

MEDIA RELEASE

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Gunns announcement offers hope for better deal on NSW native forests

The announcement by Tasmanian forestry giant Gunns Limited that it will stop logging native forests in favour of plantation wood sources provides an opportunity for conservationists, industry and government in NSW to work on an agreement for a more sustainable forest future, according to the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

Gunns has also indicated it does not want native forest burned for energy. However, the NSW government is currently considering a proposal by the second largest woodchipper of Australia's native forest, Nippon Paper Group, to build a 5MW biomass plant fuelled by native forest 'waste' in Bega in the south east.

"It's hard to believe that in the twenty-first century NSW is still allowing the loss of our precious native forests for low-value chips or burning them for electricity," Nature Conservation Council of NSW Chief Executive Officer Pepe Clarke said today.

"Up to 95 per cent of trees logged at Mumbulla State Forest over recent months ended up as woodchips, up from an average 90 per cent recorded across forest logging activity in the south east. It's misleading to say the biomass plant will be powered by 'waste' when this fuel source wouldn't exist without the 19,000 hectares of forest logged in the south east each year.

"The true waste is allowing their destruction when we know native forests are critical habitat for wildlife, play an essential role in water cycles and are a cost-effective and efficient method of carbon storage.

"The Nature Conservation Council supports the motion endorsed at the Forest Forum held in Batemans Bay this weekend that the Nippon Paper Group should follow the lead of Gunns in acknowledging public opinion and announce its exit from Australia's native forests.

"The Nature Conservation Council welcomes the Gunns announcement about Tasmanian forests and hopes NSW will continue the momentum by reaching agreement on protecting our forests while creating sustainable timber industries based on the use of plantation estate," he said.

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