



GREAT SOUTHERN FOREST

FORESTS: A PATTERN CHANGER FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Forests are vital to climate action. Forests are living, breathing entities drawing down atmospheric carbon dioxide and storing it as terrestrial carbon, and breathing out oxygen. Globally, forests are depleted to 1/8th their size from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Walter Jehne). Forests are living planetary organs which ensure homeostasis and so the conditions for Life.

The magnificent carbon and biodiversity dense forests of south eastern NSW are facing a critical moment, the catalyst being the re-evaluation of the 20 year Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in 2019 and 2021 – either further destruction for another 20 years or - with an enlightened and pragmatic orientation – our forests are preserved and valued for their life-giving contributions to carbon storage, water, air, soil and diversity. The key is switching the management of forests from logging, (read wood-chipping), to carbon sequestration.

Management of the SE native forests has been prescribed by RFAs with attendant myths of 'sustainable logging' and using 'waste wood'; the overwhelming majority of trees felled go to Australia's oldest woodchip mill at Eden. When the RFA's were negotiated two decades ago, climate change and carbon economics were not commonly recognised. Now mature plantations meet all of Australia's timber needs (Judith Ajani) and locally, state-owned mature plantations at Bombala are in production. Most timber workers are employed in plantations (CFMEU). Forestry Corporation NSW reports show its native forest operations lost \$79 million in 7 years. Private loggers and millers lost a further \$1.4 million in 2012 despite accessing publicly subsidised logs. Clearly, managing native forests for timber/woodchips is out-dated economically and environmentally.

All forests sequester carbon. However there is a gross reduction in carbon stocks due to logging as unlogged forests are known to contain three times more carbon than logged forests. Logging contributes to greenhouse emissions. Ceasing to log SE native forests could save up to 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year. At a conservative auction price of \$10-12 per tonne, these avoided emissions could earn NSW a gross income of \$20-40 million a year (Perkins and Mackintosh). The ecosystem service of carbon sequestration (the metric used by the Clean Energy Regulator) has a value for climate change mitigation both nationally and internationally (Heather Keith et al). This service is accounted under the mandatory Kyoto and Paris Agreements, and priced under the Emissions Reduction Fund.

The Great Southern Forest (GSF) proposal is a deeply researched plan for the SE forests supported by a coalition of state environment groups, academics and activists. GSF is a solutions-focussed model to manage public native forests in SE NSW for carbon capture rather than woodchipping, funded by carbon emission abatement credits. GSF would generate new revenue, increase regional employment, protect biodiversity, connect fragmented landscapes, enable Indigenous partnerships, consolidate social cohesion, encourage nature-based tourism and importantly, mitigate climate disruption. This new model is relevant and transferable nationally and internationally. The GSF can reduce forest fragmentation by linking existing state forests, national parks and private forests thereby equipping forests as a whole with the connectedness and resilience to withstand and ameliorate a changing climate.

Forests exuberantly celebrate the intimate interconnectedness of Life. Deep ecologists, Arne Naess and John Seed speak forests' ability to permeate and entrain the human mind to the visceral experience of connectedness. Interconnectedness is the foundational, organising dynamic of Life – we are not and never can be separate from each other and our enfolding



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environment. Yet, separateness is the metaphysical base of our present form of government leading to dissociated decisions, war mentality and resultant climate change. Interconnectedness *as-an-experience* is the key to the change in consciousness to do politics differently - and hence wise and compassionate exercise of democratic power. As the inner state of being changes, so do thinking, thence behaviours and in turn social institutions. Forests model and activate the psyche required for stabilising our climate and peace on Earth. (<http://www.greatsouthernforest.org.au>)

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