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Which draft PNF Code are you providing a submission on? *	All Codes
My comments	Please see attached submission.
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Natalie Meyer

NSW 2480

Submission on the draft Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice for Northern NSW, Southern NSW, River Red Gum Forest and Cypress & Western Hardwood Forests.

I am a landowner, a taxpayer and I vote. I am not a member of any political party. I am employed as the Manager of a community services charity which has been involved in responding to the bushfire emergency in 2019 and now the Covid 19 pandemic, continuing to provide frontline services to disadvantaged families and people in need throughout the pandemic.

I have **strong concerns** about the proposed variations to all Codes relating to Private Native Forests in New South Wales and **I OBJECT** to the overall weakening of many of the existing environmental protections.

In my view all landholders, including myself, are merely temporary custodians of the land we occupy and we have a responsibility to protect its health and well-being and must not be permitted to exploit it at the expense of its medium-long term health and that of any wild inhabitants. Additionally, activities on land can negatively impact on adjoining properties or those downstream and indeed upon all those who share the same water catchment area. Property boundaries are artificial and arbitrary when the surrounding context is taken into account. The short term economic interests of individual landowners must not be permitted to be generated at the expense of the longer term wellbeing of the surrounding environment and properties.

Accordingly, I **STRONGLY BELIEVE** and **RECOMMEND** that all **Private Native Forestry activities should be subjected to a Development Application process** like any other developments which impact on surrounding properties, to ensure rigorous assessments are undertaken and to give the local community and surrounding property owners a chance to raise their concerns.

At the very least, they should be **closely scrutinised by Local Land Services** and subject to the requirement to submit proposed plans and independent evidence of likely environmental and other impacts. There must be consequences in the form of penalties for landholders who depart from any agreed plans and regulations, and the **LLS must be given sufficient resources to facilitate its capacity to monitor and enforce** the requirements of any approved logging plans.

In particular:

Any logging plan must be approved by Local Land Services, including any variations, before logging. Under no circumstances should landholders be allowed to unilaterally vary plans with no accountability.

Landowners should be required to notify LLS if logging is suspended for more than a month and notified before it restarts.

Additionally, I STRONGLY BELIEVE and RECOMMEND that the following variations should be made to the Code/s:

- **There must be surveys for threatened species before logging so they can be protected;**
- **Local Land Services must ensure there is accurate and ecologically credible mapping of, and full protection for, Threatened Ecological Communities, rainforest, old growth forest, wetlands, heathlands, and rock outcrops, along with buffers;**
- **At least 20m logging exclusions should be implemented around all streams, both mapped and unmapped;**
- **Logging must be prohibited on steep slopes over 25°;**
- **All trees over 80cm diameter (dbh) must be protected;**
- **Retained nectar feed trees must be large healthy mature trees;**
- **The proposed increase in logging intensity must not proceed;**
- **Clear felling must not be prohibited and severe penalties should apply for breaches;**
- **Weeds must be managed and regeneration assured;**
- **There needs to be an independent expert review of the criteria and methodology for remapping rainforest and old growth forest in a transparent and open process involving conservation groups.**
- **Rainforest and old growth forest must be subject to 50m buffer zones as an absolute minimum.**

The protection and regeneration of what remains of our native forests, whether private or public, is not about ideology or politics, it is not about being a 'leftie' or a 'greenie'. This is about science and fact, and the fact is that human beings as a species are facing an imminent existential threat. As long as we continue to interface with the environment in a hostile and aggressive manner, treating it as a mere commodity and viewing whatever does not have commodity value as 'waste', or a barrier to 'progress' (e.g. roads, urban development etc.), we are paving the way for our own demise.

Our native forests and all watercourses have already been reduced to mere shadows of their former selves, and we are seeing an alarming increase in species decline and extinctions. As a wildlife carer for over twenty years I am witnessing significant decline in species that once were very common.

For example, twenty years ago large flocks of Wompoo Pigeons would appear on my property every autumn to feed upon the large fig trees and those on the property adjoining mine. For the past few years their numbers have declined dramatically and now there are only a few returning each year.

We have seen mysterious and fatal diseases appear in various other bird species such as lorikeets and the 'black and whites' (magpies, butcher birds, crows and currawongs), and fig birds. We are also seeing increasing sudden and unexplained deaths in previously considered robust species such as Mountain Brush-tail possums and increasing susceptibility to illnesses causing death in wallabies. And of course the koalas continue to succumb to Chlamydia and Koala Retrovirus and other illnesses.

Insect populations are collapsing, and along with them the birds and animals which feed upon them.

The causes of many of these events are as yet not fully understood, but overall they are indicators of compromised immune systems and environmental health. Koalas have lived with Chlamydia and KoRV for thousands of years but it is only over the past two decades or so they have been so catastrophically impacted by these diseases. There is a direct correlation with the destruction of their habitat. Habitat destruction means that all wildlife must expend greater amounts of energy to find food and nesting habitats, must face greater competition across the board and is increasingly forced to interface with human beings and associated hazards (e.g. fences, cars and dogs). As their exposure to toxins and environments degraded by human activity increases, their ability to survive continues to decline. Even without factoring climate change into the equation, the ongoing habitat destruction alone is bringing about total devastation for our wildlife and overall environmental health and resilience.

As with all animals, our own survival as a species is integrally linked to the health and resilience of the natural environment. Without clean water, air and food we cannot survive. Human beings are ultimately dependent upon a healthy environment in order to access clean air, water and food. A large part of maintaining a healthy environment is the preservation of native forests. Leaving our native forests to grow and regenerate is one of the most significant things we can do to mitigate the impacts of climate change and drought, with minimal economic costs compared to those involved in the phasing out of fossil fuels.

I have spent a lot of time in our native forests over the last forty years and I am alarmed about the density and the size of the trees that remain, even since forty years ago. The diameter of the trees taken continues to decrease and there are barely any trees left in much of the forests that are old enough to support life and in particular koalas. Yet the remaining koalas desperately cling to this habitat because it is all they have left. It breaks my heart to bear witness to this.

And this was before the bushfires of 2019-2020. Our forests are increasingly bushfire prone because the small remaining trees are like kindling compared to the giant trees that have been removed.

As human beings we are now feeling the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and we face a future of lurching from one catastrophe to the next. The economic impact of these catastrophes will be far greater than any jobs lost as a result of limiting or even halting logging in our native forests.

Additionally, our native forests have the potential to yield far greater value as genetic sources of beneficial food, fibre and medicinal materials, if they are allowed to regenerate.

The last remaining old growth forests will soon live out their lives. Trees do not live forever. There will be no new trees to replace the old ones because we have removed all of their potential replacements and continue to do so. We are running out of time. With each generation the memory of what the forest once was increasingly fades and the associated knowledge (e.g. of our indigenous people) is being lost. Unless we dramatically change course now, future generations will only ever know sparse and silent forests, devoid of most life and biodiversity, even replaced altogether with empty mono-culture stands of black butt extending for thousands of hectares as far as the eyes can see.

The quality of life, if not the very survival of future generations is at stake and is in our hands. We must show leadership and rise above politics and short term economics, or we will leave a legacy of misery and disaster behind us. We are all in this together. Will we recklessly exploit what remains in a last dash to benefit a few, whether economically or politically, at the expense of the future of entire generations?

Please don't let it be so.

Regards,
Natalie Meyer