentally in my respectful opinion it “must be produced in ways that don't danger human lives or the environment...”

3. The framework in which logging is conducted must also be revised to better protect plant and animal species, as I understand that currently the preponderance of independent scientific and informed opinion is that the protections for native forest and species from logging is deficient.

The final report of the review into the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth) 1999 headed by Mr. Samuel again highlighted, as other studies have, that regional forest agreements unfortunately are part of the system which is currently failing protection of this country's environment and natural resources. The report called on the federal government to abolish the exemption from federal environment laws to native forest logging covered by regional forestry agreements.

As noted above, consumers and industry do indeed “need timber”. Workers, particularly in regional communities, plainly, and obviously need jobs.

The current framework for logging of native forests in this state, however, is unfortunately unsustainable, contributing to the “trajectory of environmental decline” as noted in the final report of the independent review into the EPBC Act 1999, and risks exacerbating the worsening bushfires of the future.

I respectfully, but strongly encourage the Committee to take into account, and and recommend changes to place the industry on a more sustainable and more long-term footing, while also providing better protection for surrounding communities (for example in the case of bushfires as the impact of climate change worsens) and the environment.

Finally, I respectfully ask that the Committee does not publish my name and keeps it confidential.