

Submission
No 184

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

Organisation: Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition Inc

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NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – INDUSTRY
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INQUIRY INTO THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

The Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition (CVCC) is a community group based in the Clarence Valley. The CVCC formed in 1988 to campaign against the threat posed to our forests and river by the proposed Harris-Daishowa Pulp Mill. Since that time, the CVCC has been involved with environmental issues – both locally and beyond – and has maintained its long-term interest in the protection and management of our forests.

The CVCC is keenly aware of issues with the management of our forests and believes these issues pre-dated the devastation caused by the 2019-20 to our native and plantation forest resources. As such, the CVCC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the parliamentary inquiry into the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry. Thank you for the extension until Monday 31 May to provide this submission.

The CVCC calls for an end to public native forest logging for the following reasons.

1. Protection of biodiversity.

Native forest ecosystems provide essential habitat for threatened species. It is only old-growth forests – with their mature, over-mature and senescent trees – that provide the hollows needed for a range of threatened birds (e.g. large forest owls and parrots) and arboreal mammals (e.g. gliders). Current intensive logging practices destroy this habitat value.

The 2019-20 fires burnt 1.8 million hectares of habitat and feed trees. Many hollow-bearing trees were destroyed due to the combined effects of the drought and intense fire. The patches of unburnt or lightly burnt forests that are currently being targeted for logging are critical, often tiny, refuges for wildlife and must be protected.

The most ecologically significant state forests must be managed for their biodiversity values. To achieve this, they should be transferred to the national parks estate.

2. Climate change mitigation

Native forest ecosystems provide an important store of carbon – it makes no sense for the NSW Government to be championing the planting of trees to offset greenhouse gas

emissions when trees on public land are logged for woodchips and as fuel stock for biomass-fuelled power stations.

Destroying forests releases carbon that has been stored over the lifetime of the tree, contributing to climate change. Ceasing native forest logging will be a key component to successfully meeting the net zero emissions target of 2050.

3. The state's finances.

Native forest logging makes no economic sense. The Hardwood Division of Forestry Corporation is loss-making. It depletes the financial resources of the state, as well as our state's biodiversity and carbon-store resources. This loss-making is a subsidy to an industry that, due to the increasing mechanisation of the industry, employs very few people.

4. Employment opportunities in plantations and timber processing.

NSW has not managed its forest resources to be self-sufficient in timber products. The NSW Government is supporting an industry which exports low-value products such as wood chips, while we import high-value products like engineered timber.

A plantation-based industry with more processing in Australia could greatly increase jobs in regional parts of the state, including the Clarence Valley.

5. Catchment protection.

Ongoing high levels of turbidity in the Nymboida River – and ongoing Level 1 water restrictions in the Coffs–Clarence Regional Water Supply Scheme – points to major issues with the protection of waterways in the upstream forests.

It is essential that wide, vegetated and fully protected filter strips are established along all watercourses (including first-order streams) in both plantations and native forests.

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. The CVCC therefore calls for an immediate expansion of plantations on land that is currently cleared (i.e. not via conversion of native forest into plantations).

The CVCC is keenly aware of previous commitments towards a plantation-based industry that have not been realised. This was promised in the early 1980s at the time of the Rainforest Decision which included the reservation of Washpool National Park. More recently, in the 1990s and early 2000s, plantations established under managed investment schemes were cleared when the tax-offsets were no longer available. Pine plantations in our local area were destroyed during the 2019-20 fires as they were seemingly not the focus of protection efforts despite them being valuable public assets.

To assist with the transition of the forestry industry from native forests to plantations, the CVCC calls on the NSW Government to:

- make a solid commitment to invest in long-term well protected plantations
- prepare and support the implementation of transition plans for affected communities.

Leonie Blain
Hon Secretary