

## SUBMISSION TO THE EPA AND DPI RE RFAS.

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The past two decades of logging in NSW have had a dire effect on our NSW's State Forests. Auditor-General Peter Achterstraat stated:

*'To meet supply commitments, the native forest managed by Forest NSW on the north coast is being cut faster than it is growing back.'*

What are the consequences of this over-logging of our publicly owned native forests? One huge result is our plummeting native animal population. Australia is losing its native animals at a faster rate than any developed nation. One hundred and thirty-four native plants and animals have been added to the threatened species in Australia in the past seven years. This is an appalling result. Our iconic koala was listed as 'Rare and Vulnerable' in 1992. 'In recognition of the continuing decline of Koalas and Koala habitat in NSW, in early 1995, the NSW Government introduced State Environment Planning Policy No 44 - Koala Habitat Protection (SEEP 44). This is the first state-wide species-specific planning policy introduced by any government in Australia.

However, New South Wales Government has never implemented the Koala Recovery Plan (Australia Koala Foundation 2017). Koala numbers have declined 26 per cent in NSW over the past two decades stated Dr Martin Taylor of the WWF. (Koalas could soon be wiped out in areas of QLD, NSW due to land clearing, WWF Australia says 19 May, 2017)

How did this situation become so flawed? One reason is that, according to EPA documents obtained by Fairfax Media, 'Forest NSW is a corporation with powers unmatched for a state agency, including protection from third-party challenges such as from environmental groups.' 'The inherent conflict of interest for a corporation in having a concurrency role for negotiating, revoking or changing the terms of their licence...and the removal of third party legal rights, exists nowhere else in NSW legislation or regulation.' (EPA)

This is a terrible miscarriage of justice. When illegal logging is sighted, NSW citizens should have the legal right to have their concerns listened to and taken seriously. The tack taken by NSW Governments of both major parties has been to punish the messenger with fines and/or arrest, rather than allow open and independent investigations of these reported

breaches. Fairfax Media also reported that 'the EPA also sought legal advice on how to restrict 'very intense' logging that Forestry Corp had conducted or years in areas such as the blackbutt-dominant forests of the NSW mid-north coast.' However, the Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOAs) that allowed that logging to take place were purposely obscure making it very difficult to take legal action.

'Forestry Corporation has two operating segments; the Softwood Plantation Division, and the Hardwood Division (which is primarily engaged in native forest logging). For the six years between Fiscal Year 09 and Fiscal Year 14, the Softwood Plantations Division cross-subsidised loss making native forestry to the order of \$79 million. Through significant headcount reductions in Fiscal Year 14, the division broke even in Fiscal Year 15, but this was before making any contribution to the Corporations \$8 million interest charge. Furthermore, a declining outlook for demand of native forestry products will make this result hard to repeat.' (The Australian Institute March 2016 – Money Doesn't Grow on Trees – Roderick Campbell and Richard McKeon)

Logging our NSW native forests is a money losing proposition. Why then have successive NSW Governments condoned it? One reason is the oft repeated claim that rural communities would be decimated without it. However, this logging will be stopped because of lack of supply, and with nothing in place to replace it, these communities will certainly suffer. Rural locations would be a great place to set up renewable energy production. Also, people who work as loggers have a great deal of knowledge about operating large machinery. Transfer their skills to plantation logging. Our NSW Government has been drastically cutting back on employing Forest Rangers. This is well known and has received a good deal of criticism from the public. Instead of cutting back on Park Ranger positions, our NSW Government should be hiring people who have worked in these forests as loggers. They certainly know the forests and I think they would welcome the more secure employment.

Successive NSW Governments have failed to see the opportunity that retaining our native forests as carbon credits offers. They completely underestimated their worth. We are now witnessing the reality of China coming close to a massive carbon-trading system. Other Asian nations are hoping to follow suit and form an Asia-Pacific 'carbon club'. If Australia stops logging our native forests and gets our carbon credit

certification business organised, we would be in a good position to reap in a huge amount of income. This money could be used for schools, caring for our parks and hospitals or funding renewable projects.

We need to look at the fact that only about '600 people are directly employed in the native forest industry in NSW, less than 0.1% of the total workforce (The Australian Institute – March 2016 – Money Doesn't Grow on Trees – Roderick Campbell and Richard McKeon). A fact of today's society is that huge numbers of people have had to retrain or relocate in order to secure employment. My family has experienced this personally. It is challenging but we must learn to be flexible in the modern world. The days of being hired for your work for life are disappearing.

We must stop using the past centuries solutions and start to think creatively for today's challenges and it is high time for our NSW Government to show the courage that is needed to take this vital step into the future.