

**Submission
No 216**

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

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Todd Gelletly's Submission to The Inquiry into the Long-Term Sustainability and Future of the Timber and Forest Products Industry.

I have been involved in Native Forest Harvesting all my working life.

Our business has been a producer of renewable energy since 1987. Starting off from humble beginnings cutting chipwood for the sawmill in Cohuna, then wood for the boilers at the local milk and brick factories, to now being one of the largest producers of Red Gum firewood in South Eastern Australia.

Our business employes over 20 staff and is part of a wider local industry that employs in excess of 100 local people which apart from farming our industry is the largest employer in the region.

I have been involved in the Red Gum Timber Industry since I was a kid helping my father on school holidays and have witnessed firsthand the evolution of the wider timber industry over the last 30 plus years to an industry that is one of the most heavily regulated professional timber industries anywhere in the world.

I have also witnessed first hand the positive outcomes our industry produces for the forests and then the benefits that flow onto our community

The products our industry produce are all from sustainable operations. Basically every tonne we harvest grows back in a one year period over the forest estate in which we operate. So it doesn't take too much intelligence to realise that this style of harvesting can go on for ever. You could say it's the ultimate in sustainability!!!!!! If it is growing back at the same rate we harvest it, that makes it carbon neutral.

Native Forest harvesting operations in Australia are best practice, conducted under a strict regulatory framework, world leading and sustainable.

The long-term future of the Timber and Forest products industry needs to be something state and federal governments strive to support and ensure their continuation.

Products produced from native timber harvesting operations have many environmental and economic benefits including storing carbon, are renewable, sustainable and create critical employment in many regional areas of New South Wales and across Australia.

We could fix the whole State Forest/Native Timber Harvesting versus National Park Debate once and for all.

All we'd need to do is line up 100 people from both sides of the argument on a warm summer day.

On one side of the group is an overgrown National Park with hazardous fuel loads literally up to their waists and on the other side of the group is a State Forest that has had a fully integrated harvesting operation with all the residues removed for something like Bio Fuel.

Then we set fire to the area and see what side of the line everyone runs to. Debate over.

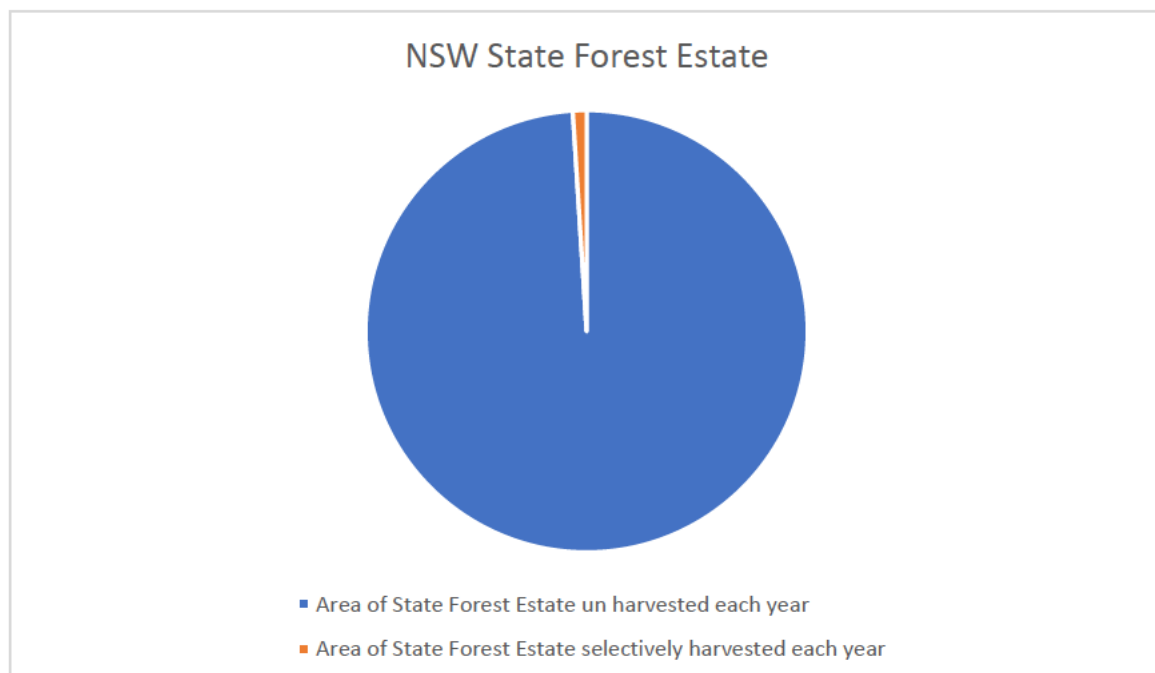
The side where the most people stand is the winner of the debate. (For those who run into the National Park we can put their demise down to Darwin's theory of evolution) It's pretty simple to work out as many people have these ideological dreams and ambitions and run around justifying their position on things but when its life and death, instincts and the will to survive kick in pretty quick and take over.

This inquiry will hear from many coming from far and wide as to why the native timber industry should be shut down, unfortunately many of the people calling for this to occur have no idea what they are talking about, evident recently for calls to shut down the native timber industry due to the threat to koala habitat. The facts are that the main threats to the koala as a species are wildfire, chlamydia, dog attacks, being struck by a motor vehicle and the expansion of the urban sprawl. Not one mention of native forestry harvesting operations, yet the so-called experts wish to close down a sustainable industry that produces carbon storing renewable products as well as supporting regional employment and community well-being.

Having visited the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie personally, the effects of chlamydia and dog attacks and car strikes were there for all to see, ironically not one of the koala patients at the hospital was there from the result of native forest harvesting.

The highly regulated selective harvesting operations in NSW each year cover less than 1% of the State Forests estate. Can someone explain to me how that is unsustainable?

Table 1



Again, how is this unsustainable? How is this threatening the future existence of any form of native species?

Table 2

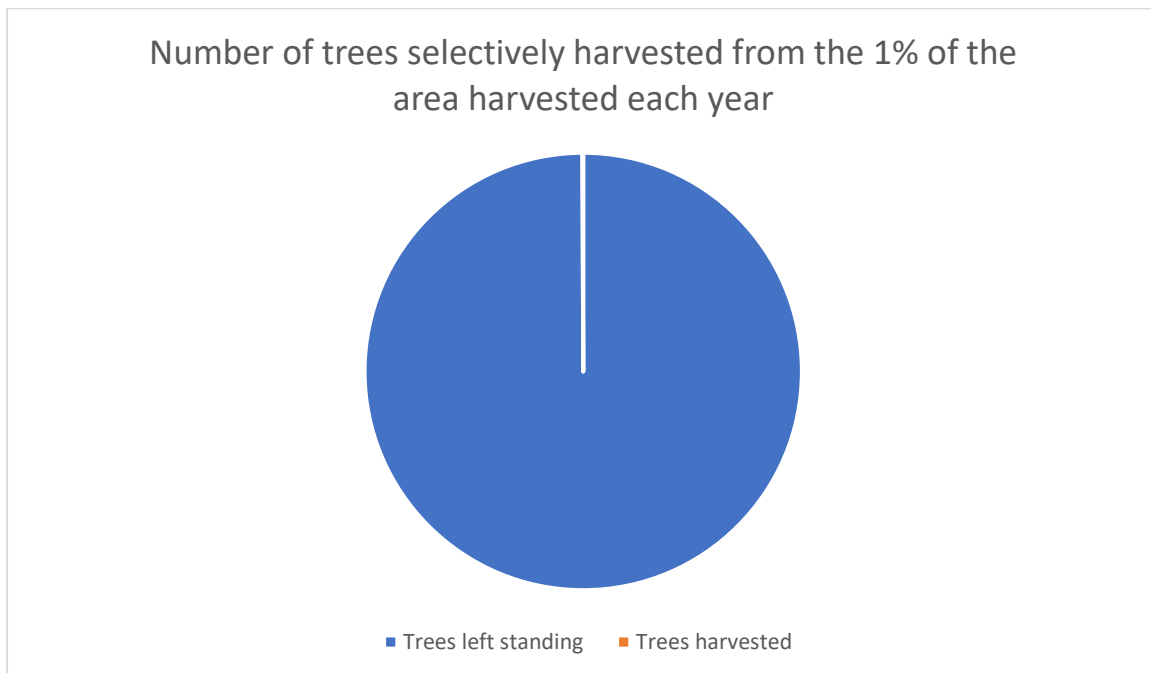


Table 2 represents the total area in orange from Table 1, as you can see the number of trees harvested from the 1% of the State Forest Estate isn't even visible in this graph.

The wider industry across Australia creates 180,000 jobs and generates \$24 billion into the economy accounting for 0.5% of Australia's GDP.

That's \$4,800,000,000 cups of coffee (at \$5/cup) over and above the current sales in Australia, most of which would have to occur in regional areas.

We have good environmental outcomes in state forests and have sustainable timber products to supply Australians now and into the future. Timber is a top-class renewable material suited to many things plus Australian's love using timber.

If we have resource security with rolling 20-year wood supply agreements in line with relevant Regional Forest Agreements investment in the industry and regional NSW would increase as businesses would have the security and confidence to invest and create further employment.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON THE INDUSTRY

One of the biggest influences on political decision making over the last 15 years is the use of the term "Climate Change". The climate has been changing for millions of years yet the ideological greens constantly come out with the scare tactic that the ocean levels will rise by anywhere between 1 and 3 meters by 2050.

If this is true then all the Capital Cities in Australia along with much of the population along the eastern sea board is in big trouble and we only have 29 years left to relocate them to higher ground, perhaps they'll all have to move to the North and the West of the Great Dividing Range. Not sure what we'll do about Hobart, Adelaide, Darwin and Perth though, they might have to move to regional NSW.

Perhaps state and federal governments had better start some compulsory acquisition of suitable land and targeted spending on infrastructure to ease the burden of relocating 80 percent of Australia's population by 2050.

If climate change is as bad as the so-called experts are saying every 10 years from now, we should be seeing a rise in seas levels of anywhere between 30 centimetres and 1 meter. Or 3cm to 10cm every year from now until 2050.

Anyone would think that the price of real estate in these areas would be declining rapidly due to the impending disaster.

In relation to Native Forests if the climate is changing and we are heading into a drier and warmer climate then we need to act. Drier and warmer will mean there will be an overall increase in tree mortality rates so in actual fact we will need to be harvesting more trees to ensure the impacts of climate variation doesn't have a negative impact of native forest health. A reduced availability to rainfall and soil moisture will require a reduction in the standing tree population to ensure the native forests maintain their health and biodiversity.

The increase in harvest rates will also assist with the reduction of available fuel when bushfire strikes. This will also need to be applied to our National Parks as many of the catastrophic bushfires in 2019 / 2020 started in National Parks and due to the lack of access and the dangerously high fuel loads these fires turned into uncontrollable wildfires and the results were devastating loss of life and property, millions of hectares razed and reportedly 3 billion animals perished.

Drier and warmer will also see an increase in native forests vulnerability to fire. Something we can have an influence on is the available fuel. More fuel on the ground and in the understory equals more fierce bushfires. Less fuel means less fierce fires that can be controlled and stopped.

It's interesting to note that on May 31st 2021 some Victorian towns had their coldest overnight or minimum temperature ever recorded, where are the climate change alarmists when statistics like this pop up?? My guess is they are in their inner-city concrete apartments with aluminium window frames under their doona with the electric blanket and split system both set on high. The minute we get a hot windy day they are out in force claiming the world is going to end.

Another interesting stat is that on the 9th and 10th of June 2021 Mount Baw Baw in Victoria recorded its highest ever rainfall event of 230mm in one 24-hour period. Incredible. If you listen to the alarmists anyone would think it was never going to rain again.

In Victoria the state government has announced the closure of the native timber industry by 2030 spruiking the transition to plantations as the saviour of the industry, it has since been proven that the plantation estate is totally inadequate to cater for the industry to transition to and remain viable and sustainable as an industry.

To properly transition to plantation there would have needed to be a vast plantation estate established 80 to 100 years ago and continually added to.

Even then what happens to all the native forest that will essentially be locked up. Costs of management go from approximately \$9/Ha as a State Forest to over \$130/Ha as a National Park. Fuel loads increase to hazardous levels and when a fire does start it is impossible to control let alone extinguish.

The greens while holding certain political parties to ransom are a minority. They shouldn't get the majority of the say when it comes to native forest management.

DEMAND FOR HARDWOOD AND SOFTWOOD FOR NEXT 30 YEARS

The recent bushfires have heavily impacted the key pine plantation regions of Tumut and Tumbarumba in NSW. Areas along the South Coast of NSW have also been hard hit in the native forests with lesser of an impact on the North Coast.

Initially there has been a large increase in the harvesting rates to salvage timber that could be utilised from the pine plantations. The salvage operations have now concluded. Contracts to be issued if not already issued are rumoured to see a reduction from approximately 1.3m tonne annually to approximately 850,000 tonnes annually from the Tumut and Tumbarumba region. A reduction of 450,000 tonnes of log product, close to 34%. It will take decades to get the plantation estate back to the pre fire stocking levels so there will be an increased demand for native timber.

The building industry is facing critical shortages with delays of several months impacting building and construction companies. This is not just in Australia but there seems to be a global shortage of timber.

South Australia is currently holding crisis talks about the shortage of timber in the state. S.A. MP Frank Pangallo, who is also a member of a Select Committee investigating the state's timber industry, said SA's critical \$16 billion building sector was about to enter a "Valley of Death" situation which would have a "catastrophic domino's effect that is expected to be felt across the entire state" Those invited to attend the summit included key industry associations such as the Master Builders Association of SA, the Housing Industry Association, the Plumbers Association of SA and National Electrical Contractors Association, some of the state's leading timber producers and suppliers, and SA's largest homebuilders.

Source: Australian Forests and Timber Magazine

The domino effect they are discussing is the impacts on other trades such as the electrical, plumbing, flooring, cabinet makers, landscaping, roofing and glazier trades that heavily rely on the construction of new homes in order to maintain their businesses. There are many other impacted trades that will feel the pinch of a timber shortage.

Demand for timber products is increasing as consumers see the benefits of utilising a sustainable, renewable product that also stores carbon.

There is a huge push for renewable energy and this is where we can future proof our forests and our regional communities by governments investing in bio fuel plants.

Residues that are produced as a by-product from authorised harvesting operations can be turned into renewable energy and put into to the power grid. This fits in with the circular economy that is constantly talked about.

This will have many economic and environmental benefits as a minimum it will

1. Produce renewable energy that can be a consistent form of baseline power, something the current renewables in solar and wind turbines severely lack.
2. On the back of infrastructure and investment there will be tens of thousands of regional jobs created and rather than welfare dependent struggling communities, we will have regional communities thriving again. In our local region of the Southern Riverina many families and businesses have really suffered ever since the overnight creation of the Murray Valley National Park.
3. Long term responsible forest and fuel load management, something our native Aboriginal tribes had done for tens of thousands of years until European settlement.

There are stories from the early explorers as to how much of the landscape had smoke emanating from it all year round, yet modern day environmentalists ignore the wise Aboriginal people and have this urge to lock things up in order to protect it. Facts are the worst thing we can do to a native forest is to lock it up for its own protection. The 2019/2020 bushfires are testament to this. The devastation the fires caused were a result of decades of poor native forest management allowing hazardous fuel loads to accumulate year on year decade on decade. I have heard respected forest scientists express this view.

Current renewable energy sources are something the greens hang their hats on and refer to all the time but just how renewable are they? Are they sustainable?

The carbon footprint of solar panels and wind turbines in the manufacturing process is something that needs to be also considered as I doubt a wind turbine would ever produce enough 'Renewable Energy' to cover the carbon footprint it creates during its manufacturing process.

DID YOU KNOW?

**EVERY PART OF A WIND TURBINE
DEPENDS ON STEEL**

BLADES
STEEL HOLDS THE BLADES IN PLACE AS THEY TURN

GENERATOR
65% STEEL
35% COPPER

TOWER
90% STEEL
TUBULAR STEEL TOWERS

FOUNDATION
MADE FROM STEEL RE-INFORCED CONCRETE

GLOBAL STEEL PRODUCTION IS DEPENDANT ON COAL

70% OF STEEL* IS MADE FROM COAL

1MW OF WIND TURBINE CAPACITY REQUIRES **220** TONNES OF COAL

= 220 SMALL CARS!

* STEEL IS MADE THROUGH A PROCESS OF MAKING IRON ORE WITH COKING COAL

SOURCES: ACOAL - THE HARD FACTS, WORLD STEEL ASSOCIATION

resources





Used Wind Turbine components in land fill. They can't even be recycled.

In terms of using native timber for energy production, its renewable and sustainable. The fact that is growing back every year at the same rate it is harvested at makes it carbon neutral.

If we lock up all our native forests into National Parks where are Australian's going to get their timber from? Plantations are not a suitable replacement for the needs of the market and the consumer so even more of our timber will be imported from countries where there is little to no regulation on the harvesting of timber and critically endangered species will have more pressure on their environment and likely become extinct.

This is what I would call a sustainable Native Forest Management Model in the diagram below.



The following is a news report posted by the ABC in 2017

Illegal logging operation in Cambodia, Vietnam prompts demand for crackdown on imports to Australia.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS BEING URGED TO CHECK WOODEN FURNITURE IMPORTED FROM VIETNAM, AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF A MASSIVE ILLEGAL LOGGING OPERATION.

Key points:

- *EIA estimates 300,000 cubic metres of timber illegally logged in north-eastern Cambodia in four months*
- *Timber was brazenly smuggled across the border to Vietnam — a big exporter to Australian*
- *Australian importers' compliance with due diligence requirements is low*

Investigators say logs from national parks in Cambodia are being smuggled across the border to Vietnam, where they are being used in the country's flourishing furniture industry.

"This is the single largest log-smuggling operation that we have seen for years," said Jago Wadley, senior forests campaigner at the London-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA).

The EIA estimates that between November and March at least 300,000 cubic metres of timber was cut down in Cambodia's north-eastern Ratanakiri province and exported to Vietnam, despite a logging ban.

The operation was facilitated by millions of dollars in bribes to local officials, with stockpiles located near Vietnamese military outposts on the border, according to the EIA investigation.

"The brazen nature of this smuggling is certainly new," Mr Wadley told the ABC.

The frenzy of illegal logging began late last year, driven by Vietnam's other neighbour Laos starting to enforce its logging laws.



This left Vietnam's timber processing industry without enough raw material.

"So it has obviously set its sights on Cambodia as an easy replacement source of cheap illegal tropical wood for its market," said Mr Wadley.

Importers fail to check timber

The EIA did not track the illegally-felled Cambodian logs through Vietnam so it is not yet known where the products ended up.

"We have in the past seen western consumers buying outdoor furniture very often manufactured in Vietnam made with very highly suspect timber from countries like Laos and also Cambodia," said Jago Wadley.

Australia is a major market for the Vietnam timber industry.

Last year, Australia imported \$300 million worth of timber products from Vietnam — mostly wooden furniture.

"Australia has the illegal logging prohibition act of 2012 which puts the onus on the importer to demonstrate that the timber, or the trees from which the timber was produced, were legally harvested," said John Halkett, general manager of the Australia Timber Importers Federation.



However, most importers are failing to conduct due diligence.

In February, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources released the results of compliance checks of the 512 biggest importers.

It found only 35 per cent complied with the overall due diligence requirements.

Only 8 per cent of furniture imports were made with certified timber.

The checks are part of an extended "soft start" to enforcing the 2012 legislation, with no penalties for importers who fail to verify their timber products.

Mr Halkett said the complex supply chains made it difficult for smaller importers to carry out the necessary checks.

He also said most of the timber used in the Vietnamese imports was sourced from plantation-grown acacia trees.

"Those plantations are harvested and made into furniture which is sold through a number of large national furniture networks in Australia," said Mr Halkett.



[Photo: It's illegal to import this wood in Australia but compliance with checks is low. \(Supplied: EIA\)](#)

"I think it's a different story when you talk about species out of natural forests [from Cambodia] ... and there's well established records that significant amount of that timber finds itself into Chinese markets and from there of course into world markets, particularly markets that are importing furniture."

China is the largest supplier of timber products to Australia, exporting \$2.7 billion worth to our shores last financial year.

The EIA said Australian shoppers should not have to worry about buying products made from illegally-logged timber.

"They're not in a position to navigate the complex world of regulatory compliance that's needed to identify illegal timber in these types of products and they expect governments and companies to clean up this sector for them," said Mr Wadley.

"So the Australian Government can look into what its importers are bringing on to the market in Australia and potentially use laws at its disposal to maybe do something about it," said Mr Wadley.

End of report.

THE RISK OF COMPLETE RELIANCE ON PLANTATION TIMBER

The fires in the Tumut and Tumbarumba region around Christmas 2019 are of significant warning to the wider industry if we become reliant entirely on plantations as our source of timber. The loss of such a large percentage of the plantation estate in such a short period (a matter of days) could see not only the timber industry brought to its knees into the future if native forestry is ceased in order to create National Parks, but also the building and construction industries as well.

Plantations are located in targeted areas and usually in close proximity to each other, the risk is that a wildfire could wipe them all out. Where will our timber come from then? Our construction and building industries would be crippled and so would tens of thousands of jobs. We would be waiting months on end for imported timber to arrive and the price would sky rocket bringing into question the ability to complete projects on budget and then build affordable housing for the average Australian.

All of our eggs would well and truly be in one very small basket for timber supply.

That is the last thing any business runs the risk of exposing all of its risk in one small sector. Many industries are seeing the negative effects of heavy reliance on one large customer as recent trade tensions with China continue to increase.

It's just too risky so why would we risk entire industries like the timber industry as well as the building and construction as well.

Let's just say we do turn all Native Forests into National Parks we then have hazardous fuel loads in National Parks that are right next to high value plantations so the risk of wildfire wiping out the entire plantation estate into the future would be even greater than the devastating summer of 2019/2020. It would only take one lightning strike on the wrong day and what's left of the entire New South Wales timber supply chain could be lost, along with tens of thousands of jobs. New South Wales has the largest state population in Australia. These possible outcomes are a very real prospect and matter considerably to our future.

Complete reliance on plantation timber is too greater risk to consider, sustainable native timber harvesting is critical to the future sustainability of the timber and products industry.

Refer to Appendix 1 attached with this submission, **Frames and Truss Manufactures Association of Australia, Housing Update May 2021** for further information in relation to the demand for timber.

TRANSPARENCY AND DATA REPORTING OF TIMBER SUPPLY.

There needs to be greater scrutiny on timber imports and consumers need to be educated as to its origin and impacts on the environment from where it came.

Australian native timber should be more highly prized and recognised for its strict regulatory controls and long-term sustainability and the environmental and economic benefits that flow from the industry. Forestry experts do say that regulations in NSW are some of the strictest in the world. We are put down and targeted all the time by activists. But the truth is we should be proud of what we are doing and encouraged to continue sustainable operations for 100's of years to come.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRY INCLUDING VALUE ADDING

The native timber industry in NSW would jump at the opportunity to be involved in the production of bio fuel through the removal of residues from harvesting operations. This would have the strict regulatory framework under which we operate applied of course. Fully integrated operations could return across the state and utilisation of residues from sustainable operations would increase the value chain dramatically creating more employment and economic benefits for regional communities and less fossil fuel power production would be needed.

BIO FUEL.

Bio Fuel can provide the answer to the problem. The environmental movement want renewable energy, well Australia's Native Forests have an abundance of renewable and sustainable energy.

Due to the poor management practices over the last 20 – 30 years we have wasted millions of tonnes of renewable energy. It has literally gone up in smoke.

Not only have we wasted millions of tonnes of renewable energy we have incurred an incredible cost in fighting the fires and then recovering and rebuilding infrastructure and housing which I imagine would be beyond any investment required to establish bio fuel plants across the state. Let alone the terrible experiences families and firefighters have had in the bushfires.

The timber industry can provide a solution to the extreme fuel loads that have been allowed to build up over decades.

Governments must be prepared to invest in Bio Fuel plants to utilise residues from harvesting operations. These bio fuel plants can be strategically located to streamline the process from the harvesting of the timber to the efficient delivery to the bio fuel plants to produce energy.

I propose that many of the sawmills throughout the state of NSW are ideal locations for a number of reasons.

1. Their locations are relative to the timber supply areas and additional employment in regional areas would strengthen local communities.
2. A lot of the infrastructure is already in place ie: Roading network, log yards, log handling equipment to name but a few.
3. The critical industry knowledge is already in place. Harvest and haulage crews along with mill owners and operators are already there just give them more to do and they will manage the forests and fuel loads for you, pay you money in the form of timber royalties and then produce energy to put into the grid. Fully integrated operations will return to the entire Native Forest Estate regardless of land tenure. This can be done completely sustainably.
4. The business acumen of the saw mill owners has been proven over a long period of time, in many cases over multiple generations.

Alternatively opt for entirely new sites that are located in relation to the timber supply and existing electricity supply infrastructure to maximise the efficiencies of getting renewable energy back into the grid.

If we don't utilise the products and reduce the fuel loads this will happen again and again.

LOCKING THE GATE TO THE FORESTS IS NOT THE ANSWER

How does a National Park "protect" the landscape?? Can anyone answer that question please?

According to the Institute of Foresters Australia there is 20 million Hectares of Native Forests in NSW. Production Forests make up just 2 million hectares of that. How is Native Timber Harvesting the problem here?

National Parks management practices are pretty simple, just lock it up and leave it. Look where that has lead us to.

Reportedly 3,000,000,000 animals, yes 3 Billion, perished in the catastrophic fires of 2019/2020. No one I know in the timebr industry was surprised this happened. It was just a question of when. To match such a shameful outcome over a 100 year period of native

timber harvesting the timber industry would have had to have killed 30 million animals per year for 100 years which equates to 576,923 animals per week 52 weeks of the year or 115,348 animals every day in a 5 day working week.

We can still have National Parks, yet the management of them has to change. Why in Australia, one of the hottest and driest continents on earth, do we lock up forests for their protection? When you then add that many of these forests are Eucalyptus it makes no sense at all.

The Australian Oxford Dictionary describes Eucalyptus Oil as Any of several volatile oils extracted from the leaves.....

Volatile oils, locked up with little to no management of the extreme fuel loads in which it is surrounded by. You couldn't make this up. How stupid are we?????

We lock up huge tracts of land with millions and millions of tonnes of eucalyptus trees within them in full knowledge that in summertime lightning strikes are ever present and will start bushfires, not might or maybe, they definitely will.

That's just one cause of fire then we have arsonists and a whole myriad of causes that can, will and do lead to devastating bush fires.

A locked up Eucalyptus Forest in Australia with extreme fuel loads building year on year, decade on decade is a bushfire catastrophe sitting idle for 5, 10 or 20 years just waiting for the right weather conditions to present themselves and a source of ignition and within minutes we have an out of control bushfire that then turns into a fire like we saw impact Cobargo in NSW. Uncontrollable, unpredictable and devastating anything that gets in its path. Killing people, destroying property, devastating the forests and its inhabitants along with generations of blood sweat and tears.

Regardless of land tenure we have to change the management of our Native Forests now.

AUSTRALIAN POPULATION GROWTH

If Australia continues with the current average population growth rate (1.5%), by 2050 the Australian population will reach 40 million and by 2100 it will reach 53 million, which means Australia's population will more than double by 2100.

The Eastern Sea-board is the most populated area of Australia for obvious reasons.

Where are they all going to live? How are we going to provide the essential services for this population number? Where will our "base load" power come from to "keep the lights on?"

They all can't live in the city. The facts are there will be a higher population living in regional areas surrounded by Native Forests. So, into the future bushfires of any consequence will impact higher numbers of populated areas and then add the increase in population in these area's which will kill more people, devastate more communities unless we change the management and fuel loads of Native Forests.

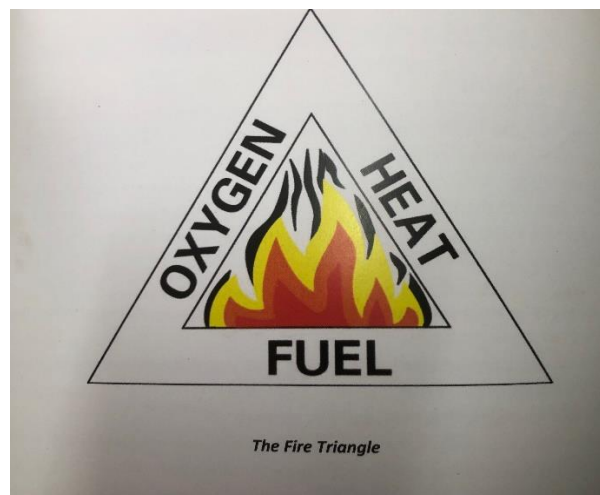
In 2028 when the Yallourn Power Station is fully decommissioned, according to the Australian Energy Regulator, Victoria and South Australia are facing an uncertain power future and are already admitting that power shortages and power outages in peak demand will occur.

We will have an increased demand for electricity into the future and a higher density of population living in regional areas surrounded by native forests so it makes sense to invest in bio fuel. The benefits are

1. Renewable energy that can provide base load power when the wind and sun are having little effect.
2. Reduction in fuel loads in native forests of all land tenures.
3. Greater capacity to control wildfire.
4. Bushfires will burn at a reduced intensity ensuring the recovery period of the native forest will be far shorter and the loss of biodiversity reduced significantly.
5. Regional employment and prosperity.

THE FIRE TRIANGLE

A fire only needs three things to continue burning. Heat, Oxygen and Fuel, take away any one of these three components and the fire will go out.



OXYGEN.

Oxygen makes up about 20 percent of the atmosphere and is virtually impossible to remove from a wildfire.

HEAT.

Every fuel has a temperature at which it will burn. Once a fuel reaches its particular ignition temperature it ignites. Fire sends a lot of energy into adjacent unburnt fuels, drying out moisture levels, then it, the adjacent fuel, catches fire and the fire grows.

FUEL.

Fuel is anything that will burn under suitable conditions. The more fuel available the more intense the fire. Fuel has a multiplier effect in that if you double the fuel you quadruple the intensity. If you quadruple the fuel load you increase the intensity by 16 times. Think about that point in terms of fuel loads in native forests.

Fuel is the only thing we can control in the landscape. We possess the ability to reduce the fuel loads so why aren't we doing it? Instead we do the opposite we allow it to increase to the point where it decimates anything in its path when fire strikes.

The reintroduction of Cattle grazing should be immediate as should cultural cool burns and Hazard Reduction burning operations be given greater funding.

A combination of measures to reduce the fuel load in our Native Forests is the key to reducing the impacts and devastation of Bush Fires not only on communities but the forests themselves.

The environmental movement will argue against the use of Bio Fuel but history has shown every 10, 20 or 30 years it burns anyway.

So what's the flaming difference?

At least with Bio Fuel it creates jobs, creates renewable energy and controls the fuel loads in Native Forests. The benefits that flow on from this for Native Forests make this proposal worthwhile.

RED GUM STATE FOREST EXAMPLE OVER THE BLACK SUMMER of

2019 - 2020

Over the summer of 2019/2020 our business was called upon to assist in the fight of 5 fires within the local Red Gum State Forests. We provided an immediate response and had men and machinery on the fire ground within an hour of being called out. At one such fire our harvesting crew employees were the first responders to a lightning strike nearby our operations.

Our business has 4 trained firefighters available for Forestry Corporation to call upon at any stage. In some cases, we are placed on call when weather conditions are severe. We also have critical equipment to assist in the response to fire. Our company has the only enclosed cabin log skidder in the region and is described by Forestry Corporation as the key piece of equipment in red gum firefighting. It is critical in being able to push containment lines around the fire in a short period of time. We also have an 18,000-litre bulk water tanker

with firefighting hose reel to assist. The water truck is critical in keeping enough water up to the Forestry fire truck and the numerous Forestry utes with firefighting appliances on the back.

Can anyone tell me why that with no less than 5 fires in the Red Gum State Forests that we didn't suffer catastrophic fires like the rest of NSW and Victoria? Why did we only have fire impact a maximum of 20 Hectares from 5 fires?

The answer is simple, there wasn't the available fuels for the fire to spread. Why weren't there fuels available? The local timber industry conducts fully integrated operations removing saw log and marketable residues in a single pass.

The Director of Native Hardwood Division of FCNSW Daniel Tuan has stated that the Red Gum Forests have the best utilisation of any State Forest in the State of NSW.

One such fire in November 2019 we attended and on a catastrophic fire rating day of 44 degrees and gusty winds, a skeleton crew of 5 timber industry members and one supervising FCNSW employee kept the fire contained within the containment lines. Experienced industry members working alongside experienced FCNSW staff was critical but the overriding factor was the lack of available fuel for the fire to consume and grow to a size and strength beyond our capacity to contain it. How do I know this, I was there on the ground fighting the fire and we did an incredible job.

We know the lay of the land, we live here, we work in the red gum forests every day, we understand real world forest conditions and the weather and the risk some weather conditions bring. More than anything we want the red gum forests to be healthy and to go on and on into the future.

If Bio Fuel plants are invested in and positioned at strategic locations across the state the entire native forest estate can have its fuel loads reduced and utilised in the creation of renewable energy. Regional communities will prosper, the forests will benefit and the economy will be stronger and the future reduction of bush fire devastation will benefit the entire country.

Options for the Government are simple,

1. Invest into industries that can utilise native forest residues reducing bush fire threats into the future.
2. Or just do nothing and every 20 to 30 years' history will repeat itself until finally strong leaders with common sense make changes in relation to Native Forest Management in Australia.

I welcome anyone to use the utilisation of the Red Gum Timber Industry as a roadmap to future proofing to the best of our ability our Native Forests across the State and the Country for that matter.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES TO THE INDUSTRY

The role of the state government should be to ensure the long-term viability of the industry by awarding rolling 20-year wood supply agreements in conjunction with relevant Regional Forest Agreements (RFA's).

The state government of the time should continue and strengthen its relationship with key stakeholder groups and businesses and listen to the experience and knowledge that we as a collective can provide over generations of industry involvement. It must listen to legitimate forest scientists too, not just the loud alarmist activists.

A product of this inquiry should be that the industry is not just consulted with as to the future direction of the native timber industry but actually listened to and governments implement our management principals under the continued strict regulatory framework in which we operate. We are the source of critical materials needed for the people in NSW and Australia. One day when we are all gone most of the hardwood timber supply will be imported from places with weaker or no environmental regulation and then face the risks of shipping disruption, currency fluctuations and illegal logging to name just a few of the challenges faced in the future when wanting to utilise hardwood.

In terms of funding the industry to support and encourage improvements to forestry practices bio fuel makes perfect sense. The bio fuel plants will create long term employment therefore the rolling 20-year wood supply agreements would be well justified.

There would be many other funding opportunities for the industry to take advantage of including but not limited to

1. Improved log truck safety.
2. Upgrading of the roading network to cater for larger configuration trucks to ensure an overall reduction of truck traffic on the roads.
3. Localised firefighting training for industry members.
4. To upskill local industry members and local Indigenous groups to ensure cultural and hazard reduction burns are increased.
5. To ensure forest roading networks are maintained each year to ensure access in the event of fire breaking out.

6. Invest in technology to assist in the detection of forest fires in order to speed up the response.
7. Invest in the expansion and diversification of the plantation estate for both native hardwood and softwood alike.

Environmental Impact and Sustainability of Native Forest Harvesting including Following the 2019/2020 Bushfires

As per tables 1 and 2 from earlier in this submission the area covered by native forest harvesting is miniscule. Forestry Corporation NSW are conducting a thorough assessment of the impacts of the 19/20 bushfires and will continue to assess the long-term sustainable yield from native harvesting operations.

Fire has always been part of the Australian landscape so the forests will recover but what we can do is reduce the available fuels into the future for fire to access

It is interesting to see how the United States of America is reacting to wildfire over many years with a recent report in the Australian Forests and Timber Magazines "Daily News" edition.....

US to Double or Quadruple Thinning to Reduce Wildfires

The United States must double or quadruple the rate at which it thins and removes dead wood from its forests to reduce the threat of wildfires that have become more frequent and severe due to climate change, the Biden administration said on Thursday. Source: Reuters

The call for a more ambitious forest management program comes after a record wildfire season in 2020 that burned more than 10 million acres, nearly half of which were on lands owned by the US Forest Service.

The yearly blazes have grown worse in recent years because global warming has brought warmer temperatures and periods of drought, and also because decades of lax forest treatment practices have led to a build-up of dead trees and brush.

"Forest Service and other research scientists have determined that this current level of treatment is not enough to keep pace with the scale and scope of the wildfire problem," the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said in a document laying out the department's climate change strategy.

The USDA, which manages the 193 million acres of Forest Service land, said forest treatment rates need to rise by between two- and four-fold. That would result in an additional 50 million acres of federal, tribal and private lands, primarily in Western U.S states, being treated in the next 19 years, it said.

The Forest Service treated 2.65 million acres in 2020 to reduce the dead wood that fuels wildfire. The agency also said it would increase reforestation efforts to help boost forests' ability to sequester carbon dioxide. Forests now sequester the equivalent of 14% of US carbon dioxide emissions, the report said, a level which the agency said could increase by 20%.

*Strategies to remove carbon from the atmosphere are regarded as critical to meeting US President Joe Biden's goal to decarbonize the US economy by 2050. **Source:** **Australian Forests and Timber Magazine***

Epping Forest National Park Queensland

The Epping Forest National Park is dedicated to the conservation of the Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat. It is located approximately half way between Longreach and Mackay (as the crow flies) and I see a critical quote from their website as extremely relevant to NSW Native Forests and the whole State Forest versus National Park debate

“Threats to the northern hairy-nose wombats at Epping Forest National Park include uncontrolled fires that can destroy large areas of wombat feeding habitat. Food competitors, predators that can kill wombats and weeds that can alter and degrade their habitat. These threats have to be managed to help the wombats survive and their population increase”.

Think about this quote and apply it to native forests in NSW. We don't need large tracts of land locked up for so called conservation. What we need is better management of the areas set aside for so called Conservation. These threats have to be managed.

Status of the Red Gum Timber Industry

In 2010 the industry was decimated by the introduction of large-scale National Parks. What remained of the industry has been hindered by the available resource set out in the IFOA. The NRC disagreed with Forestry Corporation NSW's inventory volumes and argued a much smaller volume to be made available to the industry. Without any science behind it the volume made available to industry was made up on the back of an envelope in the Environment Ministers office.

Today the Red Gum Timber Industry is centred around the twin towns of Barham and Koondrook on the Murray River and the township of Balranald. There are two sawmills and four separate firewood operations encompassing 8 businesses who rely on timber supply from the Red Gum State Forests and Western Land Leases.

The Arbuthnot Saw Mill in Koondrook has been in operation on its current site since 1889. Its longevity in Red Gum sawmilling stretches across three centuries totalling 132 years in

operation and guess what? The Red Gum Forests are still here!!! In actual fact there are more Red Gum trees now than when Arbuthnot's first started sawmilling all those years ago.

Mathoura Red Gum Sawmills is owned and operated by Chris and Dawn Crump a name synonymous in the Mathoura region as they are now 3rd generation sawmillers. Chris and Dawn continue to operate in Mathoura providing critical employment in a small town that has been ravaged since the introduction of 107,000 hectares of Red Gum National Parks in 2010.

The residue side of the red gum industry is critical to the makeup of the industry and the health of the forest. There are four separate mills being ourselves and O'Brien's Red Gum at Barham who also encompass Campi Bulk and Peter Strange as residue licensees.

At Balranald there are two operators in Forest Logging and ARH Firewood.

All the residue is processed into firewood that services the States of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

In total the Red Gum timber industry employs in excess of 107 FTE's.

It's interesting to note prior to the politically motivated "Red Gum Decision" to lock up 107,000Ha of Red Gum State Forest into National Park the Red Gum Industry employed over 530 FTE's.

In comparison this is like reducing the NSW Public Sector employees from 330,000 down to just 66,000. The loss of over 400 full time jobs in our community has been devastating. Some small towns in regional NSW don't even have 400 people live there.

The reliance on our industry now as an employer in small regional communities has never been more critical. The products produced by the Red Gum Timber Industry generate between \$21 million and \$25 million at the retail end of the supply chain. At our end 85% to 90% of our expenditure is done at a local level. Companies such as the fuel station the tyre service, the hardware and mechanical businesses in Barham and surrounds all rely heavily on the local timber industry. We employ local residents and they in turn have kids at local schools, they partake in local sporting and community-based clubs and associations which in turn generates support for other businesses in town such as the supermarkets, pubs and clothing stores and so on it goes.

If our industry disappears our local economy will suffer a huge loss. The population will decrease dramatically as there isn't the available replacement employment in our region, job losses mean people have to sell up and move. This effects the schools, sporting clubs and the social fabric of our communities.

Numerous droughts and drastic fluctuations with water availability to the farming businesses of the region have highlighted the critical importance of our industry as a reliable form of employment in the region.

On top of all the challenges regional businesses have faced in the last 20 years Covid 19 wreaked havoc on many businesses during 2020. Except the Red Gum Timber Industry as we were classified as an essential service, we have been able to continue to provide consistent stable employment and economic value to the community.

I can vividly recall driving home from work of a night time usually around 7 to 730pm and driving through the main street of Barham it was like a deserted town, not a light on not a pub or a café open and not even a car parked in the street, you could have been mistaken for it being 3am not 7pm.

I can still see the look of fear and trepidation on the faces of the business owners who had never faced so much uncertainty.

Covid 19 again showed just how critical the timber industry is to towns like Barham, Koondrook and Balranald as a form of reliable stable employment.

A closure of the Red Gum Industry would have immediate impacts on the sustainability of many businesses in the townships of Barham, Koondrook and Balranald.

Forestry Corporation NSW has conducted a resource review and the outcome is an increase in the available overall resource of 17% yet the political gamesmanship between the office of the Minister for the Environment and the office of the Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade and the delays are holding the industry back in major fashion. The Chief Scientist's Office has been involved and the delays continue to frustrate the entire industry and our businesses are held to ransom. The volume review should be made a priority.

The industry is ready to invest further in their businesses and employ more people yet the political system is holding us all back and we are sick of it.

Our Business

Personally, our business is facing unprecedented demand for our firewood as a renewable source of energy and heat. Our current supply is 99% from State Forests. Gradually our product mix is heading more and more to split firewood. This suits our business as the value adding in the supply chain is under more of our control.

If more national parks are introduced there will be many homes in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales overnight without any form of heating as many homes only have a wood heater as their source of heating. The natural gas network is insufficient to cater for the loss of wood heating.

Our business has invested millions of dollars into state-of-the-art equipment to increase productivity and safety in the production of our firewood. Safety improvements include harvesting equipment meeting and exceeding Australian and International standards for safety in relation to the operator's cabin. We have also invested in improving log truck

safety with front and rear gates, automatic load binders and electronic braking all added to our fleet in the last 12 to 18 months.

We are eagerly awaiting the outcome of the FCNSW Red Gum resource review where the wider industry would look to further invest and create employment.

The additional volume identified would generate a further \$8 million into the economy and the potential to create 40 to 50 full time jobs.

But until we are given additional resource and security, we have reached a point where we are sceptical about further investment due to lack of future resource security and longevity.

Given longer term resource security with 20 year rolling wood supply agreements we would immediately invest a further \$2 million into infrastructure and equipment to produce bagged firewood to be distributed to retail outlets across the country. This would stimulate our local economy and create a further 10 jobs overnight. This would see the highest possible value adding to the supply chain all under our control and increase our businesses economic return to the local region.

The Mathoura Example.

Mathoura is small town in the Southern Riverina of NSW located between Moama and Deniliquin and along the Western border of what was the Millewa group of state forests and now the Murray Valley National Park.

It was dealt a cruel blow in 2010 when the NRC and the Labor Government of the time handed down the "Red Gum Decision". Its widely known through political circles that that particular decision was a politically motivated decision to gain green preferences. Ian Cohen from the Green's at the time stated in the NSW Parliament that Labor "had better deliver on the Red Gums or it could forget greens preferences".

That's when we got our "lesson in politics" from the then Minister for the Environment Frank Sartor at the Gulpa Sawmill in Deniliquin. The Minister stated that in order to win the next election Labor needed green preferences. Nothing scientific about that, just politics.

Far from scientific the NRC with anything other than wild predictions that the millennium drought would last forever and climate change was to ensure it would never rain again set about ensuring there were large scale National Parks.

Professor Peter Kanowski of the ANU even bet a slab of crown lager stubbies with an industry member when touring the Koondrook State Forest that the particular creek bed we were all standing in would never see flood water again, the very next Spring that same creek bed had 4-5 meters of flood water surging through it, the slab of beer was delivered and consumed. A hollow victory for industry really as we had just lost 107,000 ha of state forest based on so called scientific expertise, yet we as locals were left in the wake. The region is now stuck with national parks forever.

\$70,000,000 annual industry. At the meeting I gave Commissioner Williams the following information. To replace a \$70,000,000 industry with tourism to our region it meant that for 52 weeks of the year there had to be an additional 384 tourists per week each spending \$3,500 per week of their visit over and above the existing tourism numbers. I then asked him the question if he thought that a husband and wife with two kids would spend \$14,000 dollars on a one-week holiday to the region. He simply shook his head and said “No”.

Commissioner Williams knew that his dream of the tourist dollar replacing the industry was never going to happen, yet the NRC still delivered large scale National Parks in full knowledge the economic losses would never be replaced by the tourist dollar.

With the term “Covid Normal” creeping into our vernacular the tourism industry is suffering, many closing their doors for lockdowns and unfortunately some closing for good. What regional communities desperately need is long term reliable employment not the promise of the unrealistic dreams of others.

Best Practices in Australia and International Jurisdictions in relation to sustainability of the timber and forest products industry, including social sustainability community and indigenous engagement and multiple use of the forest estate.

Australia’s timber industry is world leading in sustainability and regulation and its time governments rewarded this with 20 year rolling wood supply agreements that run hand in hand with relevant Regional Forest Agreements. Our operations are sustainable so its time our risk and investment were rewarded with sustainable futures for our businesses.

Australia is way behind the rest of the world when it comes to bio fuel it’s time we caught up. In Australia, one of the hottest driest continents on earth, every 20 to 30 years it burns anyway costing Billions of dollars to fight it and then recover from. It’s time we harnessed the energy, create jobs and reduce fuel loads and the impacts of wildfire on our native forests and surrounding communities. On top all that the industry would pay the government a royalty for the timber harvested.

Indigenous engagement can also play a crucial role in forest management and the reduction of the fuel loads to sustainable levels through cultural burning. After all, the Aboriginal people managed our native forests for tens of thousands of years prior to European settlement. Particularly in National Parks and areas of high conservation value.

Multiple use or active management is the forest management practice we should be employing across all tenures while recognising there are areas very high in conservation

value and their management will be different than that of areas utilised for timber production, we must move away from the practice of locking up huge tracts of land in order to “protect it” and appease the greens and their preferences at election time. Rather quite the opposite, we need to actively manage it through a variety of methods including timber harvesting, hazard reduction burns, cultural burns and cattle grazing.

Every time we lock up another National Park in Australia, we create more and more demand for timber produced illegally overseas placing critically endangered species such as the iconic Sumatran Tiger’s and the Orangutan’s at greater risk of extinction.

Recent bushfire history in Australia suggest that areas locked up for conservation are actually locked up for devastation instead, the opposite of the desired intention.

Todd Gelletly

Managing Director

Gelletly Red Gum Firewood

30 years hands on experience in Native Forest Management.