

**Submission
No 168**

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

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Public inquiry into the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry.

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Climate impacts of logging

Soil carbon: Logging is done with heavy machinery these large machines cause massive disturbance and compaction to the soil, often this happens in steep country where soil is washed away. This kind of disturbance along with tree removal destroys or damages the soil web. The soil in healthy unlogged forests is a first rate carbon store. Microorganisms in the soil sequester massive amounts of carbon. Logging damages this ability and where soil is badly disturbed soil carbon can be leaked back into the atmosphere in the form of CO₂ or methane. Furthermore this disturbance can stunt or kill soil biota making forests weaker and far less efficient at sequestering carbon. The soil web can take years or decades to recover. Forestry are moving towards 15 year rotations in many forests so it's likely that soil diversity will plummet with a loss and simplification of much of the forests most diverse soil ecosystems. In the long term this will make forests far worse carbon stores at a time when these very carbons stores are critical for maintaining a stable climate.

Old and mature forests are better at removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing that carbon. They are more efficient and store more carbon the young disturbed forests. Forests that have recently been logged can actually turn from carbon stores to carbon emitters and this can take years to reverse.

Forest degradation

Habitat values of forests are degraded by logging. Many forest dwelling species of animal rely on a variety of food sources found in intact forests, once logged many of the flowering understory plants, feed trees, fungi and native grasses disappear. When the food resources in a forest are degraded like this the forest loses its ability to support large healthy populations of animals. Thus genetic diversity is lost and animals become more vulnerable to predations and disease as it becomes harder to find the food resources that were available pre logging. Another impact from logging is the loss of breeding habitat. Most forest species are specialists that rely on very particular conditions to breed. For example many forest animals and birds require tree hollows to breed. Some species like yellow bellied gliders require a network of tree hollows across a range and of a certain size to remain viable and breed successfully. Logging often destroys tree hollows and removes mature trees that are soon to form hollows thus the future supply of tree hollows is compromised. As populations decrease and become unavailable localized extinctions or functional extinctions in individual populations increase.

Logging favours commercial timber species like black butt. Favouring only commercial species leads to simplification of forests. Simplified or monoculture forests are less resilient to disease and climate change. They are also of less value to the flora and fauna that lives within the ecosystem.

Logging has serious impacts on the water cycle. A healthy unlogged forest captures rain and slows down its movement, absorbing it like a sponge, storing, filtering and slowly releasing the water over a long period of time. Thus downstream water quality and quantity is maintained. When a forest is logged it loses much of the above mentioned abilities, instead water runs off quickly taking soil with it. Floods become worse, waterways become full of sediment and water quality becomes worse. During drought the logged forest has far less water stored and streams become dry. Furthermore after logging saplings are far thirstier than mature trees so forests end

up using more water to support the new growth. Again the end result is less water for downstream users.

Logging creates disturbance, reopens roads and tracks. Makes canopy gaps and machines bring in weed seeds. Forests that have been logged are very susceptible to weed invasion. Weeds can dominate the undergrowth of logged forests suffocating native understory plants and making it difficult for animals like koalas to move from tree to tree. It is rare to see weed infestation in intact unlogged forests.

Fire impacts

Logging removes large parts of the canopy, this dries out the under story and makes the forest hotter and drier. This in turn can make the forest more flammable.

Logging leaves massive fuel load of stumps, crowns and undergrowth. When a fire comes thru a logged area this fuel load increases fire intensity and length. These piles can burn for days after a fire has gone thru.

During the 2019/20 fires it was noted by many locals that Forestry Corporation were using heavy handed firefighting tactics that resulted in the destruction of thousands of old and mature trees. Forestry were spear heading massive and sometimes unnecessary back burns that spread fire into the landscape and in many cases made the situation worse. One back burn near chealundi west of Dorriggo was done about 20 km in front of the forest fire. Thru this patch of forest back burn after back burn was done. The ecological consequences of this fire operation will take generations to heal. This is only one example of many.

Race to the bottom

The forestry industry in Australia is engaged in a race to the bottom. Often exporting the lowest value products like unmilled saw logs, wood chips and pulp for paper and biomass. Mills often turn native forest logs into pallets or other low value products. Meanwhile the government gives the industry millions to continue these low value products and practises. The industry and the government has largely failed to ensure that local forest products are value added onshore in Australia. They have failed to see the industry modernise with best practice and true sustainability. Instead the industry plows ahead at the expense of taxpayers and the Environment.

Currently in NE NSW forest products are being burnt for electricity and wood chips are exported from Brisbane for the same. Proposals for wood fired power plants and making Hydrogen from burning wood at Redbank are being given feasibility studies and funding from tax payers. This is short sighted in the extreme while facing a Climate and biodiversity extinction crisis.

A recent Old growth remapping project where on average over 80 percent of the current mapped old growth was remapped and downgraded to be given to the timber industry to harvest is a classic example of just how bad this industry is and how stacked the NRC and DPI are with pro forestry anti-environment drones. Thankfully that project was shelved when it was shown the industry was lying about the resource shortfall and had been over cutting their existing quota. Yet right now there is a similar rainforest remapping project in the works. Recent logging at Wild Cattle creek saw 4 to 600 year old brush box being cut so it's not hard to imagine what the target of the rain forest remapping project will be. Projects like these show the self-interest, regressive and arrogant nature of the current timber industry.

Failed stewardship of wildlife.

The RFA's are exempt from the environmental laws that govern most other sectors of the economy. It's been disappointing over the last few years that I have been observing the forestry industry to see the best areas for wildlife getting treated like any other patch of forest. One example was in Gladstone state forest where there was a breeding koala colony with in excess of 80 koala records in one logging compartment. This patch of records stands out in the landscape as the best koala colony between Bellingen and Nambucca. Forestry Corporation went into log it like it was any other patch of forest. Direct meetings with forestry, lobbying ministers, media and a protest camp were able to protect just 2 hectares of forest. The rest of the compartment was industrially logged. Koala feed trees were cut or pushed over. There are many more examples like this where Forestry are logging the best threatened species habitat.

Future timber industry

What is the future of the timber industry? 2019/20 bushfires wiped out about two thirds of NSW pine plantations. Events like this are becoming more frequent. Ask any expert. Climate change will drive disease outbreaks like Myrtle rust, die back, pine beetles etc. The world economy is moving away from unsustainable practices like native forestry. If business as usual continues in the timber industry it will become unviable. Current yields in native forestry are \$28 per HA. Only the National party would support an industry that is so unprofitable. Will the public continue to support an industry that is sending our wildlife towards extinction, degrading our forests, diminishing our water supplies and driving climate change while making basically no money? It is time for a massive shake up in the industry and a new direction.

Abolish forestry Corp and create a new best practice organization focused on sustainable high quality products from plantation, on farm forestry and native forestry in areas that will not impact biodiversity.

Incentivize the manufactured timber industry. Local industry making laminated and engineered wood products from plantation timber, hemp wood, bamboo, recycled plastic etc.

Stop all imports of timber from native forests Its true that the forestry industry is worse in SE Asia and south America etc. Ban all non-independently certified timber from Australia and the international market. Get rid of the government's dodgy sustainability certification for native forestry.

Stop all low value timber products like wood chips, pallets and pulp.

Immediate ban on wood burning power generation.

Create a nation afforestation program.

Put a price on carbon and find a way to financialize forests left standing at current prices \$30 per HA would see the NSW tax payers better off.

Phase out native forestry with immediate stop of all high value habitat and ecosystems. Forests that contain breeding populations of threatened animals should immediately be added to the national parks estate.

Move towards farm forestry. Plantation forestry and alternate fibres like hemp and bamboo.