



## POSITION PAPER

### DEFORESTATION

#### BACKGROUND

The 2018 Living Planet Report published by the World Wildlife Fund has reported that Australia is the only nation in the developed world to make the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) global list of deforestation hotspots. The Report puts Australia alongside New Guinea, Indonesia, Congo and Brazil for deforestation. The main cause is land clearing for livestock pasture, according to WWF conservation scientist Dr Martin Taylor.

New South Wales gave permission to clear over 7,000 hectares of native vegetation in 2015-16 - an increase of 800 per cent in three years. During that time, the NSW Government relaxed the laws around land clearing. Environmental groups had warned the new regime would lead to a major increase in loss of habitat for animals including koalas. The WWF estimates the koala will be extinct as early as 2050.

The Living Planet report estimates the number of vertebrate animals in the world (everything from mammals to birds to fish) has halved since 1970. It lists four main causes: Habitat destruction (logging and land clearing), over-exploitation of natural populations (hunting and fishing), invasive species (e.g. cats and foxes in Australia) and climate change. The major causes of deforestation in NSW were clearing for livestock pasture and unsustainable logging.

The world's forests absorb 2.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per year, one-third of the annual CO<sub>2</sub> released from burning fossil fuels. Forest destruction emits further carbon into the atmosphere, with 4.3–5.5 GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq/yr generated annually, largely from deforestation and forest degradation. Protecting and restoring this vast carbon sink is essential for mitigating climate change.

Forests also play a crucial role in climate change adaptation efforts. They act as a food safety net during climate shocks, reduce risks from disasters like coastal flooding, and help regulate water flows and microclimates. Improving the health of these forest ecosystems and introducing sustainable management practices increase the resilience of human and natural systems to the impacts of climate change.

The NSW Government is planning to allow logging in more than 15,000 hectares of protected old-growth and high-conservation-value public forests. More than 29,000 hectares of previously protected old-growth forests on private land have already been opened up to logging in recent years.

#### NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

The National Trust supports the position taken by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW in calling on the NSW Government to –

- Ensure no areas of forest currently protected will be opened up to logging
- End the remapping and rezoning of old-growth forest and rainforest on public and private land and
- Conserve native forests to protect biodiversity, store carbon and provide new tourism and recreational opportunities.

#### ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Trust will publicise its position on deforestation and act to support moves to conserve currently protected native forests, old-growth forest and rainforest.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Deforestation and Forest Degradation*, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 2020  
*Living Planet Report*, World Wildlife Fund, 2018