

Private Native Forestry Review

Individual submission by Pierre Louys

Preamble

The NSW Government is providing all members of the community the opportunity to improve the way the NSW private forest estate is managed through a review of private native forestry (PNF Review). The PNF Review seeks to balance the sustainable development of the private native timber and agricultural industries while recognising the environmental values of the private forest estate.

The NSW Government is seeking public submissions on PNF Review Terms of Reference for a period of 10 weeks from November 2018 (submissions deadline is 31st January 2019)

Terms of Reference

The PNF Review Terms of Reference provides a framework for the PNF Review. They set out the scope and objectives of the PNF Review and outline the consultation process and proposed timeline for making new PNF Codes of Practice. The scope of the review is:

1. Review the PNF Codes of Practice (Northern NSW, Southern NSW, River Red Gum forests and Cypress and western hardwood forests)
2. Consider and develop options for:
 - a) Establishing efficient and effective regulatory settings
 - b) Developing an effective training and accreditation program for PNF haulage and harvest contractors
 - c) Enhancing landholder knowledge and community acceptance of the PNF industry

The following questions are suggested as part of the online submission:

1. What improvements should the NSW Government consider making to the existing Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice?
2. Do you have any suggestions to ensure the Private Native Forestry regulatory settings are efficient, enforceable and effective?
3. How can the NSW Government improve the authorisation and approval system for Private Native Forestry?
4. What training and advice services would assist landholders, industry and the community?
5. Do you have any other comments or feedback relevant to Private Native Forestry that you would like to share with us?

It is noted that the PNF Review does not seek comments on the review process and scope.

Sustainable development and environmental values

The principles of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) are set out in the Forestry Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. Ecologically sustainable forest management seeks to provide the social and economic benefits to the community from the use of forests, including recreation, while considering the impact on the biological diversity (biodiversity) and health of these forests.

Biological diversity and health of NSW forests

The Independent Biodiversity legislation Review Panel report 2014 states:

*Having considered available evidence, the panel has found that the community expects that biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are valued, conserved and sustainably managed and used. Over time, governments have responded to these expectations through regulation, establishment of a reserve system on public and private land, investment in biodiversity conservation programs, community engagement, and education and extension activities. **To the extent that it can be assessed, the effectiveness of these efforts has been mixed.***

The NSW landscape is not in a pristine condition. Biodiversity has been modified and is constantly changing in response to pressures, and in particular, human-induced change. The major threats to biodiversity include clearing and disturbance of native vegetation, the impacts of invasive pest and weed species, altered fire regimes since European settlement and climate change (NSW EPA 2012 & Coutts-Smith & Downey 2006).

Social and economical benefits of NSW forests

Economic benefits are usually measured in monetary terms and may include income from employment in the forestry sector (see figure below). The data may include the value of the production of goods and services from forests and the contribution of the forestry sector to the national economy. In addition, the economic viability or sustainability of the forestry sector can be assessed by measures such as the profitability of forest enterprises or the level of investment.

Forestry 2013–14

	NSW	Aust.	NSW % of Aust.
Area of Forest¹ ('000 ha)			
Open forest	9,797	33,927	29
Closed forest	509	3,810	13
Woodland	10,449	81,688	13
Plantation forest	390	1,999	20
Total forest	22,679	124,736	18
Total land area	80,064	769,202	10
Sawnwood production ('000 cu m)			
Coniferous (softwood)	4,449	14,358	31
Eucalypt (hardwood)	949	10,940	9
Forestry gross value of production (\$m)			
Total forestry (sawn logs delivered) ²	378	1,789	21
Forest product exports (\$m)			
Sawnwood	62	403	15
Wood pulp	0.3	0.3	88
Woodchips	0	768	0
Other forest and wood products	58	245	24
Total forest products (ex board and paper)	120	1,415	8

¹Area measurements were last updated in 2011.

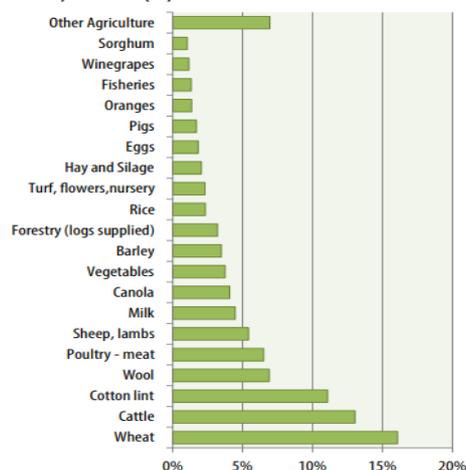
²Excludes log processing and forestry product manufacturing.

Note: Components may not sum to totals due to rounding.

¹Total fuel and mining products exclude gold. Gold is treated as 'other' in the WTO International Trade Statistics 2015 publication and is not considered a mining export.

Note: Components may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry GVP, by Value, NSW, 2013-14(%)



The social functions of forests are more difficult to measure and can vary considerably from states to countries, depending on their level of development and traditions. For example, in developed, post-industrial societies, the benefits of forests for recreation and amenity values or the maintenance of a rural way of life may be most important, while in developing countries, the area of forests available for subsistence activities or the number of people employed in the sector may be a better indication of their social value.

The context of this submission

The NSW Government’s vision on native forestry is to have a sustainably managed forest estate that underpins a dynamic economically efficient forestry industry which (continues to) deliver social and environmental benefits.

From the statements (and figures) above on the current status of Australian forests, on the effectiveness of various government programs and the economic and social values of the forestry sector, there are grave concerns for the “long-term ecological sustainability of native forestry in NSW”.

The NSW Government’s attempt to reform the native forestry regulatory framework is laudable but to address the long-term ecological sustainability of native forest, it must maintain the ecological basis of forested land (the formation of soil, the energy, carbon, nutrient and water cycles).

This is an absolute requirement to ensure that forest ecosystems have the capacity to reconstruct.

Permanent land clearing and inappropriate activities in forests have significant impacts on ecological processes. **There is currently a lack of comprehensive controls over clearing and timber harvesting on private land and on all commercial users of public forests**, and considerable variation between the States and local government in their approach.

The NSW Government reform must also review in detail current economic benefits with realistic considerations of ecological constraints. The reform must address the development of a dynamic and competitive wood processing industry, development of the forest-resource base. The public consultation should ask how to make best use of and preserve the intangible benefits of forests, and identify national forest-related issues such as research, education and training, conflict resolution and forest use and the greenhouse effect.

The Danish Model

The Danish example is an inspiration for such reform. In the early 1800s, the forest cover in Denmark was estimated as low as 4% of the total land area. Deforestation was caused by logging and firewood demand and animal grazing areas. Denmark’s first forest legislation came into force in 1805. Its main objective –as well as the objectives of subsequent Danish forest legislation – has been to maintain the forested area and to protect the existing forest from overexploitation, premature felling and grazing by farm animals. In the mid-nineteenth Century, intensive forest management became widespread and large afforestation projects were carried out. Today approximately 13% (615,000 hectares) of Denmark’s land area is covered by various types of forest.

The specific key objectives include:

Nature and environment Long-term conversion to near-to-nature forest management principles and 10% of the national forest area having biodiversity as the most important management objective by 2040.

Economy Development of sustainable economic framework conditions for the forest sector.

Social concern Maintain and develop the forests as a benefit for public welfare through opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature experience in the forests.

Afforestation Forest landscapes should cover 20-25% of Denmark after one tree generation (80 – 100 years) – and the scope and potential for natural habitats and processes should be strengthened in this effort.

Knowledge Effective information sharing – access to updated and relevant knowledge as a basis for forest policy development and implementation through research, education, awareness raising and dissemination of information.

International objective Promotion of sustainable forest management at global and regional levels.

Human Security

Human Security is a concept derived from the declaration of Human Rights which redefines national security and economical development. Human Security covers the following aspects:

- Economic: creation of employment and measures against poverty
- Food security: measures against hunger and famine
- Health: measures against disease, unsafe food, malnutrition and lack of access to basic health care
- Environmental: measures against environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters and pollution
- Personal security: measures against violence, crime, terrorism, domestic violence and child labour
- Community: measures against inter-ethnic, religious and other identity tensions
- Political: measures against political repression and human rights abuse

The objectives of this submission

This submission is attempting to take the PNF Review beyond its basic regulatory framework (already well covered by Review *The Independent Biodiversity legislation Panel report 2014*). This submission is aimed at policy makers and Government officials who *can't see the forest from the trees*.

This submission warns the Review panel not to be so concerned with specifics or details that the larger problem, situation or point will be missed. Therefore only the following question will be answered:

Do you have any other comments or feedback relevant to Private Native Forestry that you would like to share with us?

Submission

The overall goals in developing forest management plans for NSW should be:

- Conservation of biodiversity
- Sustained health, vitality and productive capacity of ecosystems
- Protection of soil and water resources.
- Sustained contribution to global carbon cycles
- The social, cultural and economic benefits

An equally important objective is to protect and conserve the value of our forests to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal people (eg cultural burning).

- To prevent the decline of the forestry sector in agriculture, it is critical for PNF policy and regulations to be aligned with climate change, energy, drought and water policies.

Such policies must challenge the present structures and legislative framework (free trade) that have created vulnerability and associated social and economical inequalities. These free-trade policies have impacted farmers' livelihood and food security.

Rural landowners note that biodiversity on private land exists mostly as a consequence of the strong ethic of stewardship that landowners had toward their land (Landcare). Many landowners acknowledge that effective protection of biodiversity required good local knowledge of the environment and active management at a considerable cost of both time and money to the landowner. The majority favoured using a voluntary approach with strong incentives to work with landowners to protect biodiversity on their land, rather than putting regulatory controls on their land, thereby alienating them.

Rural landowners see the inequity evident in the state current mechanism protecting national biodiversity (a public benefit) at private landowners' cost. A number of landowners say that if the Government intent is to control the landowners' use of their land for the protection of biodiversity for national benefit, then compensation (or other financial arrangements) should be paid to the landowner.

National interest and priority

- The NSW Government's vision on native forestry is a state focus vision; however it must take place within the requirements of Australia's national interest.

In 1994, Denmark developed a National Strategy for Sustainable Forest Management, based on the principles and guidelines laid out in the Rio Forest Declaration and the resolution from the Helsinki Conference. More and new international agreements and recommendations are being developed, the UNFF-process clearly recommends development of national forest programmes, and an increased participation of the general public in the development of national programmes and strategies is a national priority.