

Submission
No 182

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

Organisation: Bellinghen Nature Company and Bellinghen Nature Tours

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SUBMISSION - BELLINGEN NATURE TOURS AND BELLINGEN NATURE COMPANY

NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

I submit that industrial logging of publicly owned native forests in northern NSW is not in any way sustainable. This is because:

1. SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS ARE GENERATED BY INDUSTRIAL LOGGING OF PUBLIC NATIVE FORESTS

Industrial logging of State Forests causes significant economic harm to the North Coast economy. This is because:

i. Loss of tourism values caused by industrial logging.

A significant and dominant pillar of the North Coast economy is tourism. The value of tourism and the jobs generated far exceed that derived from industrial logging of publicly owned native forests.

Most tourists visiting and spending money on the North Coast are attracted by the natural values and bushland of the region. Nature-based tourism is amongst the fastest growing sectors of our economy. Covid-19 has forced residents to travel internally, thereby capturing many billions of dollars that previously bled our economy to overseas. Tourists do not wish to visit ugly industrially logged areas, to swim in rivers polluted by industrial logging or to ride, walk or drive in weed infested ugly industrially logged areas. The economic value of unlogged public native forests far exceeds the scant value derived from industrial logging of these public assets.

ii. Loss of water supply and water security caused by industrial logging.

Intact native forests maintain water security by maintaining water quantity and quality as a function of biomass and natural ecological and biological functions. Industrial logging of native forests causes a significant loss of biomass, a degradation of ecosystem function and a reduction in biodiversity.

Major North Coast primary industries including agriculture and fisheries depend upon maintenance of water quality and quantity. The value of these two major primary industry sectors far outweighs the economic value and jobs generated by industrial logging.

Municipal water supplies across the Mid North Coast are derived from catchments containing State Forests. Industrial logging of these State Forests impacts adversely on water security by reducing streamflow and reliability and polluting streams. The Regional Water Supply of Coffs Harbour and the Clarence Valley has recently been significantly harmed by unlawful industrial logging at Wild Cattle Creek State Forest. This follows a large proportion of the Regional Water Supply catchment area being heavily impacted by the Bees Nest and Liberation Trail mega-fires, causing a reduction in streamflow and pollution of streams. With all municipal residents between Sawtell and Yamba depending upon this catchment, ongoing industrial logging of State Forests is causing unacceptable costs to the economy, impacting on public interests and depriving over 150 000 residents of water security.

iii. Industrial logging of native forests causes more intense future fires resulting in property impacts, loss of human life, declines in biodiversity and reduction in streamflow.

Industrial logging of native forests causes major changes in fuel distribution, making crown fires significantly more likely, as well as drying forests out, thereby making future fires much more severe. This creates major risks for human assets and lives. The fires between September 2019 and January 2020 were made significantly worse by industrial logging of State Forests. Assets were lost and lives endangered by more severe fires caused by the industrial logging of publicly owned native forests.

iv. Loss of stored carbon and weed infestation in industrially logged native forests

Native forests store and sequester carbon. Native forests draw-down carbon. Both these attributes have massive economic value. Both these attributes are required for the global climate to remain safe and inhabitable.

Industrial logging of native forests removes carbon stores, reduces carbon draw-down capacity and causes ongoing forest degradation that results in ongoing atmospheric carbon contributions including methane generation.

Industrial logging of native forests causes major weed infestations in previously weed-free areas. This in turn causes Bell Miner Associated Dieback and ongoing ecosystem degradation and in places ecosystem collapse.

There is a massive economic cost involved in meaningfully addressing weed infestations in industrially logged State Forests. This is not being done, leaving weed infested ecological wastelands where previously healthy, biodiverse and carbon rich forests existed.

2 SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS, BIODIVERSITY LOSS, LOSS OF STORED CARBON AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IS GENERATED BY INDUSTRIAL LOGGING OF PUBLIC NATIVE FORESTS

The North Coast has the most diverse tall Eucalypt forests on Earth. These forests support the most diverse marsupial assemblages across all space and time and the most ancient songbird species on the planet. These are all being rapidly degraded by landscape-scale industrial logging regimes within State Forests across the North Coast. This is causing harm to forests with Outstanding Universal Values and Nationally Significant Conservation Values.

Industrial logging is causing local extinctions and an accelerated decline in many threatened species. This is exacerbating the extinction crisis. For species such as the Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), Greater Glider (*Petauroides Volans*) and Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*) extinction is demonstrably being hastened by industrial logging of public native forests causing local extinctions, and cascading extinctions because of major populations losses caused by recent mega-fire.

For other threatened species, including many obligate rainforests species such as the Rufous Scrub-bird (*Atrichornis rufescens*), Pouched Frog (*Assa darlingtoni*), Sphagnum Frog (*Phyllorhina sphagnicolus*), Stuttering Frog (*Mixophyes balbus*) and New England Tree Frog (*Litoria subglandulosa*), industrial logging is drying out forests, causing much more severe and widespread fires and ongoing processes of desiccation of the ancient moist refuge forests that these Gondwanan species depend upon. In places such as Wild Cattle Creek State Forest, an area that previously had the greatest diversity of threatened frog species on the continent, extinctions of these species are being accelerated by unlawful industrial logging.

SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FOR ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN FOREST RESTORATION TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY, STORE AND DRAW-DOWN CARBON AND MAINTAIN WATER SECURITY

There are abundant opportunities for employment generation and the re-deployment of logging workers in protecting and restoring native forests. This will improve water security, store carbon (with significant economic value), address environmental weeds and arrest the ongoing decline in our globally significant biodiversity. This will more than compensate for any individual losses and serve the public interest.

I submit that I wish to deliver evidence to the Committee in person.

Mark Graham

Managing Director, Bellingen Nature Company Pty Ltd.