Uniting Eco Group

Submission to the Independent Forestry Panel

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Uniting Eco Group
www.unitingearthweb.org.au

The logging of native forests in NSW is not ecologically or financially sustainable and should cease. Uniting Eco Group supports a rapid end to native forest logging and is in favour of a solely plantation-based industry. Public native forests should be gazetted for permanent protection and managed to enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate benefits, cultural values and recreational values.

Uniting Eco Group (UEG) is a grassroots environmental group within the Uniting Church in NSW and the ACT. Our members, based on the NSW north coast, south coast, Illawarra, Blue Mountains and Sydney, are active in care for forests and native animals, advocacy on climate change and in efforts for sustainable living. We are pleased to make a submission to the Independent Forestry Panel on the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW.

The Uniting Church in Australia states: "God loves the divine creation and wills the development of its life. No creature is indifferent in the eyes of God. Each has its dignity and thereby also its right to existence" and that "Nature has a right to the protection of its eco-systems, species, and populations in their inter-connectedness" (Uniting Church in Australia Assembly 1991).

Native forest logging is not sustainable. The majority of the area of forests and woodlands in NSW that existed prior to European colonisation has been cleared and logging what remains is placing many threatened species, such as gliders, koalas, owls, quolls and glossy black-cockatoos, at risk (Ward et al. 2024). Climate change is increasing the severity of bushfires (Abram et al. 2021) and logged native forests are more flammable than intact forests (Lindenmayer et al. 2021).

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) is not a responsible corporate citizen and cannot be trusted to operate within the law. It "has a pattern of environmental offending" in its forestry operations (*EPA v. FCNSW 2024*, clause 145), repeatedly breaching its conditions of approval and has logged in prohibited areas, illegally felled habitat trees, and failed to abide by post-bushfire restrictions on logging, placing threatened species at heightened risk (Pepper and John 2024).

Moreover, native forest logging in NSW is a loss-making enterprise that is propped up by government subsidies (Frontier Economics 2023).

For these reasons, native forest logging should end. The future of the industry lies with plantations. UEG opposes the "conversion" of native forests to plantations (Cadman et al. 2024) but supports the expansion of plantations on land that is already cleared and degraded. Areas of hardwood plantations that provide high quality threatened species habitat should also be assessed and protected.

As well as providing habitat for threatened species, intact forests provide ecosystem services such as regulating the climate, producing oxygen, supplying clean water and mitigating natural disasters. Mature forests store carbon – protecting them is a key part of mitigating climate change.

The native forests of NSW should be managed to protect and enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, cultural values and recreational values. To ensure their permanent protection, UEG supports the gazetting of native state forest areas through their gazetting as national parks or other reserves under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. UEG recognises the sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples over their homelands and supports Aboriginal management.

References

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