

**Submission
No 190**

**INQUIRY INTO LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND
FUTURE OF THE TIMBER AND FOREST PRODUCTS
INDUSTRY**

Organisation: Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) Protection Group

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NSW Parliamentary Inquiry: Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry.

For over 30 years now I have been watching forestry operations in State Forests on the far south coast of NSW in the Southern and Eden Regions. Over this time, I have seen a rapid decline in the quality of the environments of these forests on many fronts including forest biodiversity and health, weed spread, water quality, erosion and animal and bird species plus destruction of registered Aboriginal sites. Now the fires last year have devastated most of these forests.

My first involvement in the logging debate was in 1988 when the then Forestry Commission of NSW commenced logging on Gulaga (Mt Dromedary), a registered Natural Sacred Site with no consideration of the impacts on her heritage significance and ignoring the advice of their own Mt Dromedary Flora Reserve Advisory Committee. We have been active in seeking to bring some common sense and accountability into forestry operations since that time.

Since the initiation of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), we have witnessed blatant contravention of the provisions of those agreements and the Integrated Forest Operations Approvals (IFOAs) by NSW Forestry Corporation (FC) and very little action taken by NSW Environment Protection Authority to rectify these known breaches. The classic breach of the RFAs was the failure to undertake the statutory 5 yearly reviews and the total inadequacy of those reviews when they were finally conducted in assessing the multiple identified breaches of Environmental Protection and Threatened Species Licence requirements. Our analysis of breaches identified by EPA over the first 10 years of the RFAs revealed 4091 identified breaches of these licences from 187 audits of 2814 native forest operations (See Compliance 2004-2014 attached).

A high proportion of the southeast forests was burnt in the 2019/2020 fires. It is impossible to say reliably exactly what the effect of growth stage on fire behaviour was. Driving around the South East Forests National Park, it is obvious that forests in an old growth condition fared much better than regrowth stands. Most of the old growth has survived by epicormic shoots even where it sustained a crown fire. Some of the old growth still has intact canopies. Most of the logging regrowth has been killed to ground level and is regenerating with a combination of coppice from surviving root systems and dense seedling regeneration. This significant impact of logged forests on fire severity has been scientifically demonstrated by Dr David Lindenmayer, Dr Chris Taylor and others in multiple studies.

The negative impacts of logging on our forests here on the south coast of NSW and the senseless waste of taxpayer funds are totally unacceptable. A transition from native forestry to plantations in the south east timber industry is already underway. In countries such as New Zealand and Chile native forest logging has already ceased and was replaced by a plantation-based industry many years ago. Those countries now have thriving forestry industries operating on a far more secure environmental and economic base.

The profitable Softwood Plantation Division of the NSW Forestry Corporation has routinely heavily subsidised the marginal or loss-making native forest Hardwood Division over many years. NSW taxpayers would be major beneficiaries if native forest logging were to cease.

Finally, we wholeheartedly support the submission of South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) of which we are a contributing member and are dismayed by the details contained in the Scorecard: 50 Years of Woodchipping on the NSW South Coast (See attached). We also recommend that the enquiry take into consideration the analysis of the industry prepared by SERCA and subsequent recommendations contained in the Great Southern Forest proposal (See GSF_Brief attached).

Seán Burke
Chairperson