

**Submission
No 173**

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

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SUBMISSION TO ENQUIRY INTO THE LONG- TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

Dear Committee,

My comments to your enquiry are largely based on my experience of being resident here on the Mid North Coast, Port Macquarie, since 1975. I have been actively involved in seeking better protection and management of our native forests. I served 8 years on the NSW National Parks Advisory Council, between 1984 to 1992, advising various ministers on the administration of the National Parks Act.

I am appalled and dismayed by the current situation which confronts us when we seriously consider the questions raised by your enquiry into long term sustainability of forest industries. It has an implied bias that the industry has a future.

It may well have, but it will need a radical restructuring and reorientation in direction and function, towards rehabilitative/interpretive management of damaged forests. Any timber harvesting will have to be based on use of plantation timber only; certainly not plantations displacing and destroying native forests, but ones situated on cleared lands, carefully selected, and scaled to avoid any further environmental damage, of the sort that has been wrought to date.

The use of the term ‘sustainable forest management’ is an oxymoron. For many decades now, native forests have been systematically overcut, degraded, or otherwise cleared; the protection of forest biodiversity and other important environmental values such water catchments and now climate mitigation, undermined or ignored.

The outcome of so called ‘sustainably managed forests’, a carefully selected term prompted by marketer’s intent on ‘green washing’ the current failures of our forests management, has outcomes completely at odds with the meaning of “sustainable”.

When describing forestry operations here in NSW, use of the word ‘sustainable’ only appears to make any sense, when saying it does a great job of ‘sustaining’ the profitability of the forest industries. These forest destroying outcomes are achieved only through large public subsidies and one-off grants and other financial supports, with poor or opaque accountability measures, plundering state owned resources which should be treasured and given the highest levels of protection.

A Climate of the Nation survey (Australia Institute) shows there is considerable public support for stronger action by government at all levels on environmental issues, especially forest degradation and deforestation and uncontrolled land clearing. There are other, particularly deep concerns about a rapidly heating planet, the exponential rise of Greenhouse gas emissions and average world temperature, massive plant and animal extinctions and the lack of action from government to provide adequate protections to curb emissions.

The current situation is being called a **climate emergency** by an increasing number of people and organisations concerned with the lack of coherent, scientifically based, climate mitigation measures and responses of which forest management, land clearing laws and policies must play a critical part.

There is increasing evidence that we could trigger runaway global heating, even with existing Paris Accord targets; and some very worrying recent evidence that this may be already happening.

One stance that has alarmed many people, is the active promotion of the burning of wood from native forests to be used in electricity generation, completely at odds with concerns about rising harmful levels of

CO2 and other greenhouse gases and the need to urgently transition to real renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and pumped storage. The use of wood based bioenergy will not only have serious detrimental effects on our future climate outcomes but severe consequences on our capacity to maintain biodiversity.

In June of this year the IPCC reiterated an emphatic decree. To have any chance of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees temperature rise as set out in the Paris Accord targets (and below 2 degrees Celsius), the world must rapidly decarbonise its energy supply and simultaneously reverse the trend of accelerating deforestation and degradation.

If biofuels using trees are promoted as a so called 'renewable' energy source, as seems intended by current events here in this country and overseas, this will have an overall opposite effect. Large areas of forests Here in Australia will be decimated to meet the wood supply demand for this so called "sustainable forest" industry. The NSW North Coast forests are no exception and will certainly face an unprecented 180-fold level increase in logging intensity and related massive increases in wood volumes to be supplied under these agreements.

The forest industry misleadingly claims that only 'residues' or 'wastes' will be used in the production of wood pellets for burning in power stations. **To supply the volumes required, whole logs of smaller diameter, 'pulp logs', will be logged** Ref: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forestry/north-coast-residues-project>

For instance, under the new approved Coastal Integrated Forests Operational Approval (IFOA) in NSW, 140,000 ha of State Forest between Taree and Grafton has been opened for 'intensive harvesting' (i.e. clear-felling). This zone will be clear-felled in areas of 45- 60 ha to create Blackbutt monocultures.

The recent changes to the regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and IFOA will allow the logging of non-saw logs and is set to double from 320,000 to 660,000 tonnes. The affected zones include critical Koala habitat proposed for inclusion in The Great Koala National Park. The use of biomass from native hardwoods will most certainly have serious consequences for many threatened species including the Koala, a sentinel species. Any support for this use will certainly contribute to their almost certain extinction in less than 30 years.

Many of the submissions to the recent RFA/IFOA reviews agreed with other governmental experts who also gave advice, that it is not possible to meet both the wood supply and to meet the requirements of Environmentally Sustainable Management practices (ESMP). Most submissions thought the whole RFA process should be scrapped. Recent announcements of a redrawing of boundaries to allow logging in CAR designated forest zonings, often characterised as 'old growth', confirms the sellout of any attempt to manage the forests sustainably, in the true sense of its meaning.

Despite forest industry and Forestry Corporation assertions, wood is not the renewable energy source it is claimed to be. This is a blatantly dishonest claim. The production and consumption of biofuels and the burning of biomass releases carbon dioxide, per unit of energy produced, the quantities of CO2 added to the atmosphere is greater than that produced by burning coal.

This is especially demonstrated by the rapidly expanding wood fired power stations overseas where the CO2 released is somewhere between 10 and 80% higher than burning coal per unit of electricity produced.

References pertinent to examining the burning of trees for electricity below:

<https://sites.tufts.edu/gdae/files/2019/10/ClimatePolicyBrief7.pdf>

Bioenergy from wood is not carbon neutral and is certainly **not** the solution for decarbonising the economy. Hundreds of European scientists wrote to the EU with the scientific explanation but were ignored.

Ref: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/opinion/need-for-a-scientific-basis-of-eu-climate-policy-on-forests/>

New Report Shows Wood Pellets from Drax's U.S. Mills Increase Carbon Emissions During the Timeframe Necessary to Address Climate Change

As a result, the world is facing a massive increase in the degradation of native forests to supply the demand for wood pellets, and it is not sustainable: an industry heavily subsidised by taxpayers based on the renewable or carbon-neutral fallacy.

Ref: https://www.southernenvironment.org/uploads/publications/Biomass_Factsheet_0719_F_Pgs.pdf

Ref: <https://www.southernenvironment.org/news-and-press/news-feed/new-study-shows-burning-wood-from-sustainably-managed-forests-increases-carbon-pollution-for-40-years>

From Germany:

https://plattform-wald-klima.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Misguided_strategy_burning_wood.pdf

Europe - May 2021

In its new Net Zero scenario, the International Energy Agency (IEA) maps a 60% increase in bioenergy by 2050. But Swapping burning wood for burning coal will not save the climate, warns Peg Putt.

<https://environmentalpaper.org/2021/05/new-iea-roadmap-is-flawed-swapping-burning-wood-for-coal-wont-save-the-climate/>

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/biomass/opinion/we-cant-burn-our-way-out-of-the-climate-crisis/>

Japan

We believe contracts to supply and burn our trees for electricity generation have already commenced in Japan. Japan is reputed to now have the biggest wood fueled power stations in the world.

These arrangements flowed from the trade representations to Japan to discuss supply of wood biomass for this purpose <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/australia-japan-forest-products-trade-strengthened/>

Here in Australia: There is a growing call to expand its use here in Australia which is now being realized. There are already several small power generation companies using forest trees on the North Coast— eg at Condong on the North Coast NSW.

Redbank Power Station- in the Hunter Valley, NSW

We now have a proposal to for a large generator utilizing an old, decommissioned dirty coal fired power station currently being considered by Singleton Council as a “modified development application” as an approved development in 1997. It will use 1 million tonnes of forest wood per annum.

Open letter to governments: Redbank Power Station plan to fuel native forests' demise near Singleton

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/7226747/station-reboot-to-fuel-native-forests-demise-near-singleton/IU>

Final comments for you to consider:

- The present carbon accounting mechanisms for wood sourced energy are flawed and not supported by the science. The use of wood - based fuels, rather than assisting us in the rapid transition to the decarbonized energy systems will impede us in reaching these goals.
- There is a massive and growing worldwide demand for wood chip and pelletised wood for electricity generation.
 - The impact of promoting new bioenergy markets for wood will not only further degrade the forests converting them into heavily industrialised wood factories but will have an unsustainable impact on forest biodiversity and other important contingent environmental values.

- Using trees as fuel to generate electricity and other bioenergy uses has unacceptable risks and serious adverse impacts on our capacity to deal with climate change and our ability to mitigate against runaway global heating.

Recommendations:

- **Support changing the classification of wood as “renewable” energy source to “non- renewable”.**
- **Hold a wide-ranging enquiry into the current logging laws at both Commonwealth and State level and the proposed increased future use of low- quality forest wood and so-called forest residues, as biomass fuel source. As part of this enquiry ask you to seek a thorough audit of wood supply availability to support wood chipping and pelletising our forests and publicly reveal the attendant wood supply agreements.**
- **Champion all forms of genuine renewable energy sources such as solar and wind to contribute to the urgent action to achieve the necessary rapid transition to zero emissions.**

I believe your enquiry whatever its intentions, is not enough! It needs to go much further. What is needed is a full, honest, in depth independent enquiry, with the powers of a Royal Commission, to thoroughly test the assertions I am making here in this submission. I am more than willing to be contradicted and hope I can be.

I would be happy to provide you with further information and i would also be happy to organize an inspection of our local forests if you are interested.

Submitted by

Frank Dennis