

**Submission
No 167**

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

Name: Mr Mick Lyons

Date Received: 28 May 2021

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

I submit this plea to the NSW Government to review its recent decision to allow clear-felling of trees in forests between Grafton and Taree. Prior to the current logging rules, clear-felling was limited to areas no greater than 0.25 hectares (ha). The new rules allow clear-felling of areas up to 60 ha.

I am a resident of Port Macquarie and see direct evidence of the increase in intensity of logging. The increasing volume of trucks laden with small diameter logs points to the intention of government to vastly increase the rate of destruction of local forests.

My wife and I moved to Port Macquarie 11 years ago to support my wife's mother. Now my daughter and her son have moved here so that we have three generations with a vested interest in maintaining our town and its surrounding natural flora and fauna in a sustainable way. What we see happening under the actions of this government will ultimately be the ruin of our beautiful town and its surrounds.

Protect ecosystems and threatened species

The scale and severity of the Black Summer bushfires were unprecedented. The rules that regulate Forestry Corporation NSW's (FCNSW) logging operations are absolutely unsuitable in the context of the extensive damage caused by these fires. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) put in place amended rules for logging to provide additional protections immediately following the fires. However, FCNSW abandoned these protections and returned to logging under the pre-Black Summer fire rules. The remaining patches of unburnt or lightly burnt forests that are threatened by logging are critical refuges for wildlife. The reversion to the previous rules spells disaster for our forests and wildlife. An EPA review (September 2020) found that fauna populations surviving in fire refuges in state forests are at risk of elimination by timber harvesting under the previous rules and prevent recovery, and cause catastrophic population decline in species such as the Koala, Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider. The forest which remains must be protected.

Native forest logging is not sustainable

FCNSW's revenue is expected to decline by \$100 million, or 25 per cent, from next financial year, with predicted losses of about \$15 million a year from 2022 to 2024. As FCNSW is a government owned corporation, the NSW Government is ultimately liable for its economic survival. This means taxpayers are subsidising the destruction of our native forests and are being forced to drive species to extinction. How absurd is this?

Consequently, to stay viable, FCNSW has adopted more intensive logging, encroaching even more on sensitive areas such as waterways and putting ever increasing pressure on our environment. This is clearly not a sustainable industry.

The economic advantages of getting out of native forest logging

There are great job opportunities in a plantation-based industry where more processing is done in Australia. Right now, we export low value products like chipped hardwood, and import high value products like engineered timber. The plantation industry in NSW employs 11,600 people whereas only 800 people are currently employed in native forestry.

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.

There are many other great opportunities 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.

As well as the obvious loss-making nature of native logging, there is the growing risk of wood as fuel becoming a stranded asset. The world is rapidly moving away from carbon-based products and wood is as polluting as coal or gas when burnt for electricity or heat. Now is the time for the NSW government to look beyond the election cycle and look to promote genuinely sustainable industries.

Forests as carbon sinks

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.