



Eurobodalla Greens

Submission to the NSW Bushfire Enquiry

Dear Madam/Sir,

The Eurobodalla Greens welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the NSW Governments Bushfire Enquiry.

Your Terms of Reference: Clause 1

“The causes of, and factors contributing to, the frequency, intensity, timing and location of, bushfires in NSW in the 2019-20 bushfire season, including consideration of any role of weather, drought, climate change, fuel loads and human activity.”

Logging increases bushfires and contributes to their intensity.

Australian National University landscape ecology expert Professor David Lindenmayer said multiple academic and forest industry studies showed forest thinning in Australia "makes forests more fire prone" Professor Lindenmayer also advocates a cessation of "selective timber harvesting" from two state forests ravaged by bushfire on the state's south coast: <https://theconversation.com/logging-is-due-to-start-in-fire-ravaged-forests-this-week-its-the-last-thing-our-wildlife-needs-132347>

The decades long history of intensive logging in the South Coast region has made our forests more fire prone. Logging has made the impacts of the fires worse by increasing the number of smaller, younger trees in denser drier forests. It has also hastened climate change by releasing tonnes of carbon stored in these trees into the atmosphere when they're logged.

A moratorium on logging native forests *especially* in bush fire affected areas would maintain the carbon in the trees, assist with the recovery of native wildlife and in the longer term help prevent the extreme wildfires experienced over this "Black Summer" of 19 /20.

Eurobodalla Greens request that this commission call for a moratorium on logging native forests and ask for a permanent transition out of logging native forests into plantation timber with adequate compensation for the workers affected.

Your Terms of Reference: Clause 6 “Land use planning and management and building standards, including appropriate clearing and other hazard reduction, zoning, and any appropriate use of indigenous practices.”

Increasing the rate of prescribed burning is no answer to the current wildfire problem.

Case studies from the recent fires illustrate this - most notably the Border fire. It burnt from the Victorian border to Eden in a single day, through some of the most heavily logged forest in Australia, so even though the fuel load in that forest had been reduced, the fire simply swept through anyway.

It may seem counter-intuitive but the longer old-growth forests remain fire-free, the less combustible they become. The thicker canopy creates more shade, the undergrowth becomes thinner and less vigorous - and hence there is less fuel for fires.

We call for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to be adequately funded.

If adequate funding was re- instated for NPWS it would contribute to good land / fire management and pest control practices in our parks - and benefit the tourism industry.

Over the last 9 years NPWS had \$121 million cut from its budget in 2011. In 2017 an additional \$80 million was cut and the number of rangers employed was reduced by approx. 25% (Fact checked by The Guardian)

Previously 28 people were in the role of senior ranger. They had responsibility for hazard reduction and pest control. This role was abolished in a restructure in 2017, effectively replacing rangers with office based clerks - presumably on less pay than rangers with university qualifications and 20 to 30 year's experience in the service.

In the Eurobodalla and Bega Shires jobs directly created by forestry represent less than 1% of the total work force. By comparison, this is even less than the amount of people employed in the arts and sports. Many more jobs are dependent on our nature based tourism sector which is heavily reliant on the Sth Coast's image as an environmentally unspoilt place which is incompatible with logging.

Finally, it's time to take seriously the cultural burning practices of indigenous Australians and to adequately fund the training and resourcing of indigenous cultural burning officers as advocated by the Firesticks Alliance (visit <https://www.firesticks.org.au/>)

Your Terms of Reference: Clause 11 "Public communication and advice systems and strategies"

Many rural and remote areas in Australia don't have adequate mobile phone coverage so Access to the internet is unreliable. The ABC was *the* life line for us during this crisis.

A trusted source of information, their role as the nation's emergency broadcaster was never more important. They provided timely critical information for potential life and death decisions - when to evacuate, when to shelter in place.

It's imperative that the ABC is properly funded so it can build capacity so the organisation can seamlessly "step up a notch" in times of crisis.

Your Terms of Reference: Clause 7 "Appropriate action to adapt to future bushfire risks to communities and ecosystems."

To put it bluntly, the short term political cycle needs to be de-coupled from long term science-based strategies designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. This would neutralise the toxic debate in this country about climate change and promote leadership at all levels of government towards the urgent reduction of carbon pollution. This task necessitates a justly handled transition away from the mining, burning and export of coal.

Yours sincerely,
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