Submission
No 186

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

Organisation: Australian Sustainable Timbers

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Inquiry into the long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry

Submission by;

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a. the nature of, and relationship within, the value chain between the timber and forest products industry, logistics companies, manufacturers, retailers, exporters and their relationship with timber supply and environmental management, and opportunities to enhance supply chains

- we need to look closely at the supply chain to see how to reduce high grading and retain the quality and productivity in the forests
- contractors currently select trees for harvest and understandably take the best logs (best form, most vigorous, preferred species) and leave the sub-dominant, damaged or supressed trees. While basal area limits are retained, the forests lose vigour and productivity. Over the decades vast tracts of forests on private land become unproductive with not enough sawlog material to warrant harvesting.
- We believe slow and steady high grading over the years has been the main cause of the supply problems in NSW
- It is not economic to rehabilitated degraded forests but it will need to be done to sure up supply for future generations.
- How do we do this?
- Can we incentivise contractors to harvest poorer grade trees and small diameter thinnings with higher cut snig load prices for salvage logs and thinnings?
- This needs to be done together with industry incentives to value add to poor quality timber
- Education to the building industry to accept products from lower grade logs eg: shorter lengths for decking ,flooring , different coloured timber and different species, finger-jointed timber, glue laminated beams

(b) the impact of external influences on the timber and forest products industry, including but not limited to drought, water, fire, regulatory structures, habitat protection and local, state and federal policies regarding climate change and plantation establishment,

- The government needs to address the detrimental effects of climate change on our forests.
- Future timber supply and forest values are being threatened by increasing fire intensity and frequency
- Forests growing back from fires will be thick and overstocked and more fire prone. They will need careful management to get back to a more mature and less fire prone structure. Non-commercial thinning of thick regrowth forests should be considered as a fire mitigation tool.

- Drought is also affecting forests and timber supply

- The recent drought caused large swathes of regrowth forest on private land in the Hunter region to die from water stress. Thinning would have allowed these overstocked regrowth forests to survive this drought and other such stresses.
- We believe there is a need for incentives for non-commercial thinning on private land
- There is a vast regrowth resource on private land but it needs management. This is much cheaper than plantations!

(c) Projections for softwood and hardwood supply and demand over the next 30 years

(d) Transparency and data reporting of timber supply,

(e) opportunities for the timber and forest products industry and timber dependent communities and whether additional protections, legislation or regulation are required in New South Wales to better support the forestry products industry and timber-dependent communities, including opportunities for value adding,

- Big opportunities to value add to the hardwood timber resource through innovation and technology. Government support is needed as the domestic retail banking industry is very hesitant to lend to the hardwood timber sector.

(f) the role of the government in addressing key economic, environmental and social challenges to the industry, including funding and support to encourage improvements in forestry practices, training, innovation and automation, workplace health and safety, industry and employee support, land use management and forestry projects,

- More support for the two main timber certification scheme, both the FSC and PEFC.
- Government support is needed to address poor Native forest silviculture in both the State forest and on Private lands – significant issues with degradation in the forest and NO future resource.
- The Government needs to support education programs that empower land owners with knowledge (eg. Master Tree Growers) to ensure the long term sustainability of the native forest sector (i.e. both timber resource and ecological)

(g) the environmental impact and sustainability of native forest logging, including following the 2019/20 bushfire season,

- The hardwood industry in NSW needs a detailed on –ground forest inventory of the tree resource base (i.e. NOT just done via remote sensing). Our observation is a large percentage of the State Forest land fits into one of the following categories;
    - Young regrowth forests with poor growth rates due to lack of on-going silviculture management ,
    - Significant areas of degraded forest due to past poor silviculture. This is largely the result of the overuse of 'single tree selection'.
    - Significant areas of re-growth forests dominated by a single tree species with low market options and consumer demand eg. Eucalyptus saligna. This is the result of poor silvicultural management both past and present.
    - Significant areas of un-regenerated forest post logging operations due to weed infestations e.g. Lantana camara.

(h) the operation, effectiveness and outcomes of the implementation of the NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap and Bushfire Industry Recovery Package, LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – INDUSTRY

(i) best practices in other Australian and international jurisdictions in relation to the sustainability of the timber and forest products industry, including social sustainability, community and Indigenous engagement and multiple uses of the forest estate and

(j) any other related matters.

- The 'forestry wars' have dug 2 trenches with one side saying 'lock it up' the other 'knock it down'. The middle ground is both difficult and complex to achieve but we are currently a long way from achieving a sustainable native forest timber industry. We believe that the current 'managers' are responsible for 'piloting the ship on to the rocks' and have both degraded the forests (commercially and environmentally) and lost the social licence with the community. This has resulted in a looming native forest timber resource shortage, degraded forest asset and a polarised community.
  The industry blames the RFA (regional forest agreement), now the bush fires for the issues around supply, but until they acknowledge the years of mismanagement and under investment in long term silviculture the situation will continue to decline.