

Submission
No 174

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

I am a resident in the Kempsey shire living on a farm which our family has owned for 40 years. During this time we have had the privilege to experience the beauty and majesty by walking, camping and driving in the mid North Coast forests. We have also despaired at watching the continued destruction and degradation of these forests from the logging industry. Now the Coastal Integrated Forest Operations have zoned 140,000 hectares of state forests for intensive logging. The situation is worse now than in the 1990s.

I understand that Australia needs to have a viable timber industry to meet its requirements. Surely this can be met by plantation and farm forestry, (such as on our farm). The industry wants to clearfell our forests to export woodchip and biomass. Not only is this unethical, because of the high pollution and increased carbon emitted, but it also makes poor economic sense as forests are more valuable standing.

Native forest logging impacts not only biodiversity and natural habitat but also communities who live nearby. An example of this is the Nambucca State Forest which is currently under threat. This forest was not burnt in the 2019 fires thus providing valuable habitat for wildlife which suffered huge losses. Threatened species such as yellow bellied gliders, micro bats, squirrel gliders, many bird species including owls, who live in this forest now have to lose their homes, as logging machines move in. Forest Corp has not taken into account the dire situation these species are at since the 2019 fires.

Logging moist old growth forest opens up the canopy causing heating and drying of the soils and vegetation. Dominant eucalypt species such as blackbutt take over from rainforest species increasing the susceptibility to fire. This situation will continue to get worse as climate change will increase fire intensity. The Nambucca township is within 5 km of this forest and thus will be exposed to an increased fire risk. Coastal forest, such as this one, not only provides nutrition and homes for koalas but also provides important green spaces for our community to enjoy. Jacks Track is a popular mountain bike track through this forest. Nambucca could take on this opportunity and build a tourism industry attracting outdoor adventure in the forest such as in Tasmania.

The Nambucca forest is on Gumbaynggirr country. The loss of these forests further causes loss of Gumbaynggirr culture. This community is distressed at the destruction of their trees as witnessed by their presence at the Nambucca forest protest camp.

Nambucca State forest is just one example of the intensification of logging which is occurring on the midnorth coast. NSW has just 1% of original forest remaining. Why are we taxpayers supporting an unsustainable industry for short term goals. Unable to meet forest product demand now, the industry is logging in previously protected areas at a greater intensity. This will end the industry and the forests quicker!

These north coast forests are of global importance due to the biodiversity of eucalypt species and the unique fauna. For example another forest under threat from logging this year is Newry. This forest is part of a continuous corridor from the coast to the range to about 1000 metres. Biodiversity includes Gwandanaland flora. Logging coupes in this forest will isolate the east from the west forest affecting genetic distribution.

I have seen the devastation of clear felling on Lorne State Forest. I have walked through old logged areas in Wirrikimbe and seen how the vines take over and smother the remaining trees and preventing regeneration. These areas take many many decades to recover if at all. In other areas such as around Bellingen, logging has opened areas up to bell miners who drive out all the other birds and cause Bell Miner Associated Dieback of trees in the area. Lantana invades the area and again the forest cannot regenerate. I have seen huge old growth tree stumps illegally felled and koalas in trees in logging compartments about to be logged. Some of these compartments are on very steep slopes of light soils which after heavy rains are liable to slump.

The Nambucca Council was concerned about the increase in sedimentation and water turbidity after the last floods 2021. This situation will only increase with intensified logging and more intense weather events. Native forests provide constant clean water. In Mexico, local communities are paid to keep their mountain forests as it is cheaper than down stream water treatment plants.

Why can we not recognize the ecoservices the forest provide. This includes hollowed trees and habitat for our unique fauna and flora, habitat for insects and birds which help pest control and plants which one day may be useful for pharmaceuticals. The flowering forests are of great importance for our bee industry which is under global threats despite increasing demand for honey, medicinal honey and pollination services. Unlogged forests provide carbon sinks will help meet our climate change targets.

This unsustainable industry must move in a new direction if it wants to survive and thrive. Forest products should come from plantation only providing forest products to Australia and not exported for biofuels and pulp. Plantations should be developed on cleared agricultural land and private farm forests should be encouraged such as in NZ.

State forests should be maintained for ecoservices with the most significant forests transferred to national parks to conserve our national heritage and if well planned attract tourists. The University of Newcastle states a Great Koala National Park would create nearly 10,000 jobs. South Africa uses the safari park to attract visitors to great success. Koalas need a healthy habitat not millions spent on koala hospitals. Loggers could be transferred in to maintenance and protection jobs such as cool control burning or creating tourism amenities such as walking tracks, board walks or camping areas. There are plenty of jobs in these areas.

If we continue the short term goals of logging and clearing we deprive ourselves and future generations of the richness and glory of the forest natural world. We need our forests standing providing us with clean water, air healthy soils ,rich wildlife as we move into the future.