

Submission by Harriett Swift on proposed changes to native forest logging in NSW coastal forests

I do not intend to waste my time or yours making suggestions about how native forest logging can be made nicer.

The time has come to stop it. NSW urgently needs clear strategies and effective measures to end the native forest woodchipping industry in south east NSW. This submission focusses on *how to end* the industry rather than *why*. It also includes measures to enable the Forestry Corporation to fulfil its ethical duty of care to wildlife in State Forests.

Plenty of other submissions are providing more than enough evidence to establish that the industry must recognise reality and move to a plantation-based future.

We urgently need to ensure that it ends in a fair and environmentally sound way.

a. Duty of Care for Native Wildlife in State Forests

The Forestry Corporation manages State Forests and ethically, it must accept responsibility for any harm done to any wildlife. I am not commenting on the effectiveness of measures intended to protect threatened species during logging. For too many species, nothing can protect them and the only realistic measure is to stop.

Harm done to animals before, during and after logging. I am therefore proposing that as a matter of routine practice, Forest Corporation should apply the following measures:

1. Wildlife corridors across roads between State Forests. These should be plentiful. They should provide trees and shrub cover to enable some safe dispersal of animals during and after logging. It is particularly important in areas where both sides of a major road are to be logged at the same time, such as in the scheduled logging of Corunna State Forest. Ground and arboreal animals could disperse safely into different parts of the forest.
2. Safe zones alongside major roads to enable surviving wildlife to use forest for food and shelter without risk of becoming road kill.
3. Tunnels under major roads to enable wildlife to cross safely.
4. Nesting boxes to compensate, in part at least, for the loss of hollows in logged forest. Noting that hollows take up to 180 years to form and that retained trees are often lost in post logging burns, this practice is urgently needed for both threatened and not yet threatened species or mammals, birds and reptiles.

Countries in Europe and Canada have been providing many of these measures for decades. Australia has lagged behind badly.

For example, in France, autoroutes¹ provide overhead corridors, safe zones alongside the road and tunnels. There are many of these; they are really well designed with many trees and shrubs and solid walls to protect the animals. And there also are safe zones along the edges of autoroutes. There's an overpass every few kms in forested country.

I can provide photos and/ or other information if needed.

¹ <https://corporate.vinci-autoroutes.com/fr/actualites/corridors-ecologiques-long-autoroutes>
http://www.trameverteetbleue.fr/sites/default/files/references_bibliographiques/routes_et_passages_faune.pdf

b. Ending Native forest logging responsibly

For the south coast of NSW (Eden and Southern), the first round of RFAs have given us almost 20 years of the most intensive native forest logging in NSW, record woodchip exports, more threatened species and a growing financial burden on NSW taxpayers.

I can substantiate any of these statements with publicly available figures if required.

The first Regional Forest Agreements date from the era of the chainsaw. Within a few short years, we were in the era of the mechanical harvester^[1]. Now, it's predicted that robots will soon take on the dangerous and often remote work of logging native forests.

This is no time to be watering down environmental protections and weakening compliance.

Some obvious measures would include, but not be limited to:

- a. A remediation bond payable by the owners of the Eden woodchip mill to cover costs of restoring the chipmill site for new benign purposes once the chipmill closes.
- b. A levy on the Forestry Corporation per hectare logged to provide for the restoration of native forests logged between now and the closure of the native forest industry.
- c. A water quality levy imposed on all logging operations undertaken in estuary catchments such as Wonboyn and river catchments.
- d. A road maintenance fee to ensure that roads used by log trucks cease to be a financial burden on other road users, councils and taxpayers until logging ends.
- e. A retraining fund payable by industry employers to entitle all workers currently employed in the logging industry to a retraining package to acquire new skills.
- f. A fire control levy payable by the industry to the Rural Fire Service per hectare logged, in recognition of the fact that dense regrowth forests for the first few decades after logging are more fire prone than mature, unlogged forests.
- g. Twofold Bay seabed damage prevention and remediation levy on woodchip carriers using loading facilities at the chipmill, to compensate for degradation of habitat of species such as the weedy sea dragon and green sea turtle by woodchip carriers.
- h. If any RFAs are renewed, Wood Supply Agreements should be for realistic timeframes (no more than 5 years), should not contain "take or pay" clauses and not carry unwarranted penalties for any early cessation of access to wood supply.

c. Recommendations

1. The Forestry Corporation has an ethical obligation to protect native wildlife for the decades before, during and after logging. Measures such as wildlife corridors, tunnels, nesting boxes and safe zones are essential means to help achieve survival for forest dwelling species.
2. There is an urgent need for a clear and workable plan to manage an exit from the woodchipping industry. When the time inevitably comes, woodchippers must not be allowed to simply walk away from the environmental destruction they have caused or their obligations to workers and local communities as so many mining companies have done in the past. Action to prevent this is overdue and needs to start now.