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Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Senate Environment and Communications References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

18 APR 2011

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Thank you for your letter of 8 March 2011 providing the opportunity to respond to a submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee on the harvesting practices of Forests NSW.

Firstly, I can advise that I will only be commenting on the activities of Forests NSW, as I understand that the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) will be providing a response on the private native forestry aspects of the written submission.

The harvesting of public native forests in NSW is one of the most highly regulated harvesting operations in the world. This activity is conducted lawfully under the Regional Forest Agreements, NSW Forest Agreements and their associated Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOAs).

Forests NSW is recognised both nationally and internationally as a sustainable forest manager by its certification under the Australian Forestry Standard, AS 4708:2007, and through its compliance to the international standard for environmental management systems, AS/NZ ISO 14001:2004.

Forests NSW takes its responsibilities for management of environmental values on its estate very seriously. In native forests, Forests NSW spends more than \$5M per year on environmental protection measures, such as harvest planning, prevention of soil erosion and water pollution, environmental audits and flora and fauna research and surveys. Forest operations are routinely audited by the OEH and the Department of Trade, Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services (Fisheries) and enforcement action is taken for breaches of licence conditions, if they occur.

In terms of the comments in the submission on logging in High Conservation Value Old Growth and Rainforests, these areas were mapped during the Regional Forest Agreement process and they are excluded from harvesting operations.

Prior to harvesting operations commencing, Forests NSW' ecologists conduct surveys for threatened flora and fauna, such as Endangered Ecological Communities and koalas, and, where these communities or species, or evidence of these species are found, appropriate exclusion zones or management prescriptions are implemented. The IFOAs set out the prescriptions Forests NSW must follow to minimise the impact of harvesting operations on identified threatened species.

With respect to core koala habitat, Forests NSW continues to work with the OEH to understand the extent of koala populations in State forests, National Parks and other land tenures by taking a whole-of-landscape approach. Forests NSW has worked with the OEH on the development of Koala Management Frameworks for the Far South Coast; Pine Creek on the North Coast; the Kempsey Koala Plan of Management (a Kempsey Shire Council initiative); and Koala Management prescriptions for cypress logging in the Pilliga.

Management recommendations, provided by independent specialists commissioned by OEH, together with input from a wide range of stakeholders, contributed to a Joint Far South Coast Koala Management Framework, developed during 2006 and refined since then. This Framework integrates koala management activities across all land tenures, both public and private, to identify actions and processes needed to reduce threats to koalas.

Forests NSW is currently working with OEH to further review and refine the koala survey and management prescriptions that are included in the south coast IFOAs.

Yours sincerely

Nick Roberts
Chief Executive Officer