

*Timber recycles carbon*



Timber Queensland Limited  
30 Boothby Street  
Kedron QLD 4031

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## **Timber Queensland submission on proposed Beerwah State Forest harvest plan**

### **Introduction**

Timber Queensland is the peak state body representing the interests of the forest and timber industry supply chain; from forest growers, harvesters and haulers through to processors, fabricators and timber traders.

The Queensland forest and timber industry makes a significant economic contribution to the State, supporting more than 25,000 direct and indirect jobs, as well as contributing more than \$3.2 billion to the state economy. Many of these jobs are located in rural and regional areas across the State.


### **Background**

Timber Queensland (TQ) supports the proposed forestry harvest operation in Beerwah State Forest. As outlined in the Queensland Government fact sheet and via the additional details provided on the Department of Agriculture engagement portal, these operations are in full accordance with the mandatory code of forest practice and other regulatory requirements to maintain long-term economic, social and environmental values from sustainable forest management.

### **Key points**

TQ would make the following additional points in support of the forestry operation:

- the forest area has been under state forest tenure since the late 1800s and was most recently selectively harvested in the 1990s and is still providing valued ecological services and public recreation, which is testimony to the multiple-use benefits and quality of management that state forests provide to the community and to the wood products industry;
- the proposed selective harvest operation is to be undertaken on a small proportion (i.e., 130 hectares) of Beerwah State Forest which has a total area of around 5000 hectares, and is typical of mosaic forestry operations to maintain diversity in forest structure across the landscape, while maintaining




permanent forest cover including habitat trees and other biodiversity protections such as riparian buffers;

- there are numerous peer-reviewed scientific papers that have concluded there is no difference in koala abundance in harvested areas (state forests) and national parks. There are no peer-reviewed scientific papers that have reported a negative impact of timber harvesting on koalas;
- harvesting at an individual site level must be put into the context of a landscape level approach to forest management, whereby sustainably managed state forests can lead to better environmental and social outcomes across the landscape, where additional resources from forestry revenue are used to deliver outcomes in fire management, pest and disease control, together with forestry expertise and better roading access as well as related benefits for other industries (e.g. honey production) and multiple uses including a broader spectrum of recreation opportunities;
- state forests can provide a broad array of recreational activities compared to national parks, given statutory exclusions or policy restrictions on many activities in national parks. As advised by Outdoors Queensland, state forests provide many suitable areas that can accommodate the following types of recreational activities: trail bike riding, quad-bike riding, four-wheel driving, horse riding, mountain bike riding, trail running, walking, rock climbing, bouldering, abseiling, caving, canyoning, dog walking, bird watching, camping, picnicking, fossicking and sight-seeing, as well as large scale events for leisure, recreation and/or sporting competitions;
- state forests are accredited in accordance with independent and internationally recognised sustainable forest management certification via the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), as opposed to most national parks and conservation reserves with minimal auditing on environmental performance;
- there is an ever growing and large body of peer reviewed science and policy recognition by international climate change bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that better long-term carbon outcomes are achieved from sustainably managed forests with timber harvesting, given the multiple carbon mitigation pathways including:
  - the carbon stored in growing forests (i.e., on-site);
  - the carbon stored in harvested forest products;
  - the substitution of emissions intensive materials (e.g., steel, concrete) with low embodied energy wood products; and
  - the use of wood waste for renewable energy (e.g., biofuels, bioenergy);

- the IPCC in its 4<sup>th</sup> assessment report unequivocally stated that:

*In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit. Carbon storage in long-lived wood products and reductions of emissions from use of wood products to substitute for emissions-intensive materials also contribute to mitigation objectives.*

- forestry practices on state forest are already undertaken in accordance with strict codes of practice on state forest land to protect biodiversity values, support a healthy forest and maintain soil and water resources;
- the state forest code and operational harvesting plan specifically requires the protection of cultural heritage and to take account of consultations and values identified with relevant indigenous communities;
- polling undertaken of 3000 voters by uComms in September 2020 across five regional electorates in southern and northern Queensland showed overwhelming support for the forest and timber industry, with 9 out of 10 respondents agreeing the Government should do more to support the timber industry, including in the nearby electorates of Morayfield, Gympie and Maryborough (see [here](#));
- restricting local timber supply puts pressure on hardwood imports with a high risk of illegal logging, deforestation and poor forest management, compared to world's best practice in Australia;
- the annual footprint of the native forestry industry in term of selective harvest operations on state forest in Queensland is small, representing less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1% of Queensland's total forest area;
- the Queensland Government is obligated to provide the necessary wood from state forests to industry as required under the original South-East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA), which includes their legally binding contracts with local processors;
- at the commencement of the SEQFA over 420,000 hectares of state forest was converted to national park tenure, and the local industry has made investment decisions on the basis of the commitment to supply wood from the remaining state forest area;
- the hardwood timber industry supports thousands of direct and indirect jobs in rural and regional areas across South-East Queensland, with many small towns and communities benefiting from the jobs and local economic benefits the industry provides;

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- plantation hardwood timber cannot be substituted for most native forest hardwood applications, given the unique strength and durability properties of Queensland native commercial species, and the Queensland Government has furthermore written-off the previous hardwood plantation program as a policy failure due to their non-performance as a viable resource including poor quality and stand mortalities;
  - there is ever increasing demand for timber and a pressing need for more structural (house framing, beams, posts) and non-structural (decking, cladding etc.) wood products to address the current building boom and reconstruction efforts following the recent South-East Queensland and northern New South Wales floods, as well as hardwood poles necessary for the maintenance of the electricity network as a critical piece of state infrastructure.