

Submission
No 218

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry.

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this as a submission to the inquiry into the long term sustainability of the timber industry in NSW.

My submission is based on experience gained from many years travelling and hiking in the environment, also having previously worked for NSW Forestry and more recently, observations as an avid recreational mountain biker.

Work for NSW Forestry:

- 1) The bulk of my work for NSW Forestry was vegetation mapping and documentation, and a study of the health of population numbers of the Greater Glider and the impact of logging on this species.
- 2) The study of Greater Gliders resulted in the state forest they inhabited being made a National Park. It was found that logging was having a detrimental impact on Greater Gliders through disturbance, habitat destruction and destruction of habitat hollows placing further pressure on an already vulnerable species.
- 3) Latest evidence points to Greater Gliders in NSW still in decline along with many other species of both fauna and flora.
- 4) This work for Forestry also gave me a firsthand insight into the environmental standards to which logging companies are held. People in general think of logging as just the taking of selected trees from a forest, this is not the whole story. From firsthand observations it became evident that the impact of the cutting down of trees itself was not the only or even greatest of the environmental damage inflicted by this industry. Impact from the heavy vehicles accessing the forest and the access of tree harvesting machinery severely impacts non target vegetation and habitat. Also disturbing soils over large areas opening up for soil erosion and the subsequent polluting of waterways.
- 5) It is clear that the removal of trees is only a fraction of the environmental impact of the logging industry. The accessing of the logging area, accessing target trees by harvesting vehicles and onsite processing of trees for transport has a serious and lasting impact on the environment far outside the actual logging zone.

Recreational Mountain Biking:

6) As a recreational mountain biker I spend many hours in state forests, mostly my local mountain bike park which lies within a state forest. I have been riding for the past 10 years.

7) It should be noted that this state forest is extremely important habitat for vulnerable and threatened species including **Koalas**.

8) Over this period of time I have seen a number of concerning matters arise from the manner in which this forest is managed. I have included these matters as an example of the mismanagement that occurs regarding state forests.

9) Logging had started within this forest a number of weeks prior to the 2019-2020 fires. This section of forest being logged is within the MTB Park area. All vehicle access roads into the compartment being logged were blocked by the bulldozing of piles of trees over access trails. These same roads were also meant to be the fire access trails for fire fighting vehicles.

10) During the period the fire was moving through the forest the fire access trails had been left blocked by the logging company denying access by fire fighting vehicles. This was even with pre warning the fire was heading in that direction as it took several days to reach the compartment being logged. The logging company had been into the forest during the fire period at which time the forest was actually closed with the fire still moving through other areas of the forest. Logging continued with the cutting down of a number of remaining green trees and still leaving the access trails blocked to fire vehicles as they left.

11) Similar to observations made when working for Forestry it can be seen that damage to non target trees and vegetation is considerable. This damage is visible and apparent throughout the forest from logging operation years earlier.

12) State Forests, **if managed correctly**, do have the potential to provide benefit and income to the wider community outside the narrow field of the timber industry. For example, mountain bike clubs regularly hold races and group rides bringing valuable tourism dollars. Eco tourism is also an increasingly popular and economically important activity.

13) These activities also have an extremely beneficial affect on peoples physical and mental health, wellbeing and quality of life. **This also deserves to be taken into account** when evaluating the financial benefits of our natural environment. These benefits are supported by extensive scientific data already available. This evidence points to easily quantifiable savings for the health system as a whole and therefore a financial benefit to the whole state and tax payers.

14) However these important environments are being degraded for the benefit of the few in the timber industry and the above benefits are currently ignored.

15) Forestry management has low environmental standards and often hold forest users to a very low standard of environmental care; or are reluctant to hold forest users to even the low environmental standards Forestry themselves are governed by.

16) Case in point, unfortunately the MTB club that I belong to and that holds the licence to operate within the local state forest has had a history of multiple breaches of licence and breaching legislation.

17) These breaches infringe mandatory requirements designed to protect not only the environment but also very importantly, the general public.

18) During a phone conversation with Forestry I was told that they themselves (Forestry) are not allowed to operate in the manner the MTB club does.

19) It has been repeatedly reported directly to Forestry that the MTB club is and has been consistently breaching its licence agreement, Public Health and Safety and Environmental legislation.

20) The science regarding the standard of care and sustainability of logging native forests is clear and irrefutable.

21) The timber industry has shown to be lacking in appropriate environmental standards and lax oversight causing forest quality degradation and habitat destruction. And in turn the serious decline of biodiversity.

22) Australia has the second worst extinction rate of species in the world and in the top five for deforestation and habitat destruction. Not to mention the effect this deforestation is having on Climate Change.

23) For decades the timber industry has been unsustainable, pushing vulnerable and threatened flora and fauna to the brink.

24) After the devastating bushfires in which there was around 3 billion animals lost, 5.3 million hectares of forest and essential habitat destroyed. With the added effects of droughts and floods I wonder how many 'wake up calls' we need before we get the point. We will not be thought of favourably by future generations if we do not change from the damaging destructive course we are on. The current generation of young people are already holding us to account.

25) These degradations of biodiversity and ecosystems we are currently experiencing are not new, although the degradation is accelerating. As a society we are suffering from the well studied phenomenon of Shifting Baseline Syndrome. On an individual level and as a society, SBS has increased our tolerance to environmental degradation, including wildlife population decline, increased pollution and loss of natural habitats. These degradations are the new normal, however now we do not have ignorance as an excuse for our lack of foresight and action.

26) This inquiry into the long term sustainability of the timber industry should include in its terms of reference the wider state of biodiversity and ecosystems as a whole. As the 2019-2020 fires demonstrated, state forests do not somehow sit as an island with no relation to the wider world. Many state forests do encompass very important habitats, **the science is clear and we are running out of time**. Politics now has to catch up with the science and protect our natural environment with law, no matter what the political cost. This is too important.

27) In conclusion the logging of native forests using the current industrial methods of harvesting either on private land or public land has a long lasting negative impact on us all and a long history of negligence. I **do not support** the continuation of logging of native forests on scientific, environmental, moral and ethical grounds.

And this **is** a moral and ethical issue.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.