



Native forest logging review – research summary



A report for WWF-Australia | Q1 2023



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1 Introduction

1.1 Research context

Scorecards are a successful tool used by WWF–Australia to draw attention to conservation issues and encourage government action on those issues. WWF–Australia currently operates three scorecards: The Renewable Superpower Scorecard, the State of Plastics in Australia, and a Threatened Species Scorecard.

WWF Australia is developing a Deforestation and Restoration Scorecard

The Deforestation and Restoration Scorecard will assess and compare the progress of State, Territory and Commonwealth governments in halting and reversing land degradation (including deforestation) by 2030, as committed by Australia under the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use at COP26 (Box 1). The Deforestation and Restoration Scorecard will also enable an assessment of jurisdictions' support for Australia to achieve national 2030 targets under the Paris Agreement, Glasgow Climate Pact, and Global Biodiversity Framework.

Box 1: Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use

The Australian Government signed the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use at COP26 in 2021. The declaration states:

'We therefore commit to working collectively to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 while delivering sustainable development and promoting an inclusive rural transformation'

The commitments contained in the Glasgow Declaration reaffirmed Australia's commitments to the 2030 United Nations Global Forest Goals, the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

Further, in 2022 at COP27 Australia reaffirmed its commitment by becoming a founding member of the Forests and Climate Leaders Partnership, an international group to accelerate the contribution of forests to global climate action. The Partnership states:

By joining, countries are committing to lead by example in the implementation of their national goals and striving to be more ambitious over time. They are also committing to enhance collective efforts to maximise the contribution of forests and sustainable land use to global and national climate and biodiversity goals, and to meet annually to take stock of progress.

Source: UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, [URL](#); Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, International forestry efforts, [URL](#); Cabinet Office 2022, World Leaders Launch Forests and Climate Leaders' Partnership at COP27 [press release], 7 November 2022, [URL](#); Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2022, Australia joins forests partnership to drive climate action, 10 November 2022, [URL](#)

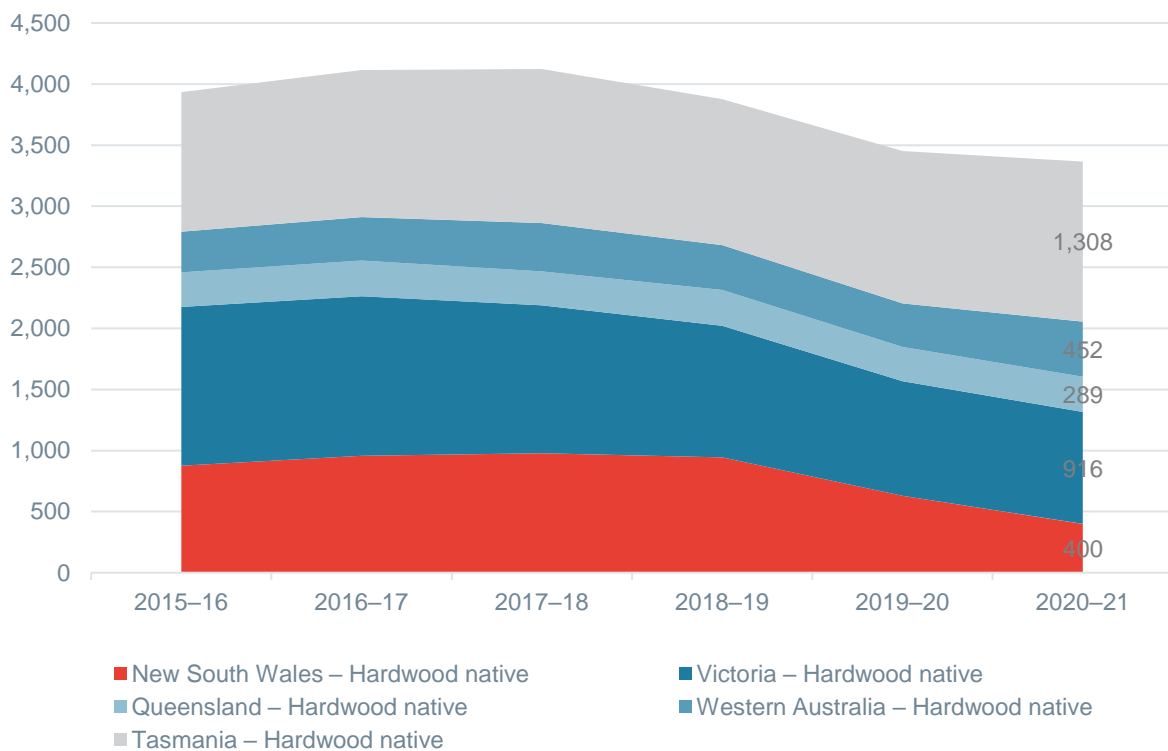


Native forest is the most extensive category of Australia’s forests, covering approximately 132 million ha.¹ Native forests are dominated by eucalypt (101 million ha), acacia (11 million ha), and melaleuca (6 million ha) forests. By ownership, as at 2016:

- Most native forests in Australia are in private (41 million ha) and leasehold (47 million ha) tenures; and
- The area of native forest in formal nature conservation reserve is 22 million ha, and the area of multiple-use public native forests is 10 million ha.

Each year around two per cent of Australia’s forests are logged.² **Figure 1** provides for recent jurisdiction level trends in native hardwood harvesting.

Figure 1: Trends in native hardwood harvesting, volume ‘000 m³, 2015–16 to 2020–21



Source: Australian Government ABARES; Frontier Economics analysis. Note: Excludes firewood removals, NT included in WA.

¹ ABARES 2018, *Australia’s State of the Forests Report 2018*, p. 3, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/sofr/sofr-2018>

² Australian National University 2022, Stopping native forest logging key to getting to net zero, accessed 3 March 2023, <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/stopping-native-forest-logging-key-to-getting-to-net-zero>



1.2 Scope and limitations

Scope of work

On behalf of WWF–Australia, Frontier Economics undertook desktop research into native forest logging (NFL) policy in place for Australia’s State, Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions. This report presents a summary of this research aligned to the characteristics of the final scoring rubric that WWF–Australia used to develop the Deforestation and Restoration Scorecard:

- **Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact NFL.** This includes whether there is a policy commitment to end NFL, the spatial coverage of such a commitment, and whether it is time bound; and
- **A clear resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL.** This includes how NFL transition packages support communities in the transition, whether there is committed funding for the transition, whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas, and matters related to land justice. For jurisdictions without a NFL transition package we consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.

Limitations

This research summary is not intended to convey a comprehensive assessment for each jurisdiction, instead it aims to provide a comparable overview of each jurisdiction’s performance as it relates to NFL. This report summarises desktop research which was solely based on publicly available information. In some instances, there was an absence of publicly available information to either identify a jurisdiction’s policy positions or assess policy efficacy.

The bulk of this research was undertaken in Q1 2023 and is not necessarily reflective of any subsequent policy, budget or regulatory announcements. Notwithstanding this, updates have been made to this summary to reflect the Victorian Government’s recent announcement that public NFL will cease at 1 January 2024.



2 Commonwealth

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the Commonwealth Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for the Commonwealth.

2.1 Background and context

The Commonwealth Government does not have a primary constitutional or regulatory role over NFL, that responsibility instead lies with the states and territories. The Commonwealth Government's role is limited by Constitutional heads of power with respect to biodiversity (for example, listing threatened species), climate change (for example, emissions abatement mechanisms), Aboriginal affairs powers (for example, land handbacks), external affairs and trade (for example, international commitments such as the Glasgow Declaration).

Notwithstanding this, the Commonwealth Government holds significant influence over state and territory NFL policy as evidenced by the RFAs and more recently its taxation and expenditure powers.

The Commonwealth Government has taken a role in investing in plantation expansion, which it is doing (for example, the 2022 announcement of \$86 million over five years to invest in the establishment of new plantations).³ Prior initiatives to support investment in plantations included tax incentives for plantation managed investment schemes, providing investors with upfront as deductions.⁴ The scheme was wound back in 2007, and combined with the Great Financial Crises, investment in hardwood plantation establishment has been almost zero post-2011 (Figure 2). The total area of hardwood plantations in Australia was approximately 711,000 ha in 2020–21, around 28 per cent lower than the 990,000 ha peak in 2008–09.

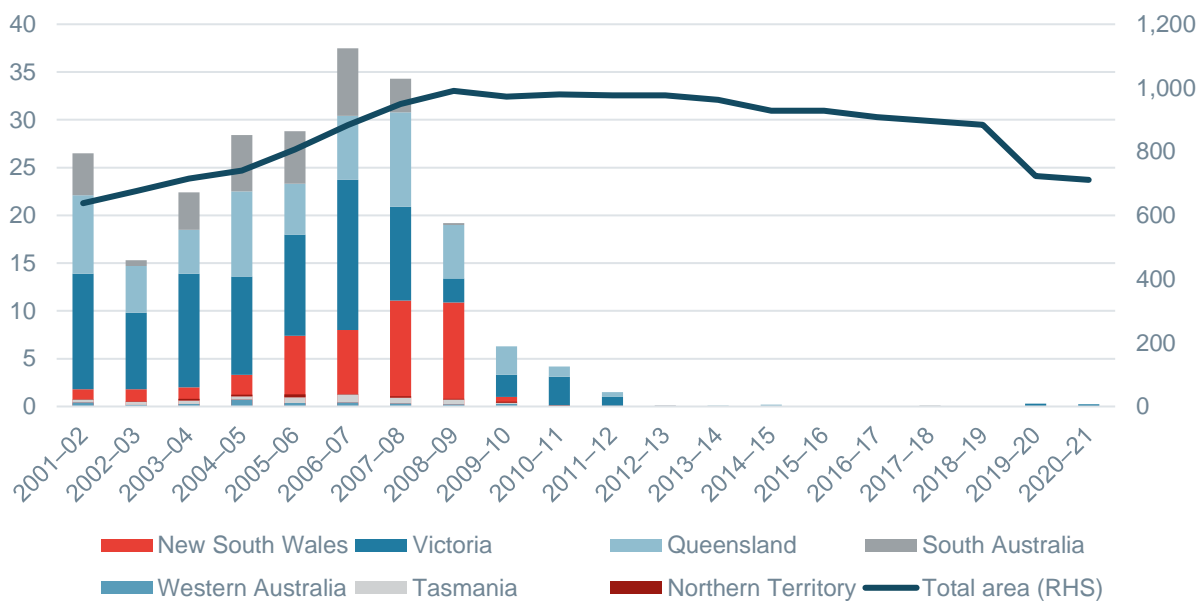
The Commonwealth Government has not committed to end NFL, though in the international arena it is increasingly attempting to position Australia as a leader in halting and reversing deforestation by 2030.

³ Office of Senator Jonathon Duniam (2022), Prime Minister – joint media release – \$86 million on offer to grow Australia's plantation estate [media release], 21 February, <https://duniam.com.au/prime-minister-joint-media-release-86-million-on-offer-to-grow-australias-plantation-estate/>

⁴ Australian Government 2020, *taxation incentives to establish forests*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/australias-forests/plantation-farm-forestry/taxation>



Figure 2: New hardwood plantation establishment and total area, '000 ha.



Source: ABAREs.

The Commonwealth Government has an opportunity to provide policy certainty for states and territories to facilitate the transition out of NFL and meet its own international commitments regarding climate change and nature. For example, the Commonwealth Government's Nature Positive Plan commits to a process of gradually applying National Environmental Standards to RFAs under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth.)* to both support the ongoing operation of the RFAs and introduce stronger environmental protection.

Regional Forest Agreements

The RFAs are 20-year agreements between State and Commonwealth Governments which allow for the logging of native forests on public land and provide an exemption to Commonwealth environment laws.

In 1992, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments worked towards achieving agreement over forest use. The resulting National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) set out broad national goals to be pursued at regional levels. RFAs were a key element in the NFPS approach. The broad aim of RFAs is to provide certainty for forest-based industries, forest-dependent communities and conservation, setting obligations and commitments for forest management that aim to deliver:

- certainty of resource access and supply to industry;
- ecologically sustainable forest management; and
- an expanded and permanent forest conservation estate.

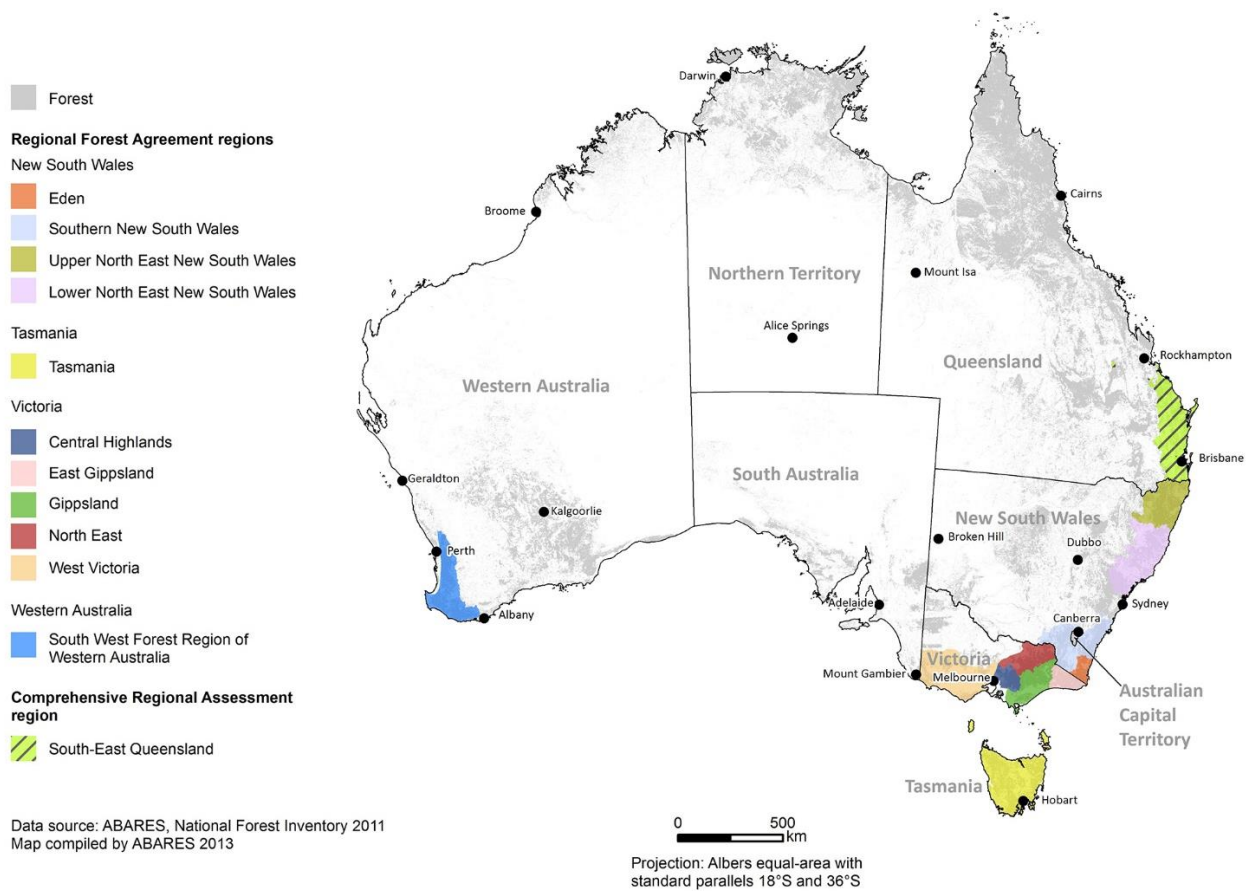
There are 10 RFAs in four states covering commercial native forestry regions – five in Victoria, three in New South Wales and one each in Western Australia and Tasmania. A map of RFA areas is presented in Figure 3 below.



The RFAs were rolled over after the 20 years elapsed, without any new science or comprehensive regional assessments being undertaken where the logging was occurring.⁵ Forestry operations within an RFA region are not subject to Part 3 – “Requirements for environmental approval” of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Along with the development of RFAs, the NFPS outlined a commitment to protect 60% of old-growth forest identified at the time as well as protecting all old growth forest classified as rare or depleted.

Figure 3: Map of RFA regions in Australia



Source: ABARES 2013, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/SiteCollectionImages/rfa/regions/map-of-regions/map-region-large.jpg>

⁵ ABC News, Ministerial documents reveal Commonwealth concerns about ‘old science’ and ‘validity’ of forest agreements, accessed 22 February 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-21/legal-concerns-over-plan-to-extend-forestry-agreements/9571936>



2.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The Commonwealth Government has not committed to end NFL. Historically, the Commonwealth Government has emphasised the employment that forestry provides – for example, in 2018 the Commonwealth Government noted that 70,000 people were directly employed in the growing and processing of forest products along with “tens of thousands” more whose jobs were indirectly supported by forestry.⁶

As a matter of policy, the Commonwealth Government supports NFL. For example, on 12 September 2017, Commonwealth, State, and Territory Forestry Ministers (excluding Queensland) issued a ministerial statement declaring support for Australia’s forestry industries. The statement claims support for the sustainable management of Australia’s native forests and the provision of timber resources for industry while protecting high value native forests.⁷ The Commonwealth Government has maintained this position in its more recent international commitments.

In the international arena the Commonwealth Government has stated its commitment to halting and reversing deforestation by 2030 (which it views as being consistent with continued NFL). In 2021, Australia became a signatory to the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which reaffirmed Australia’s commitments to the 2030 United Nations Global Forest Goals, the 2030 United Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement as relevant to forests and land use.⁸ The Commonwealth Government has, however, been criticised for lagging behind other nations regarding its climate change commitments and action.⁹

More recently, in 2022 at COP27 Australia became a founding member of the Forests and Climate Leaders Partnership – a new international group led by the UK which aims to maintain the momentum of global action on climate change through forest-based initiatives. The Partnership will support the goals of the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use, focusing on increasing global efforts to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030, and promoting sustainable production and trade.¹⁰

⁶ Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 2018, *Growing a better Australia: A billion trees for jobs and growth*, Australian Government, accessed 2 February 2023, p.2, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/forestry/national-forest-industries-plan.pdf>

⁷ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (4 November 2019) *Ministerial forestry statement* [statement], Australian Government, accessed 3 February 2023. https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/policies/ministerial-forestry-statement?_gl=1*_1atciyc*_ga*MTU3MTAzNDk2Mi4xNjc2OTMwMzQz*_ga_EFTD1N73JJ*MTY3NTIyNjMyNC44LjEuMTY3NTIyODE4MS4wLjAuMA..

⁸ Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *International forestry efforts*, accessed 22/02/2023, <https://duniam.com.au/prime-minister-joint-media-release-86-million-on-offer-to-grow-australias-plantation-estate/>

⁹ For example, see Climate Council 2021, *De-bunking Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s COP26 speech*, accessed 22/02/2023, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/de-bunking-prime-minister-scott-morrison-cop26-speech/>

¹⁰ Bowen C, Plibersek T, Watt M (8 November 2022) *Joint media release: Australia joins forest partnership to drive climate action* [media release], Minister for the Environment and Water, accessed 2 February 2023. <https://minister.dccew.gov.au/bowen/media-releases/australia-joins-forests-partnership-drive-climate-action>



2.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without a transition plan, such as the Commonwealth, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.

Community support

Not applicable, as the Commonwealth Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, as the Commonwealth Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

The Commonwealth Government does provide a degree of support to plantation investment. For example, in 2018, the Commonwealth Government published the National Forest Industries Plan.¹¹ Under the Plan, the Government released its plan for forestry industry jobs and growth – 'Growing a Better Australia: A billion trees for jobs and growth.' The Plan's central goal was to plant one billion new plantation trees, "over the next decade." This goal was to be supported by:

- The creation of Regional Forest Hubs, which focus on existing softwood plantation and processing regions;
- Reducing barriers to forestry expansion and supporting the planting of more trees;
- Using forestry resources smarter; and
- Growing community understanding of forestry to build public support for sustainable forestry activities in Australia.

The Commonwealth Government suggested that planting an additional one billion new trees would be an investment in growing new jobs across Australia, with a projected 18,000 jobs to arise over the next 10 years as a result of plantation expansion. In addition to employment, the Commonwealth Government highlighted the significant abatement potential of its plantation goal:

¹¹ Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 2018, Growing a better Australia: A billion trees for jobs and growth, Australian Government, accessed 2 February 2023. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/forestry/national-forest-industries-plan.pdf>



If the forest industry plants one billion new trees over the next 10 years an estimated additional 18 megatonnes of carbon dioxide will be sequestered per year by 2030

As a further example, the 2022–23 Commonwealth Budget supported growth in the forestry industry through allocating \$204.8 million over five years from 2022-23 to support industry training, research and development and productive growth for Australia’s timber industry. Notably, this includes:

- \$100 million over five years to establish an Australia-wide National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI) to be hosted at the University of Tasmania and supported by 3 regional research centres; and
- \$86.2 million for the Support Plantation Establishment Program (SPEP).¹² The SPEP will provide grants to the private sector and public forestry corporations for the establishment of new plantations and to secure future domestic wood supply.¹³

2.3.1 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as the Commonwealth Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

2.3.2 Land Justice

Not directly applicable, as the Commonwealth Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

The Commonwealth Government has engaged with Traditional Owners in developing strategic policy for the forestry industry. The RFAs include measures to ensure ongoing involvement of Indigenous people in managing and protecting their heritage places.¹⁴

Supplementing the involvement of Traditional Owners in RFAs, the Australian Government released the National Indigenous Forestry Strategy in 2005. The release followed consultation with Indigenous communities across Australia as various state forestry corporations recognised the need for greater Indigenous involvement in the management of forestry resources.¹⁵ The Strategy seeks to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the forestry industry in order to:

- Create improved social and economic outcomes for Indigenous communities;
- Foster opportunities to develop business partnerships between industry; and

¹² Australian Government 2022, *Budget Paper No.2*, Australian Government, accessed 2 February 2023, p.43, https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/bp2/download/bp2_2022-23.pdf

¹³ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2022, *Forestry*, Australian Government, accessed 2 February 2023. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry#:~:text=Support%20Plantation%20Establishment%20Program&text=The%20grants%20will%20be%20Open,equal%20to%20the%20grant%20amount.>

¹⁴ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2020, *Indigenous heritage*, Australian Government, accessed 2 February 2023. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/policies/rfa/about/indigenous>

¹⁵ Australian Government 2005, *The National Indigenous Forestry Strategy*, accessed 3 February 2023, p.4, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/forestry/australias-forest-policies/nifs_strategy.pdf



- Develop better forest and plantation management.¹⁶

Since its release, the Department of Agriculture has established an Indigenous Forestry Unit to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.¹⁷

2.3.3 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

The Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) incentivises less native clearing. Under the umbrella of vegetation methods, the ERF contains various methods which target greater carbon sequestration through reductions in native forest clearing. These include:

- Avoided clearing of native regrowth;
- Native forest from managed regrowth;
- Plantation forestry; and
- Avoided deforestation V1.1¹⁸

Further, the Carbon + Biodiversity Pilot (C+B) operates in conjunction with the ERF to pay farmers and landholders who plant mixed tree species a premium for emissions reduction and biodiversity benefits.¹⁹ Under the C+B scheme, landholders plant native tree and shrub species for the purpose of carbon sequestration in otherwise cleared landscapes. Participants are required to engage concurrently in a new mixed-species environmental plantings project under the ERF using the reforestation by environmental or mallee plantings method.

The Commonwealth Government's forthcoming Nature Repair Market may also provide options for governments and businesses to invest in restoration of native forests.²⁰

¹⁶ Australian Government 2005, *The National Indigenous Forestry Strategy*, accessed 3 February 2023, p.5, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/forestry/australias-forest-policies/nifs_strategy.pdf

¹⁷ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2019, *The Development of the Strategy*, accessed 3 February 2023, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/policies/nifs/development>

¹⁸ Australian Government Clean Energy Regulator, *Vegetation methods*, accessed 2 February 2023, <https://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/ERF/Choosing-a-project-type/Opportunities-for-the-land-sector/Vegetation-methods>

¹⁹ Australian Government 2021, *Australia's Long-Term Emissions Reduction Plan*, accessed 2 February 2023, p. 73 <https://www.dccew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australias-long-term-emissions-reduction-plan.pdf>

²⁰ Australian Government 2023, *Nature Repair Market*, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://www.dccew.gov.au/environment/environmental-markets/biodiversity-market>



3 Australian Capital Territory

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the ACT Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for the ACT.

3.1 Background and context

There is no commercial public or private NFL in the ACT. Much of the ACT's native vegetation has been extensively modified during the course of European settlement. Native forest has been virtually cleared from flat and undulating country and the major areas of native forest that remain cover the Brindabella, Tidbinbilla and Clear mountain ranges.

In more recent years (2013 – 2018), the ACT Government has focused on consolidating and connecting woodland landscapes to improve biodiversity conservation and management of the Belconnen Hills, Callum Brae, Majura Valley, Greater Gooroyaroo and Murrumbidgee Valley.²¹ These interventions are part of 'whole-of-landscape' environmental improvements in the ACT such as removal of feral animals and weeds and the rehabilitation of waterways.²²

3.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

There is no commercial public or private NFL in the ACT.²³

In the ACT, timber was harvested in native forests from the early 1900s until the early 1970s. A conservation and recreation emphasis has applied to the ACT's public native forest estate since 1980, with no harvesting of native forests for sawlog timber. Private and leasehold forest resources are limited and protected from harvesting.²⁴

3.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;

²¹ ACT government, *Woodlands Restoration Program – 2011 to 2018*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/biodiversity/woodlands/previous-projects>

²² ACT government, *Woodlands Restoration*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/nature-conservation/conservation-and-ecological-communities/protecting-woodlands/woodlands-restoration>

²³ Australian Government 2018, *Australia's State of the forests report 2018 Executive Summary*, p. 18, viewed 2/02/2023, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/abares/forestsaustralia/documents/sofr_2018/web%20accessible%20pdfs/SOFR_2018_Executive%20summary_web.pdf

²⁴ Australian Government 2014, *Australian native forest commerciality*, p. 33, viewed 2/02/2023, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/AustNatForCommerce_20141106_v1.0.0.pdf p.33



- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without the need for a transition plan, such as the ACT, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other notable comments

3.3.1 Community support

Not applicable, as the ACT has already transitioned out of NFL.

3.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, as the ACT has already transitioned out of NFL.

There are numerous commercial pine plantations in the ACT.²⁵ Due to their quality road and trail infrastructure, and close proximity to Canberra, these forests are popular for recreation. The forests also host events such as car rallies.²⁶ The plantation forests are managed by the ACT Government.²⁷

Prior to 2003, ACT Forests managed 26,000 ha of land, including about 16,000 ha of pine plantation. The remaining 10,000 ha consisted of areas of native vegetation including nature reserves, special purpose reserves, other conservation areas, watercourses, road reserves, travelling stock reserves and general utility areas.²⁸

In January 2003 approximately 10,500 ha of the pine plantation estate was destroyed during the Canberra bushfires, leaving only the Kowen Plantation in the east of the Territory undamaged. Following the fires the burnt plantations were cleared and some areas replanted with pine trees, particularly where the soil stabilisation and water quality protection was a priority. The previous plantation boundaries were redefined in some areas, which resulted in conversion from plantation to native vegetation, particularly in steep areas with increased environmental buffers.

3.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as the ACT has already transitioned out of NFL.

3.3.4 Land Justice

Not directly applicable, as the ACT has already transitioned out of NFL.

The substantive role of Traditional Owners in the governance and management of native forests and/or plantation resource is not clear. Likewise, handback arrangements are unclear.

²⁵ ACT Government 2022, *Plantations*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://www.parks.act.gov.au/find-a-park/plantations>

²⁶ ACT Government, *Plantations*, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://www.parks.act.gov.au/find-a-park/plantations>

²⁷ ACT Government 2017, *ACT Parks and Conservation Service Strategic Plantation Management Plan 2017–2022*, September, https://www.environment.act.gov.au/ACT-parks-conservation/management_of_the_commercial_pine_plantation_estate

²⁸ ACT Government, *Management of commercial pine plantation estate*, https://www.environment.act.gov.au/ACT-parks-conservation/management_of_the_commercial_pine_plantation_estate



The ACT Government acknowledges that, '[p]lantations in the ACT are located on Ngunnawal Country, an ancient and diverse landscape managed and cared for by Ngunnawal people for tens of thousands of years.'²⁹

3.3.5 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

Not directly applicable, as the ACT has already transitioned out of NFL

The ACT Government has established a number of conservation areas and national parks in the Territory, including Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Large patches of subalpine woodland persist across the south and southwest of the ACT.³⁰ The mean size of these woodland areas is over 25 ha and are often contiguous with other associated subalpine and alpine vegetation communities. Over 80% of lowland woodland patches are less than 10 ha in size.

The ACT government has undertaken successful investment in restoration in recent years and has identified bird corridors in the Monaro and Southern Tablelands as important areas for future restoration investment.³¹

Woodland restoration in the ACT

The ACT's remaining woodlands are nationally significant as they are among the biggest, best connected, most botanically diverse examples of their type. The ACT's woodland restoration projects have improved the condition of the woodlands, protected them from further damage and created connectivity between woodland patches with 'stepping stones' of native trees. The projects cover both nature reserves and privately owned land. Examples include:³²

- Restore ACT and Greater Goorooyarroo Woodlands project: Woodland restoration of 450ha (4.5 square kilometres) of key landscape areas that will provide additional connectivity between woodland patches;
- Million Trees – ACT project: Planting 300,000 native trees over ten years in the Murrumbidgee River Corridor; and
- Reintroducing woodland species to the ACT project: The ACT and partner organisations, including research institutions are working to reintroduce species that have not been seen in ACT woodlands for over a century. The 5 km² fenced area, which is free of foxes, cats and dogs, is within the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve.

Over the next five years the ACT Government plans to undertake 900ha of on-ground works on Box-Gum Woodland, predominantly on rural leasehold land in the ACT. These works include re-vegetation, weed control, pest animal control and provision of grazing advice. Over the course of the project, up to 45 landholders, and at least 14 community groups will be actively engaged in

²⁹ ACT Government, *Plantations*, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://www.parks.act.gov.au/find-a-park/plantations>

³⁰ ACT Government 2019, *ACT native woodland conservation strategy and action plans*, p. 17, https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1444098/Woodland-Conservation-Strategy.pdf

³¹ ACT Government, *Woodlands, grasslands, alpine bogs, and riparian corridors*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/biodiversity/biodiversity-investment-plan/woodlands-grasslands-alpine-bogs-riparian-corridors>

³² ACT Government, *Current Projects*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/biodiversity/woodlands/current-projects>



managing Box-Gum Woodland which will ensure medium to long-term management of this threatened ecological community. This project will lead to an improvement in the condition of the Threatened Ecological Community and will also benefit threatened and declining woodland birds and threatened plants dependent on Box-Gum Woodland.



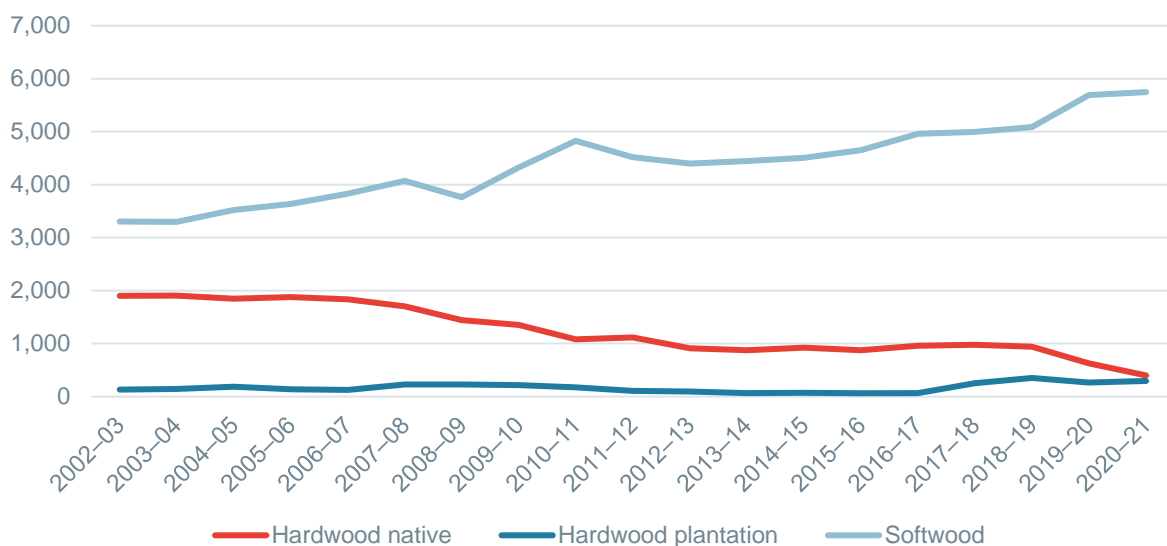
4 New South Wales

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the NSW Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for NSW.

4.1 Background and context

The volume of NFL in NSW has declined 79% since 2002–03 and is now similar in quantum to hardwood plantation logs (i.e., in 2020–21 hardwood native logging was 400,000 m³ compared to 298,000 m³ for hardwood plantation). The recent decline in NFL is most likely the result of the 2019–20 Black Summer fires as well as floods in some regions over the last 3 years. Trends in NSW log volume, by type, are presented in **Figure 4** below.

Figure 4: New South Wales log harvest volume, '000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, *Overview of Australian forestry industry*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>; Note: Includes ACT from 2010–11.

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) manages approximately two million hectares of public native forests and 34,000 hectares of hardwood plantations in the north of NSW.³³ Around half of this area is managed for conservation and the other half is able to be harvested.³⁴ **Figure 5** shows the areas of native forest resource managed by FCNSW. The majority of native forest

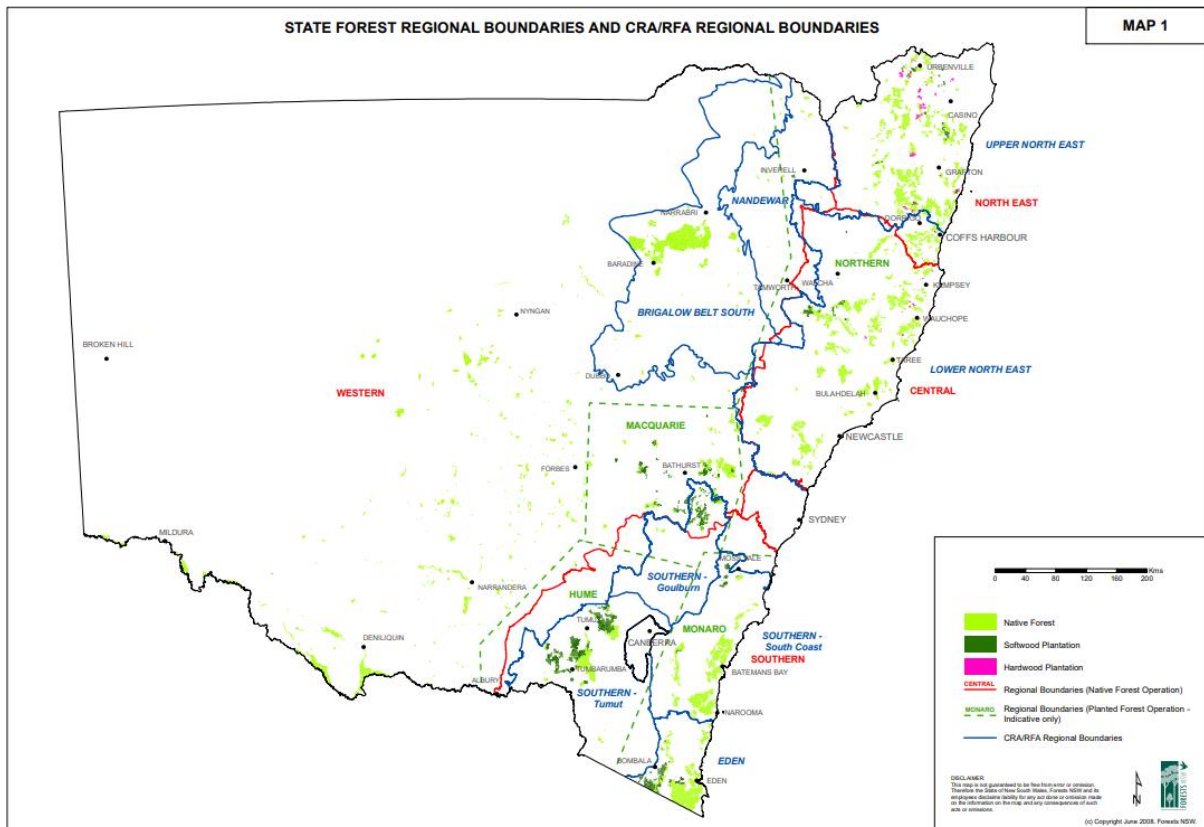
³³ FCNSW, *Statement of Corporate Intent – 2021-22*, p. 4.

³⁴ FCNSW, *Impact of fires 2019–20*, viewed 20 April 2022, <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/operations/fire-management/fire-impact-of-2019-20>



timber is harvested from the three Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) areas in NSW, which are the North East, Southern and Eden RFA areas.³⁵

Figure 5: State Forest and Regional Forest Agreement Boundaries



Source: FCNSW, Boundary Map, <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/operations/esfm> (accessed 24 March 2022).

Following the 2019-20 bushfires, in 2020 FCNSW conducted a preliminary assessment to understand the impact of the fires on the long term sustainable yield.³⁶ The analysis by FCNSW in 2020 found that:

- In the North East RFA area:
 - Around 60% of the net harvestable area available for timber production was impacted by fires in the Upper North East and 38% in the Lower North East, or close to 50% of the net harvestable area across the region;
 - Over 10% of the hardwood plantation estate was affected;
 - Blackbutt log supply can be maintained but the Spotted Gum on the North Coast (which grows significantly slower than Blackbutt) was heavily affected by fire; and

³⁵ The RFAs between the Australian Government and the NSW government control and manage the native forests in these areas and seek to balance economic uses with environmental protections.

³⁶ The sustainable yield is intended to show the amount and types of log products that can be harvested from the native forest each year without diminishing the volume the forests can produce into the future. FCNSW 2020, *2019–20 Wildfires NSW Coastal Hardwood Forests Sustainable Yield Review*, December.



- Long-term sustainable timber supply from the North East forests was estimated to have fallen by approximately 4%.
- In South Coast and Eden RFA areas:
 - Over 80% of the forest area that is able to be harvested in the South Coast and Eden RFA areas were impacted by fire;
 - The biggest impacts were in the southern regions, with lowered sawlog availability in the South Coast and Tumut regions;
 - The recovery of the forests in these areas will take longer than the northern NSW forests as the southern region forests are slower growing; and
 - Long-term sustainable timber supply from the south coast forests was estimated to have fallen by approximately 30%.

FCNSW voluntarily ceased or reduced NFL in some compartments after the 2019–20 fires and the NSW EPA has pursued FCNSW for CIFOA breaches.

More recently, the NSW Natural Resources Commission (NRC) prepared a detailed report for the NSW Government on the short and longer terms impacts of the bushfires on FCNSW's native timber supplies.³⁷ The more recent analysis by the NRC has found the following in terms of bushfire impacts:

Impacts were most severe in the South Coast subregion, where there may be up to an 80-90 percent reduction in planned wood supply volume based on the Commission's recommended pathways and risk mitigations. In the Eden subregion, risk mitigations are expected to reduce available wood supply volume by 40 percent. These impacts, while not as large as in the South Coast subregion, are still significant. In the Tumut subregion there is an estimated reduction in supply of approximately 35 percent of wood supply agreement volume. Across the north coast subregions, wood supply may be reduced by 10-20 percent under the recommended pathways and risk mitigations.

This analysis suggests a more significant impact on wood supply than the initial analysis by FCNSW. As a result, the NRC recommended that harvesting be suspended for three years from February 2020 in three management zones (Narooma, Nowra, and Taree). Restricted harvesting arrangements have also been recommended in a further 17 management zones across the Southern, Eden and North East RFA areas.

4.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The NSW Government has not committed to end NFL.

Notwithstanding this, FCNSW did voluntarily cease or reduce logging in some compartments after the 2019–20 bushfires (that is, via updated sustainable long term yield forecasts). Further, the NSW EPA has required FCNSW to reduce logging as a result of prosecutions of FCNSW for Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (CIFOA) breaches.

³⁷ NSW Natural Resources Commission 2021, *Coastal IFOA operations post 2019/20 wildfires*, June. This was a Cabinet-in-Confidence report that has been publicly leaked.



In June 2022, FCNSW extended wood supply agreements on the NSW North Coast by five years, with all WSAs on the North Coast now running through to 2028. In announcing the WSA extension, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture emphasised the positive impact the extension would have for local business:³⁸

The timber industry plays a critical role on the North Coast and employs hundreds of locals, so extending the current agreements will help future-proof local processors, whether they're a small family business or a larger operator.

There are three current wood supply agreements on the South Coast which expire in 2029, 2030 and 2033. At least three wood supply agreements on the South Coast expired in 2018 and 2020 and have not been renewed.³⁹

4.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without a transition plan, such as NSW, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.

4.3.1 Community support

Not applicable, as the NSW Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

4.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, as the NSW Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

Notwithstanding this, FCNSW has a strategy to expand its plantation estate, though details remain unclear. In its 2021–22 Annual Report, FCNSW states:⁴⁰

While re-establishing plantations remains a primary focus, opportunities to expand the state-owned plantation estate continue to be actively pursued as part of our strategy. Towards the end of the financial year, the division applied to the

³⁸ Toole, P (Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture), 2022. *Certainty for local timber processors after extension to Wood Supply Agreements*, viewed 1/02/2023, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/wood-supply-agreements>

³⁹ IPART 2021, *Review of Forestry Corporation's native Timber Harvesting and Haulage Costs 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2019*, May, p. 34, <https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/documents/document/final-report-review-forestry-corporations-native-timber-harvesting-and-haulage-costs-2016-2019>

⁴⁰ FCNSW 2022, *Forestry Corporation Annual Report 2021–22*, https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1436390/forestry-corporation-annual-report_FY22.pdf



Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for approval to acquire a private plantation estate in NSW. Prior to the publication of this report the ACCC released a statement of issues and indicated they would move to a second stage review.

4.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as the NSW Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

Land Justice

In terms of First Nations involvement in ongoing NFL, FCNSW employs an Aboriginal Partnerships Liaison Team to work with Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. FCNSW also works in partnership with Aboriginal communities across the State to complete a range of forest management activities including:⁴¹

- carrying out cultural heritage surveys;
- jointly managing culturally significant sites;
- delivering firewood to elders; and
- providing forest products for cultural purposes, such as bark for canoes.

4.3.4 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

NFL and the broader protection of vulnerable species and ecosystems is a source of policy debate, a recent example being the NSW Labor's election commitment to establish The Great Koala National Park on the mid-North Coast.⁴²

Policy debate on the environmental and economic viability of NFL

In August 2022 the NSW Parliament received a parliamentary petition signed by 21,000 people to:⁴³

- Transition NSW's native forestry industry towards sustainable plantations by 2024;
- Immediately place a moratorium on public native forest logging until the regulatory framework is introduced;
- Urgently protect high-conservation value forests through gazettal in the National Parks estate; and
- ban biomass fuel made from native forest timber.

⁴¹ FCNSW, *Aboriginal Partnerships*, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/operations/aboriginal-partnerships>

⁴² Loomes, P., & Murray, D. 2023, *NSW Labor eyes \$80 koala national park*, *The Canberra Times*, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8053432/nsw-labor-eyes-80m-koala-national-park/>

⁴³ National Parks Association of NSW 2022, *NSW parliamentary debate on ending native forest logging shows government is out of touch with community expectations*, October 17, viewed 1/02/2023, <https://npansw.org.au/2022/10/17/nsw-parliamentary-debate-on-ending-native-forest-logging-shows-government-is-out-of-touch-with-community-expectations/>



On 13 October 2022, the legislative assembly noted the petition and debated the merits of NFL.⁴⁴ Themes in the debate included the role of hardwood plantations in the industry, the cost and efficacy of native forest management in mitigating the risk of bush fire, the role native forest logging plays in construction, the sustainability of import substitution for hardwood products, carbon abatement potential, and jobs supported by the forestry industry. Towards the end of the debate the Minister for Agriculture at that time stated his thanks for the petition, but ultimately expressed support for continued NFL.

In November 2022, the NSW Government pulled a bill that would have made it easier for landholders to clear private native forestry without duplicate approval processes between state and local government after cross bencher MO Fred Nile refused to back the bill, ensuring it would have failed on the floor of Parliament.⁴⁵

In December 2022, the NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No.4 – Customer Service and Natural Resources tabled an inquiry into the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry. The Committee Chair's forward to the review outlined the challenge facing the sector:⁴⁶

Over the years, there has been a progressive loss of timber supply, particularly of native hardwood timber, with forest areas taken out of harvesting and put into protected areas with little effort to compensate for this loss. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating 2019/20 fires have only exacerbated an already precarious situation.

Among other recommendations, the Committee recommended that the NSW Government:⁴⁷

- Implement as a priority a long-term funded strategy for the expansion of both softwood and hardwood timber plantations in New South Wales;
- Establish further state-owned timber plantations;
- Provide long term support to workers in the timber and forest products industry transitioning away from native forestry to other parts of the sector with access to worker transition services, training and retraining support, relocation support, and counselling;

⁴⁴ Parliament of New South Wales 2022, *Legislative Assembly Hansard – 13 October 2022 – Proof Native Forest Logging*, 13 October, viewed 1/02/2023, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-128109>

⁴⁵ Smith, Alexandra 2022, *NSW government forced to pull divisive 'koala wars' bill*, The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 November, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/nsw-government-faces-defeat-in-koala-wars-as-mp-fred-nile-refuses-to-back-bill-20221114-p5by3c.html>

⁴⁶ Parliament NSE Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 4 2022, *Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry*, Report 54, September, viewed 2/02/2023, p. viii, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2762/Report%20No.%2054%20-%20Long%20term%20sustainability%20and%20future%20of%20the%20timber%20and%20forest%20products%20industry.pdf>

⁴⁷ Parliament NSE Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 4 2022, *Long term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry*, Report 54, September, viewed 2/02/2023, p. xi, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2762/Report%20No.%2054%20-%20Long%20term%20sustainability%20and%20future%20of%20the%20timber%20and%20forest%20products%20industry.pdf>



- Consider the impact of a transition away from public native forestry on communities where native forest logging currently occurs and provide investment and incentives to encourage new economic opportunities in publicly owned forests; and
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for further engagement with indigenous communities on forest management practices, particularly cultural burning.

In response to the Committee’s report the NSW Government supported the recommendations to:⁴⁸

- Expand plantation supply and noted FCNSW’s strategic objectives include actively pursuing strategic plantation acquisitions and acquiring greenfield sites for plantation expansion (including for carbon sequestration opportunities); and
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for further engagement with indigenous communities on forest management practices, particularly cultural burning noting that ‘work is already underway to identify and facilitate these opportunities’.

The NSW Government noted recommendations to provide support to workers transitioning out of NFL and consider the new economic opportunities in publicly owned forests. The NSW Government stated:

The complete cessation of harvesting from public native forests is not supported by the NSW Government given the severe economic consequences for regional industries and employment, as well as the potential carbon and environmental impacts associated with importing timber from jurisdictions with lesser environmental protections.

The NSW Government considers that public NFL can sustainably occur, ‘in accordance with the stringent ruleset contained in Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals and other environmental requirements in the NSW Forest Management Framework’.

The NSW Government acknowledges the importance of natural capital

In December 2022, the NSW Government published its NSW natural capital statement of intent, laying out the NSW Government’s role as a responsible steward of natural assets through the delivery of conservation and environmental market policies and programs. Within the *Statement of Intent*, the NSW Government proposes to realise the value of natural capital to grow resilient industries, regional communities and jobs through taking action to:⁴⁹

Identify and enable natural capital opportunities in regional NSW that can contribute to the development of new regional industries, sustainable employment and opportunities for primary producers, landholders and Aboriginal communities. This includes creating the market framework and financial incentives for the primary industries and lands sector to sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity,

⁴⁸ NSW Government 2022, *NSW Government Response Inquiry into the long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry*, September 15, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2762/Government%20response%20-%20Report%2054%20-%20Timber%20and%20forest%20products%20industry%20-%20received%2015%20December%202022.pdf>

⁴⁹ NSW Government 2022, *NSW Natural Capital Statement of Intent*, <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/our-science-and-research/our-research/social-and-economic/natural-capital/natural-capital-statement-of-intent>



improve productivity through best practice, and create other economic opportunities.

The cessation of NFL is aligned to these actions, and the broader themes and strategies contained in the NSW natural capital statement of intent.



5 Northern Territory

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the NT Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for the NT.

5.1 Background

The NT undertakes limited NFL, with limited supplies of products provided periodically from native forests on leasehold and private tenures.⁵⁰ Plantation forestry is the second largest production land use in the NT after beef grazing, with more than 47,000 hectare of the NT currently growing forest products. There are 3 plantation operations in the NT where companies grow African mahogany, black wattle or sandalwood:⁵¹

- African mahogany, *Khaya senegalensis*, is being grown in the Douglas Daly region to produce high-value sawn timber used for flooring, fine furniture or veneers. The 14,000 ha, unirrigated plantation is the largest African mahogany plantation in the world, with a predicted rotation of 17 to 22 years;
- Black wattle, *Acacia mangium*, is being grown on the Tiwi islands for woodchip to produce pulp. The approximately 30,000 ha of forest is expected to produce 200,000 and 400,000 green metric tonnes of wood chip for export each year; and
- Sandalwood, *Santalum album*, is grown in irrigated, mixed-species plantations to produce sandalwood oil for pharmaceutical and ceremonial markets worldwide. The more than 4,000 ha of plantations in the NT, centred around Katherine, are part of the largest area of sandalwood plantations in the world.

In 2021, Territory Natural Resource Management published *Sustainable Forestry Practices: Guidelines for the Northern Territory*.⁵² The report contains Sustainable Forestry Practices Guidelines prepared for foresters or those interested in the industry to gain an understanding of the requirements necessary to undertake plantation forestry operations sustainably.

Pastoral leaseholders in the NT are allowed to apply for a permit to clear up to 5,000 hectares of land before the application must be referred to the Environment Protection Authority for a decision on whether environmental impact assessment is required.⁵³ Unlike every other state and territory in Australia, the NT does not have native vegetation laws or a conservation strategy.

⁵⁰ ABARES 2014, *Australian native forest commerciality*, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/AustNatForCommerce_20141106_v1.0.0.pdf

⁵¹ Northern Territory Government 2022, *Forestry*, viewed 2/02/223, <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/food-crops-plants-and-quarantine/forestry>

⁵² Territory Natural Resource Management 2021, *Sustainable forestry practices guidelines for the Northern Territory*, https://www.territorynrm.org.au/files/ugd/da28f0_df72240145134698aa6e1c5aea687a9d.pdf

⁵³ Environmental Justice Australia 2022, *As landclearing skyrockets in the NT, unique savanna woodlands need protection*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://envirojustice.org.au/blog/2022/11/02/as-landclearing-skyrockets-in-the-nt-unique-savanna-woodlands-need-protection/#:~:text=In%20the%20NT%2C%20pastoral%20leaseholders,land%20to%20clear%20without%20assessment.>



5.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The NT Government has not committed to prevent NFL, though at present there is no commercial NFL in the Northern Territory.⁵⁴ However, the NT Government has identified an opportunity to harvest 'native forests on all tenures, dependant on the information derived from a native forest inventory and assessment of commercial potential, and the development of meaningful engagement models between stakeholders.'⁵⁵ NFL potential is characterised by the NT Government as a job creation initiative, which provides the following example:⁵⁶

Aboriginal engagement in native forest management for timber production has the potential to generate large employment and production benefits. If 10% of the private forest with commercial potential was actively managed for timber, for example, this would represent 660,000 ha and could generate \$15 million in selectively harvested log income per year and produce \$100 million of sawn timber annually. This would create around 370 direct jobs for Aboriginal communities and industry partners.

According to the Forestry Industry Association Northern Territory (FIANT), there is 80–90 million hectares of native forest which is either indigenous-owned and/or managed (see **Figure 6**) of which 17.2 million hectares could be important for NFL.⁵⁷ ⁵⁸ Recently, the timber industry with the support of the NT and Australian Governments and local development organisations have funded investigations into whether commercial NFL is viable in Indigenous owned and managed lands.

⁵⁴ Australian Government 2018, *Australia's State of the forests report 2018 Executive Summary*, p. 18, viewed 2/02/2023, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/abares/forestsaustralia/documents/sofr_2018/web%20accessible%20pdfs/SOFR_2018_Executive%20summary_web.pdf

⁵⁵ Northern Territory Government, *Forestry*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://industry.nt.gov.au/industries/primary-industry/agriculture/plant-industries/research-and-development/forestry>

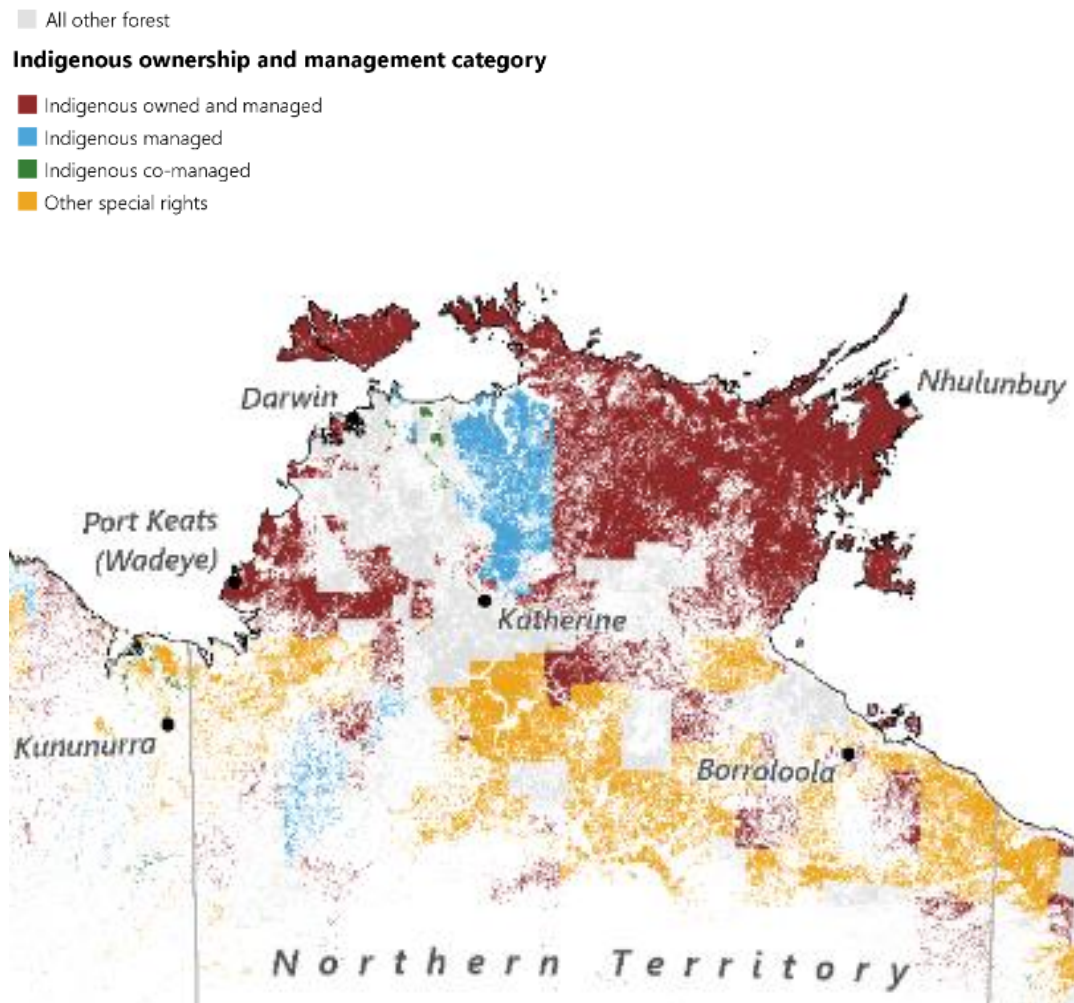
⁵⁶ Northern Territory Government 2022, *Forestry*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/food-crops-plants-and-quarantine/forestry>

⁵⁷ Forestry Industry Association Northern Territory 2022, *About FIANT*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://fiant.org.au/about/>

⁵⁸ Territory Natural Resource Management, *Sustainable forestry practices guidelines for the Northern Territory*, p. 17, https://www.territorynrm.org.au/_files/ugd/da28f0_df72240145134698aa6e1c5aea687a9d.pdf



Figure 6: The indigenous forest estate, by landownership and management category



Source: National Forests Inventory 2018.

5.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without a transition plan, such as the NT, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.



5.3.1 Community support

Not applicable, as the NT Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

5.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, as the NT Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

There are 3 plantation operations in the NT where companies grow African mahogany, black wattle or sandalwood. Currently, there does not appear to be a plan to grow the plantation estate in the NT. Studies show potential for plantation forestry in the NT.⁵⁹

5.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as the NT Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

5.3.4 Land Justice

Not directly applicable, as the NT Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL. However, The NT Government is seeking to support Traditional Owners utilise their forestry assets to support economic development objectives (e.g., East Arnhem Land).

5.3.5 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

Industry and government have identified 17.2 million hectares of native forest in the NT which could be potentially important for forestry production.⁶⁰ Much of this is located on Indigenous owned and/or managed land.

A transition into NFL is a risk for the Northern Territory

The Forestry Industry Association of the Northern Territory (FIANT) was established in 2020 to advocate for the industry and policy development. A key focus area of FIANT is Indigenous Forestry Project Development which includes NFL on indigenous owned and/or managed native forest.⁶¹ 17.2 million hectares of native forest have been identified to be potentially important for forestry production.⁶²

In 2020, a project managed by Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) was announced to investigate the potential for commercial NFL in the Northern Territory's East Arnhem Land. The project is funded by FWPA and the Australian Government, delivered in partnership with the

⁵⁹ For example, see: Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia 2020, *Northern forestry and forest products industry situational analysis*, April, <https://crcna.com.au/resources/publications/northern-forestry-and-forest-products-situational-analysis>

⁶⁰ Territory Natural Resource Management, *Sustainable forestry practices guidelines for the Northern Territory*, p.17, https://www.territorynrm.org.au/files/ugd/da28f0_df72240145134698aa6e1c5aea687a9d.pdf

⁶¹ Forestry Hub Northern Territory and Ord Valley, *About us*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://ntovfh.com.au/about-us/>

⁶² Territory Natural Resource Management, *Sustainable forestry practices guidelines for the Northern Territory*, p. 17, https://www.territorynrm.org.au/files/ugd/da28f0_df72240145134698aa6e1c5aea687a9d.pdf



University of the Sunshine Coast and Developing East Arnhem Limited (DEAL).⁶³ DEAL's strategic plan states:⁶⁴

East Arnhem has abundant natural forests and is connected into national and international markets via the Gove Port. Yolŋu traditional owners have led pioneering work in forestry by producing Darwin stringybark, a Class 1 hardwood, which is used for construction, decking and outdoor furniture. DEAL is leading a collaborative initiative to map the region's forestry resources and undertake market testing of the region's forest products.

In February 2022, the NT Government stated the investigation into the potential for commercial NFL is due for completion in June 2023.⁶⁵

⁶³ Timberbiz 2020, *Potential in NT for commercial indigenous forestry*, 17 July, <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/potential-in-nt-for-commercial-indigenous-forestry/>

⁶⁴ Developing East Arnhem Limited 2019, *Strategic Plan 2020–25*, p. 20, https://www.developingeastarnhem.com.au/assets/uploads/2019/11/DEAL_Strategic_Plan_2020-25.pdf

⁶⁵ Northern Territory Government 2022, *Supporting commercial forestry opportunities in East Arnhem Aboriginal communities*, February, <https://industry.nt.gov.au/publications/primary-industry-publications/newsletters/regional-newsletters/rural-review/nt-rural-review-february-2022/supporting-commercial-forestry-opportunities-in-east-arnhem-aboriginal-communities>



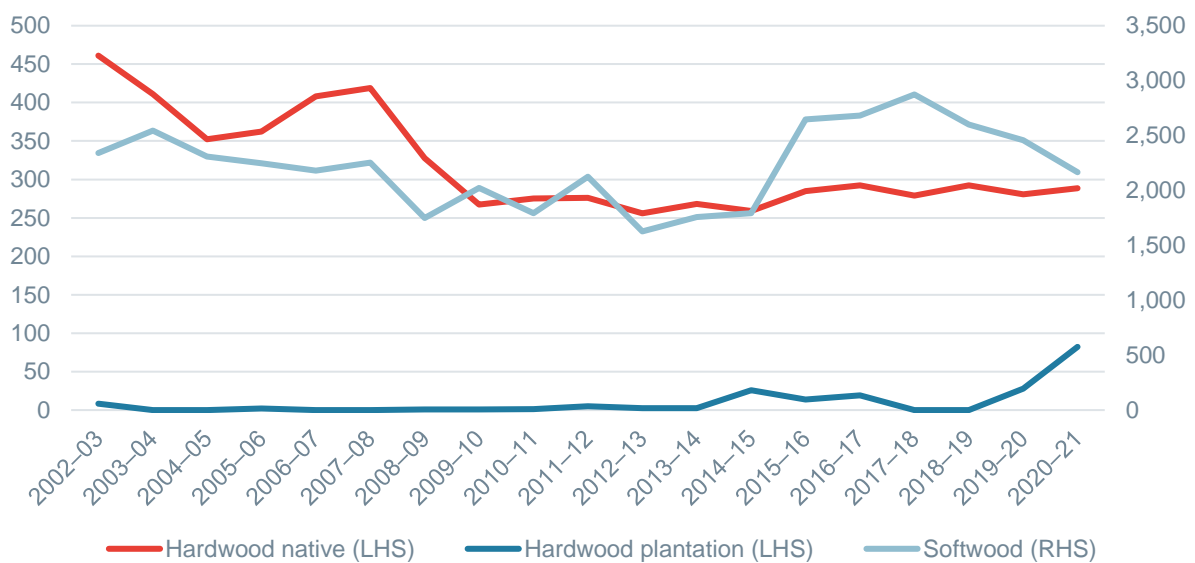
6 Queensland

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the Queensland Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for Queensland.

6.1 Background

Trends in Queensland’s harvested log volume, by type, are presented in **Figure 7**. Native hardwood logging has hovered around 280,000 m³ per annum over the five years to 2020–21, with privately owned native forests supply around 60% of Queensland’s native hardwood timber business. Hardwood plantation volumes have grown rapidly over recent years, from essentially zero in the early 2000’s to 82,000 m³ in 2020–21.⁶⁶

Figure 7: Queensland log harvest volume, ‘000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, *Overview of Australian forestry industry*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>

⁶⁶ HQPlantations is the state's major grower, owning around 96% of Queensland's plantation estate. The remaining plantations are owned by mostly small-scale private growers. HQPlantations grows approximately 130,000 ha of Southern Pine and 40,000 ha of Araucaria. Source: Queensland Government, 2022, *Plantation Area*, viewed 24/01/2023, <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/forests-wood/plantation-forestry/plantation-area> ; HQPlantations 2023, *Species we grow*, viewed 24/01/2023, <https://www.hqplantations.com.au/our-plantations/species-we-grow>



Queensland is experiencing high rates of deforestation, largely on private land. In 2019–20 418,656 ha of woody vegetation was affected by clearing – including full and partial clearing. This resulted in a net reduction of 296,569 ha of the state’s woody vegetation.⁶⁷

A driver behind NFL in Queensland appears to be land clearing to support livestock. 2019–20 figures show 85% (or 357,604 ha) of clearing was done to create new pasture.⁶⁸ Further, approximately 52% of all vegetation cleared in 2019–20 was classified as old growth or older than 15 years.

Of the state’s 13 bioregions, the Brigalow Belt (48% or 199,218ha) and Mulga Lands (26% or 110,161ha) accounted for nearly three-quarters (74%) of the state’s woody vegetation clearing activity. In each of these bioregions, about 80% of the clearing activity was mapped as full clearing – meaning that less than 10% canopy remained after clearing.⁶⁹

The Queensland Government has not committed to end private NFL and policy settings support NFL on private land.⁷⁰ Many productive private native forests are located on large properties where cattle grazing is the major focus of the enterprise.⁷¹

6.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The Queensland Government has committed to end public NFL in South-East Queensland by 2024. The Queensland Government states an aim to, ‘eventually end timber production from State forests to allow transition of these areas to the conservation estate.’⁷²

Native forestry in Queensland is distributed across different supply zones (**Figure 8**) with differing commitments to transition out of NFL, some of which are time-bound and some not. The Queensland Government’s current commitments for NFL of state forests include:

- To cease in the SEQ Regional Plan area on 31 December 2024 reflecting the 1999 South East Queensland Forests Agreement;
- To continue up until at least 31 December 2026 (extended from 2024) in the balance of the SEQ supply region, i.e., the Eastern Hardwoods Region;
- To potentially cease in the Western Hardwoods region in 2034; and

⁶⁷ Queensland Government 2022, *2019–20 SLATS Report*, accessed 27 February 2022, <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/mapping/statewide-monitoring/slats/slats-reports/2019-20-slats-report/statewide-overview>

⁶⁸ Queensland Government 2022, *2019-20 SLATS Report* accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/mapping/statewide-monitoring/slats/slats-reports/2019-20-slats-report>

⁶⁹ Queensland Government 2022, *2019-20 SLATS Report* accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/management/mapping/statewide-monitoring/slats/slats-reports/2019-20-slats-report>

⁷⁰ Queensland Government 2020, *Privately owned native forests*, viewed 23/01/2023, available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/privately-owned-native-forests>

⁷¹ Queensland Government, *Private native forestry*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/forests-wood/native-forests/private>

⁷² Queensland Government 2020, *State-owned native timber*, viewed 23/01/2023, available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/state-owned-native-timber>



- There are no current commitments to cease NFL in Central Queensland, North Queensland, or the Cape York region.

The Queensland Government's commitment to cease NFL in the SEQ Supply Region (i.e., the combined SEQ Regional Plan area and the Eastern Hardwoods region) was modified in 2019. The modification allowed for a continuation of NFL for an additional two years in the Eastern Hardwoods region, guaranteeing access up to 2026.⁷³ The decision noted, 'new unexpected challenges facing the industry' which is a reference to the unsuccessful hardwood plantation program intended to support the industry transition away from public NFL.⁷⁴ The decision to log public native forest in the Eastern Hardwoods region drew community protests in 2022.^{75 76}

In the Western hardwoods region, there are 'rolling term' sales permits which currently end in 2034, after which they rollover annually unless a decision is made to not grant that extension. The Queensland Government has committed to no longer granting extensions after 2034 stating:⁷⁷

As these permits include supply volumes that were not supported by forest resource assessments, sustainable harvesting levels are unknown. Ending the annual extensions will allow for the outcomes of forest resource assessments to be implemented as early as possible.

This suggests that the Queensland Government has not as a matter of policy committed to ceasing NFL in the Western hardwoods region post-2034.

In Central and North Queensland, the Queensland Government states there are a number of short-term sales permits in place, and in Cape York there are a small number of long-term permits in place (up to ten years). For native cypress supply, long-term sales permits are in place until 2037. No decisions have been made as yet regarding these regions and cypress supply.

⁷³ Palaszczuk, A (Premier and Minister for Trade) & Furner, M (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries), 2019. *Palaszczuk Government takes action to support timber industry jobs*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/88797>

⁷⁴ The Queensland Government commenced a native hardwood plantation program in 1999 to support the supply of alternative resources after 2024. An independent review of the hardwood plantation program was completed in 2015. It showed that many of the hardwood plantations established were performing poorly and would not deliver the intended 20,000 ha of hardwood resource. Despite the plantations being managed using well-established practices, the site and species selection challenges, along with increasing climate variability, pests and diseases, resulted in poor growth rates and the commercial failure of large areas of plantations. Refer: Queensland Government 2020, *Hardwood plantation program*, viewed 20 May 2022, available at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/hardwood-plantation-program>

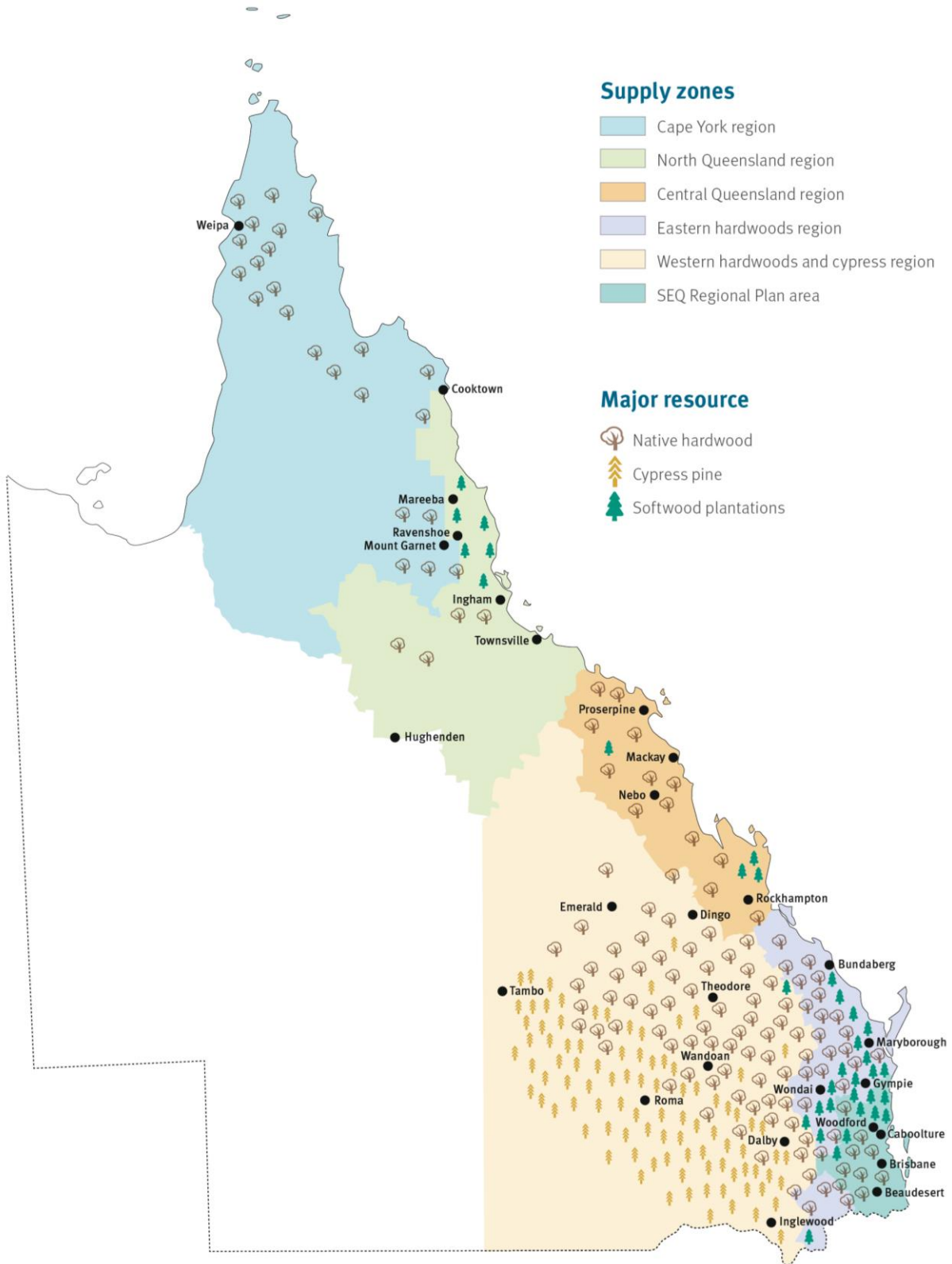
⁷⁵ ABC news 2022, *Glass House Mountains native logging proposal unites bikers, residents, environmentalists*, 12 June, viewed 24/01/2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-12/glass-house-mountain-logging-cyclists/101141758>

⁷⁶ The Guardian 2022, *Community groups angered as Queensland government proposes logging in state forest*, 27 April, viewed 24/01/2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/27/community-groups-angered-as-queensland-government-proposes-logging-in-state-forest>

⁷⁷ Queensland Government 2020, *State-owned native timber*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/state-owned-native-timber>



Figure 8: Native forestry in Queensland



Source: Queensland Government 2021, *Native forestry in Queensland—main resource map*, viewed 23/01/2023, available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/native-forestry-map>



6.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without a comprehensive transition plan, such as Queensland, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.

6.3.1 Community support

The Queensland Government does not appear to have a costed plan to phase out NFL and support communities during the transition. Notwithstanding this, the 1999 South East Queensland Forests Agreement did include community support measures.

The 1999 South East Queensland Forests Agreement

The South-East Queensland Forests Agreement was agreed in September 1999 between the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, Queensland Conservation Council, The Wilderness Society, Queensland Timber Board and Queensland Government.⁷⁸

The area available for logging at that time covered 700,00 ha, about 30% of the region's forest area. The timber industry and conservationists came to an agreement to transition to hardwood plantations, which the Queensland Government supported. The federal government refused to sign the agreement having decided to oppose a complete transition to plantations.

Conservation measures included:

- Logging of native forests on state land to cease by the end of 2024;
- Immediate addition to the conservation reserve system of about 425,000 hectares; and
- No clear felling, no export woodchip industry based on native forests, no logging of old growth or wilderness areas.

Supply during the 25 year transition:

- Logging to continue for 25 years with hardwood forests to be logged once;
- Wood supply agreements with industry to be 25 years, compensable and tradeable; and
- Current allocations to mills to remain until end of 2024 and allocation zones to be used flexibly to provide the approved volumes for the 25-year period.

Government support for industry:

⁷⁸ Invasive Species Council 2021, Threats to Nature case Studies in Success, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://invasives.org.au/publications/case-study-transitioning-out-of-logging-native-forests/>



- The development of hardwood plantations to enable industry to transition to a plantation-based hardwood resource by 2025 or sooner.
- Incentives to facilitate transition to value-added hardwood products, hardwood plantation timbers and private native hardwood resource including farm forestry.

The Queensland Government fully funded these measures itself after opposition from the commonwealth government. This included reserving land, investing in plantations (\$18 million) and providing industry and community restructuring and support packages (an estimated \$80 million).

6.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, but the Queensland Government is investigating sustainable supply options via the Native Timber Action Plan and the Native Timber Advisory Panel. There has been limited publicly available output from this Panel.

The Queensland Government initiated a Native Timber Action Plan in 2019 to ‘guide the preservation of Queensland’s timber industry’ and:⁷⁹

Conduct a comprehensive two-year study to identify sustainable future options for timber supply, including on private land, to be completed in 2021.

The Native Timber Advisory Panel was established to advise the government on policy options and implications for the native timber industry on both state and privately-owned land. The advisory panel includes timber industry, conservation, union, research and Traditional Owner representatives.⁸⁰

The Queensland Government stated that its initial focus would be on the Eastern hardwoods region. A major study of future, sustainable long-term supply options for hardwood and cypress timber across all regions will also be undertaken. These studies will aim to determine how sustainable long-term supply can be achieved.

The latest communique from the Native Timber Advisory Panel in October 2022 stated that a report on the future of native forestry in Queensland had been submitted to the relevant Minister for consideration.⁸¹ Frontier Economics has identified no public release of this report or its findings and recommendations.

⁷⁹ Palaszczuk, A (Premier and Minister for Trade) & Furner, M (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries), 2019. *Palaszczuk Government takes action to support timber industry jobs*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/88797>

⁸⁰ Queensland Government 2022, *Native timber advisory panel*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/forestry/native-timber-action-plan/native-timber-advisory-panel>

⁸¹ Feely, A (Chair, Native Timber Advisory Panel), 2022, *Native Timber Advisory Panel Communique – October 2022*, viewed 23/01/2023, https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1651233/communique-october-2022.pdf



6.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

As part of the 2019 Native Timber Action Plan, the Queensland Government committed to handing back up to 20,000 hectares of land to the conservation estate before 2024.⁸² In 2022, the Queensland Government announced a number of state forests across south east Queensland will be conserved earlier with a \$262.5 million commitment. The responsible Minister stated that the forests will go through, 'a formal process to be added to the estate, which will include engaging with the Traditional Owners of the State Forest lands.'⁸³ This announcement followed the transfer of the first 6,000 ha in the 2020–21 financial year.⁸⁴ It is not clear whether this protection of forest will result in the avoidance of NFL, or how the Queensland Government will prioritise the transfer of land to the conservation estate.

6.3.4 Land Justice

It is not clear how substantive Traditional Owner input has been to Queensland Government NFL decisions.

6.3.5 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

The Queensland Government has provided subsidies to support NFL in Cape York. In 2021, the Queensland government provided a \$480,000 grant to Wik Timber Holdings to purchase and install a Gibson sawmill near Rio Tinto's bauxite mining lease around Weipa.⁸⁵ In discussing its activities, Wik Harvest states that, 'harvesting trees for timber production that would in any event be cleared from bauxite mining lease areas promotes a significantly improved environmental outcome than the alternative.'⁸⁶

The Queensland Government expects that the Indigenous logging company will create more than 50 jobs, mostly in The Cape, will produce up to 125,000 tonnes of timber per annum. Wik Timber states that its permit covers an area of over 100,000 ha of hardwood forest – representing the 'few remaining substantial timber resources available for harvesting in Australia' – allowing for harvesting until the end of 2034.⁸⁷

⁸² Palaszczuk, A (Premier and Minister for Trade) & Furner, M (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries), 2019. *Palaszczuk Government takes action to support timber industry jobs*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/88797>

⁸³ Scanlon, M (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs), 2022, *State forests to be protected*, viewed 23/01/2023, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/96800>

⁸⁴ Encoch, L (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for Arts), 2020, *Long-term plan released to protect and expand Queensland national parks*, viewed 22/02/2023, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/90977>

⁸⁵ Office of the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (2021), Qld govt helps FNQ logger to branch out and create local jobs [media release], 27 May 2021, <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/92200>

⁸⁶ Wik Timber, *Timber and sustainability*, accessed 22 February 2023, <http://www.wikprojects.com.au/timber-sustainability/>

⁸⁷ Wik Timber, *The Wik Timber Resource*, accessed 22 February 2023, <http://www.wikprojects.com.au/the-wik-timber-resource/>



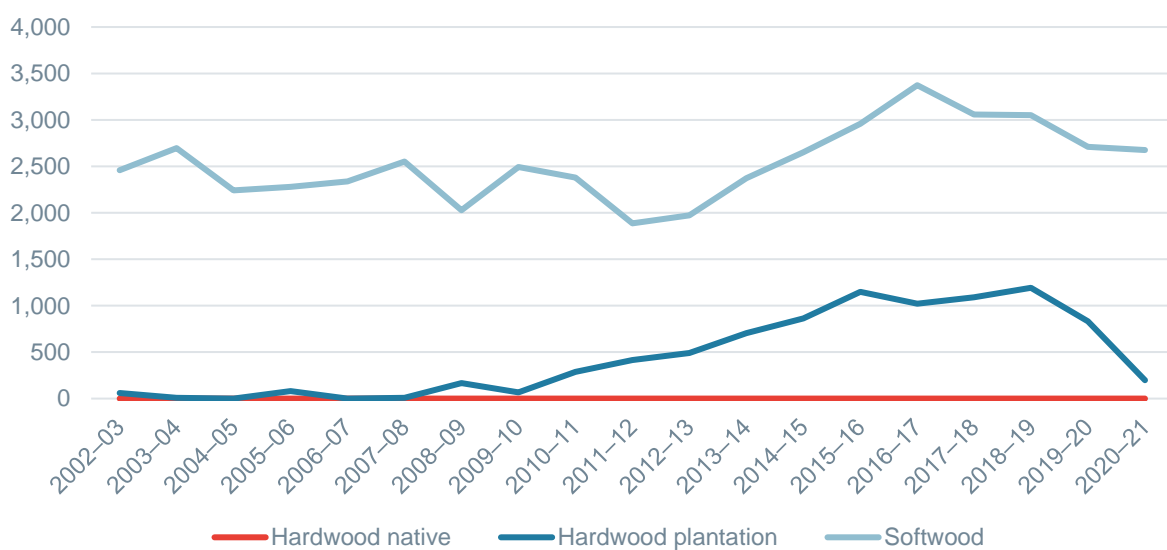
7 South Australia

This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the SA Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for South Australia.

7.1 Background

Trends in SA log volume, by type, are presented in **Figure 9**, below. Because it has few areas with high rainfall, South Australia lacks abundant native forests. The South Australian Government has taken a role in protecting native forests and establishing and managing plantation forests since the 1870s.⁸⁸ In 1973 ForestrySA stopped the clearing of native forests for new plantation establishment, twelve years ahead of the South Australian Government’s Native Vegetation Act 1985 which stopped the clearing of all native foresting in South Australia.⁸⁹

Figure 9: South Australia log harvest volume, ‘000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, *Overview of Australian forestry industry*,

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>

South Australia’s forestry industry is entirely plantation-based, predominantly involving the introduced species of *Pinus radiata* and *Eucalyptus globulus*.⁹⁰ Hardwood plantations tend to be

⁸⁸ Government of South Australia n.d., *History of Agriculture in SA Department of Woods and Forests*, viewed 2/02/2023, https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aghistory/dept_of_agriculture_as_an_organisation/collaborating_organisations/department_of_woods_and_forests

⁸⁹ Forestry SA, *Our history*, accessed 23 February 2023, <https://www.forestrysa.com.au/about-us/our-history/>

⁹⁰ Government of South Australia 2021, *State Specific Guideline for South Australia*, accessed 25 January 2023. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa-state-specific-guideline.pdf>, p.5



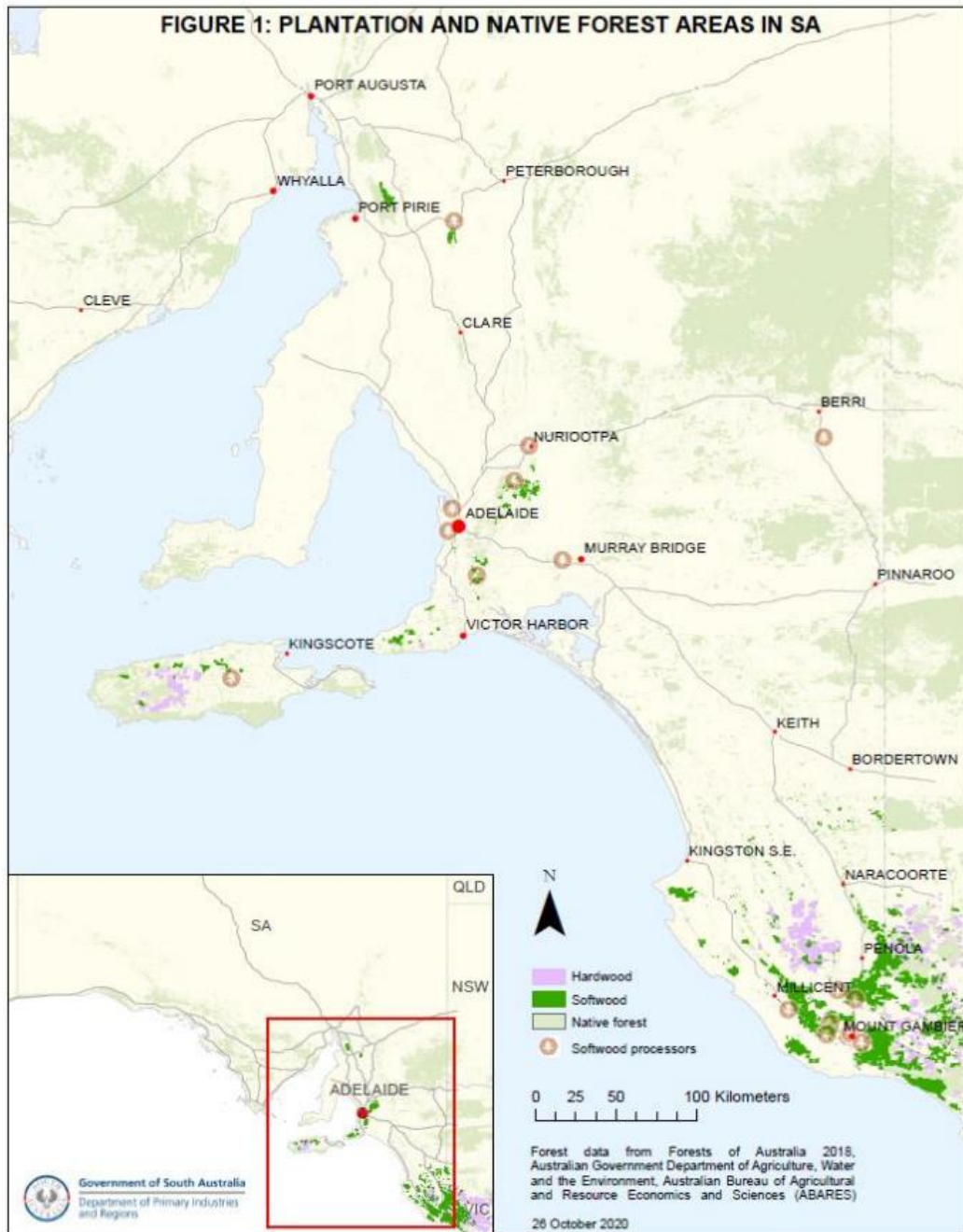
located in the State's south-east and Kangaroo Island (**Figure 10**). In the past decade, changes to water policies have directly and indirectly reduced the south east's plantations while a major bushfire on Kangaroo Island in January 2020 impacted 95% of Kangaroo Island Plantation Timbers softwood and hardwood stocks, prompting the company to move out of the industry altogether.^{91 92} Hardwood plantation harvesting volumes were down approximately 84% from its 2018–19 peak in in 2020–21.

⁹¹ Indaily 2022, *Forestry industry launches bid for 50 million trees*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://indaily.com.au/news/2022/01/27/forestry-industry-launches-bid-for-50-million-trees/>

⁹² ABC News 2021, *Kangaroo Island Plantation Timbers abandons forestry for agriculture after no-go on port*, viewed 2/02/2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-08-12/kipt-changes-land-use-strategy/100369352>



Figure 10: Plantation and native forest areas in South Australia



Source: Government of South Australia 2021, State Specific Guideline for South Australia, accessed 25 January 2023. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa-state-specific-guideline.pdf>, p.6



7.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

There is no public or private commercial NFL in South Australia.

All native vegetation is protected under the Native Vegetation Act 1991 and commercial scale harvesting is not permitted in South Australia.⁹³ Under this legislation, any disturbance, including harvesting, of native vegetation on public or private land is prohibited. However, clearing or harvesting of native wood is permitted for land management or development purposes other than commercial wood production.⁹⁴

South Australia's current arrangements built on an earlier Native Vegetation Management Act 1985, where legally binding agreements (such as a Heritage Agreement) were developed between the Government of the day and landholders, under which the latter agreed to the ongoing conservation and management of the area in return for management assistance.

7.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without the need for a transition plan, such as South Australia, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other notable comments.

7.3.1 Community support

Not applicable, as South Australia has already transitioned out of NFL.

7.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not directly applicable, as South Australia has already transitioned out of NFL.

South Australia has experienced a decline in its plantation estate. The South Australian Forest Products Association (SAFPA) states that trees need to be planted from 2022–26 to address a 'once in a generation' timber shortage in the state, stating:⁹⁵

⁹³ Australian Government & Government of South Australia 2021, *State specific guideline for South Australia*, viewed 1/02/2023, p. 5, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa-state-specific-guideline.pdf>

⁹⁴ Australian Government & Government of South Australia 2021, *State specific guideline for South Australia*, viewed 1/02/2023, p. 8, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa-state-specific-guideline.pdf>

⁹⁵ South Australian Forest Products Association 2022, *The platform policy a big industry with a big future*, 7 February, p. 6, <https://safpa.com.au/the-platform-policy-a-big-industry-with-a-big-future/>



South Australia is the first major state to see policy-driven contraction of the plantation estate. Over the next five years, the estate in the South East will have directly and indirectly reduced by about 30,000 hectares combined with almost 20,000 on Kangaroo Island. This is almost 20 million trees lost to the future – trees that could build homes and store carbon.

The SAFPA called for reform to government policies to support plantation investment, including water reforms, and for the government to sign onto a KPI of planting 50 million trees between 2022–2026 and a moratorium of further loss by allowing all harvested estate to be replanted.⁹⁶

In June 2022, the Government of South Australia announced \$19 million, the bulk of which to be provided over ten years, to support research and development, skills planning and fire resilience in the south east.⁹⁷ The Government also reaffirmed a March 2022 commitment to develop the Trees on Farms initiative which aims to support farmers and landholders to undertake activities that accelerate the development of farm-based forestry plantations and Aboriginal forestry participation for the sustainable harvest of forest products.⁹⁸

7.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as South Australia has already transitioned out of NFL.

7.3.4 Land Justice

Not directly applicable, as South Australia has already transitioned out of NFL.

Traditional Owners are involved in managing state forests. Co-management in South Australia is a partnership between the state government and Aboriginal groups to help manage our national parks that combines traditional knowledge with contemporary park management.

In 2004 legislation was amended to include shared responsibility for the management of national parks and conservation parks with Aboriginal groups, through the creation of either a co-management board or a co-management advisory committee. Further legislation amendments were made in 2013 to extend co-management to wilderness protection areas.

7.3.5 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

The history of NFL in South Australia is somewhat unique in that it was recognised very early in the state's history that NFL was not a sustainable source of timber given the state's climate.

The plantation industry in South Australia appears to be going through a period of adjustment as a result of state-based water policy, bushfire risk, and the cessation in Federal government tax

⁹⁶ South Australian Forest Products Association 2022, *The platform policy a big industry with a big future*, 7 February, p. 7, <https://safpa.com.au/the-platform-policy-a-big-industry-with-a-big-future/>

⁹⁷ Malinauskas, P (Premier), 2022. State Government delivers \$19 million to grow SA's forest and timber industries, viewed 2/02/2023, [https://www.premier.sa.gov.au/media-releases/news-items/state-government-delivers-\\$19-million-to-grow-sas-forest-and-timber-industries](https://www.premier.sa.gov.au/media-releases/news-items/state-government-delivers-$19-million-to-grow-sas-forest-and-timber-industries)

⁹⁸ Government of South Australia, 2022, *Trees on farms initiative*, viewed 2/02/2023, https://pir.sa.gov.au/primary_industry/forestry/trees_on_farms_initiative



incentives. This is not a weakness in and of itself, and there does not appear to be a suggestion by government or industry that NFL should or could act as a substitute for this resource.



8 Tasmania

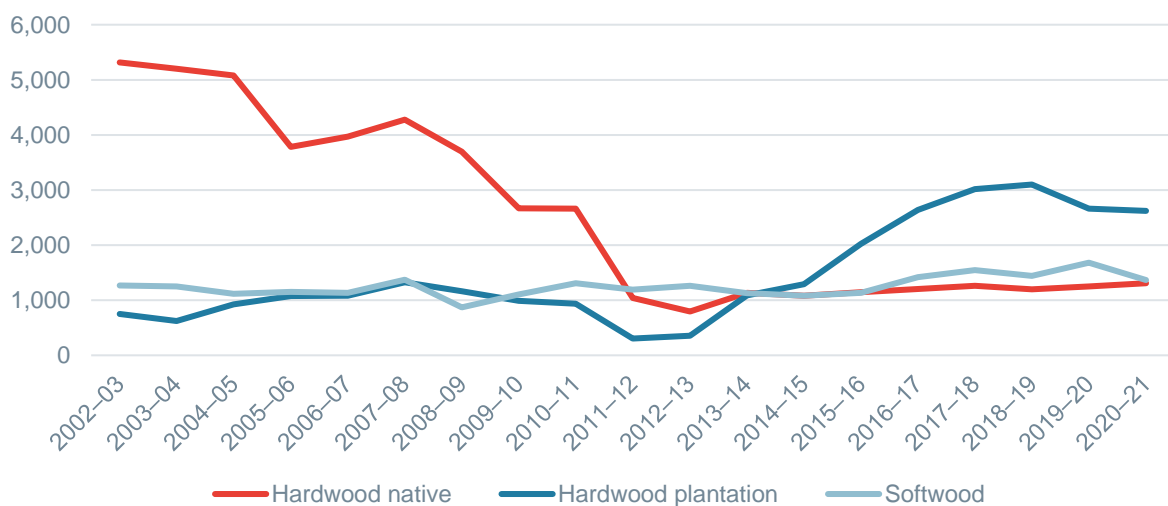
This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the Tasmanian Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for Tasmania.

8.1 Background

Tasmania's total land area is approximately 6.81 million hectares, of which 3.35 million hectares is forested (roughly 49.2%). Approximately 1.78 million hectares of forested land in Tasmania is situated within reserves, which includes more than 80% of Tasmania's old growth forests.⁹⁹ In total, in 2020–21 there was approximately 275,000 ha of plantations in Tasmania (70% hardwood, 30% softwood).

Tasmania is the largest participant in NFL across all the jurisdictions in Australian. **Figure 11** shows there has been a decrease in hardwood native logging in Tasmania over the last two decades. The decline in hardwood native logging over last two decades is largely associated with the closure of several pulp and paper mills as well as the re-tooling of sawmills to enable the processing of timber from plantation forests instead of timber from native forests.¹⁰⁰

Figure 11: Tasmania log harvest volume, '000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, *Overview of Australian forestry industry*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>

⁹⁹ Australian Government & Tasmanian Government 2021, *State specific guideline for Tasmania*, 7 April, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/tas-state-specific-guideline.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ McCormick, B 2010, *Tasmanian forests: future agreement*, accessed 28 February 2023, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook43p/tasmanianforests



Sustainable Timber Tasmania (formerly Forestry Tasmania) manages public resources of native forest and plantations – native forest (87% forest type), hardwood plantation (6.5%) and softwood plantation (6.5%) forest types.¹⁰¹ Sustainable Timber Tasmania (STT) harvests timber using private contractors from the Permanent Timber Production Zone (PTPZ) which is managed by SST under the *Forest Management Act 2013*.

There are 812,000 ha of PTPZ land in Tasmania, of which around:

- 46% contains native forest available for NFL;
- 15% is managed for reservation; and
- The remainder is a combination of plantations on rotation and land that is operationally unavailable for harvesting.

Figure 12 highlights the PTPZ, as well as areas included in STT’s three-year plan (red 2022, blue 2023, green 2024).

Figure 12: Permanent Timber Production Zone in Tasmania



Source: Sustainable Timber Tasmania, accessed 28 February 2023, <https://www.sttas.com.au/forests-you/access-map>

¹⁰¹ Sustainable Timber Tasmania 2021, Annual Report 2021, p. 86. https://sttwebdata.blob.core.windows.net/stt-prod/assets/Sustainable_Timber_Tasmania_Annual_Report_2021_55b8acc215.pdf



8.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The Tasmanian Government is not committed to end NFL and has no public plans to phase it out. In December 2022, the Tasmanian Minister for Resources stated:¹⁰²

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is the biggest supporter of our sustainable timber industry, which continues to operate at a profit and supports thousands of jobs in Tasmania, many in regional communities.

Nearly a decade ago a comprehensive agreement was reached between the Tasmanian Government, Commonwealth Government, industry, unions and NGOs to phase down (but not cease) NFL.

8.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

For jurisdictions without a transition plan, such as Tasmania, WWF-Australia will consider whether there are any other actions to phase down NFL.

8.3.1 Community support

Not applicable, as the Tasmanian Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

The Tasmanian Government has a policy objective to:¹⁰³

maintain a permanent native forest estate that comprises areas of native forest managed on a sustainable basis across public and private land in order to maintain and sustainably manage Tasmania's native forest resource base and its associated economic, environmental, and social values.

The Tasmanian Government has had a Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy since 1996. The primary driver for establishing the Policy was to regulate the extent to which native forests could be cleared and converted to other land uses, as part of the development of the first Tasmanian

¹⁰² Ellis, F (Minister for Resources) 2022, *Value of sustainable forest industry extends into community* [media release] 1 December, https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources_2015/additional_releases/value-of-sustainable-forest-industry-extends-into-community

¹⁰³ Tasmanian Government 2017, *Policy for maintaining a permanent native forest estate*, https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/energy_and_resources/forestry/native-forest



Regional Forest Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Tasmanian Government.

8.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

Not applicable, as the Tasmanian Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

8.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

Not applicable, as the Tasmanian Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL.

8.3.4 Land Justice

Not applicable, as the Tasmanian Government does not have a transition plan out of NFL. It is unclear how substantive Traditional Owner input has been to government decisions on continued NFL in the state.

8.3.5 For states without a costed plan, are there any other actions to phase down NFL, or other notable comments?

NFL policy has been a contentious issue in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement was a commitment to phase down NFL.

The Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement was a \$277 million agreement designed to create additional areas of forest reserves in the State of Tasmania, while ensuring ongoing wood supply for the forest industry.¹⁰⁴

The Agreement resulted from ongoing discussions between the forestry industry and environmental stakeholders. The catalyst behind these talks was the 2011 decision by Gunns Limited, a major forestry enterprise, to exit native forestry. The company withdrew from native forest harvesting, closed sawmills, stopped exporting woodchips and sold the Triabunna woodchip mill to new owners who sought to redevelop the site for tourism.

The Agreement was signed by the Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and Tasmania's Premier, Lara Giddings, on August 7, 2011 and provided a financial package of:

- \$85 million to support logging contractors leave the industry following the decision of Gunns Limited;
- \$43 million to protect 430,000 hectares of new reserve¹⁰⁵ under a Conservation Agreement providing legally binding protection under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999;
- \$120 million over 15 years to fund regional development projects;

¹⁰⁴ Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, *Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement*, viewed 17 May 2022, available at: <https://www.awe.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/national/aus-govt-tas-forests>

¹⁰⁵ Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, *Conservation Agreement to protect interim forest area under the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement*, viewed 28 February 2023, available at: <https://www.awe.gov.au/agriculture-land/land/forests/intergovernmental-agreement/conservation-agreement>



- \$7 million per annum ongoing to manage new reserves; and
- \$1 million for mental health counselling and community wellbeing.

An Independent Verification Group was also established to provide advice to the Prime Minister and the Tasmanian Premier on sustainable timber supply requirements and areas and boundaries of reserves from within the ENGO-nominated 572,000 hectares of native forest.

Relatedly, participants in the native forestry industry and environmentalists signed the Tasmanian Forest Agreement in 2012¹⁰⁶ which agreed to place 500,000 hectares of native forest in reserves (including 400,000 hectares as soon as legislation was made)¹⁰⁷ while also agreeing that areas of native forest could be logged – the agreement also pledged to eventually end all native forest logging.¹⁰⁸ Tasmania’s parliament passed the Tasmanian Forests Agreement putting the agreement into effect in 2013, some key measures (largely funded by the Commonwealth Government) included:¹⁰⁹

- Economic diversification fund: \$120 million to fund regional economic development initiatives, \$115 million of which will be funded by the Commonwealth Government;
- Worker support: \$45 million in transition support payments to workers directly impacted, and \$25 million to provide immediate employment and training support for redundant workers;
- Business support: \$45 million for native forest harvest and haulage contractors exiting the industry, \$10 million for sawmills, and \$20 million to assist employees and contractors that might be affected by sawmill exits;
- Sawlog contract buybacks of \$15 million; and
- Manufacturing Innovation Development: \$22.6 million to assist industry to transition to greater use of plantation timber in the longer term.

In 2014, a new Tasmanian Government repealed the Tasmanian Forest Agreement Act and reclassified 400,000 hectares of native forest for potential future logging after a six-year moratorium.^{110, 111}

¹⁰⁶ Tasmanian Forests Agreement 2012, available at: <https://www.wilderness.org.au/images/resources/Tasmanian-Forest-Agreement-2012.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ Wilderness Society 2018, *The Tasmanian Forest Agreement: your questions answered*, viewed 28 February 2023, available at: <https://www.wilderness.org.au/news-events/the-tasmanian-forest-agreement-your-questions-answered>

¹⁰⁸ ABC news 2010, *Native logging end to take decades*, viewed 28 February 2023, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-10-19/native-logging-end-to-take-decades/2304032>

¹⁰⁹ Parliament of Tasmania 2013, *Report on the Tasmanian Forests Agreement Bill 2012*, available at: <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/Reports/TFA%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Ikin, S & Nightingale, T 2014, 'Tasmania repeals the forestry peace deal between conservationists and loggers, opening up 400,000 hectares', ABC news, 2 September, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-02/forestry-peace-deal-repeal-bill-passed-by-tasmania-parliament/5714634>

¹¹¹ *The Conversation*, *End of Tasmania's forest peace deal heralds more uncertainty*, viewed 28 February 2023, available at: <https://theconversation.com/end-of-tasmanias-forest-peace-deal-heralds-more-uncertainty-31010>



The financial viability of NFL

SST operates across native forest (87% forest type), hardwood plantation (6.5%) and softwood plantation (6.5%) forest types.¹¹² There is evidence that returns from public NFL in Tasmania are not commensurate with commercial returns – based on publicly available information cash operating surpluses and profitability appear to be reliant on Government funding (which contributes toward the performance of Community Service Obligations). In 2021, SST reported a net profit after tax of \$2.7 million, from revenues of \$125 million (\$12 million of which was government finding).

¹¹² Sustainable Timber Tasmania 2021, Annual Report 2021, p. 86. https://sttwebdata.blob.core.windows.net/stt-prod/assets/Sustainable_Timber_Tasmania_Annual_Report_2021_55b8acc215.pdf



9 Victoria

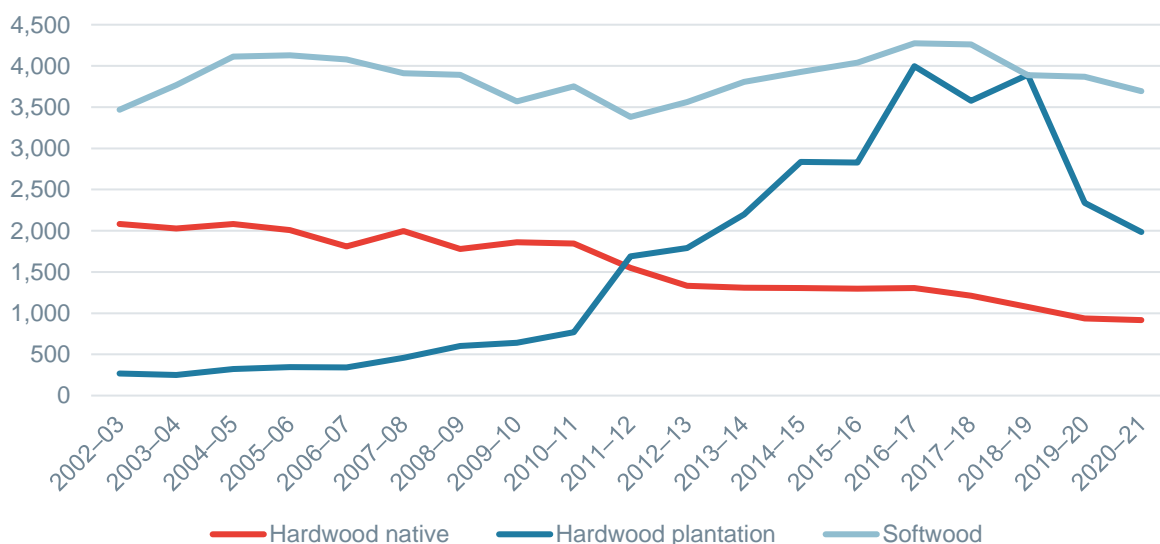
This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the Victorian Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for Victoria.

9.1 Background

Trends in Victoria’s log volume, by type, are presented in **Figure 13** below. NFL has been in secular decline having more than halved in volume from 2002–03 to 2020–21 – notwithstanding this, traditionally the scale of NFL in Victoria has been second only to Tasmania.

Victoria has a mature plantation industry – around five out of six trees harvested in Victoria are from plantations¹¹³ – and the largest total area of commercial plantations of all Australia’s states and territories with 382,600 hectares (ha) or 22 per cent of the national estate. Harvesting from hardwood plantations peaked in 2016–17, and has since trended downwards to approximately half of the peak volume in 2020–21. Trends in hardwood plantation harvesting in 2019–20 and 2020–21 reflect the Black Summer fires and Covid-19 restrictions – the area of hardwood plantation in Victoria declined by 16% between 2018–19 and 2019–20.¹¹⁴

Figure 13: Victoria log harvest volume, ‘000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, Overview of Australian forestry industry, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>

¹¹³ Victoria State Government, *Plantations*, <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/forestry/managing-our-forests/plantations>

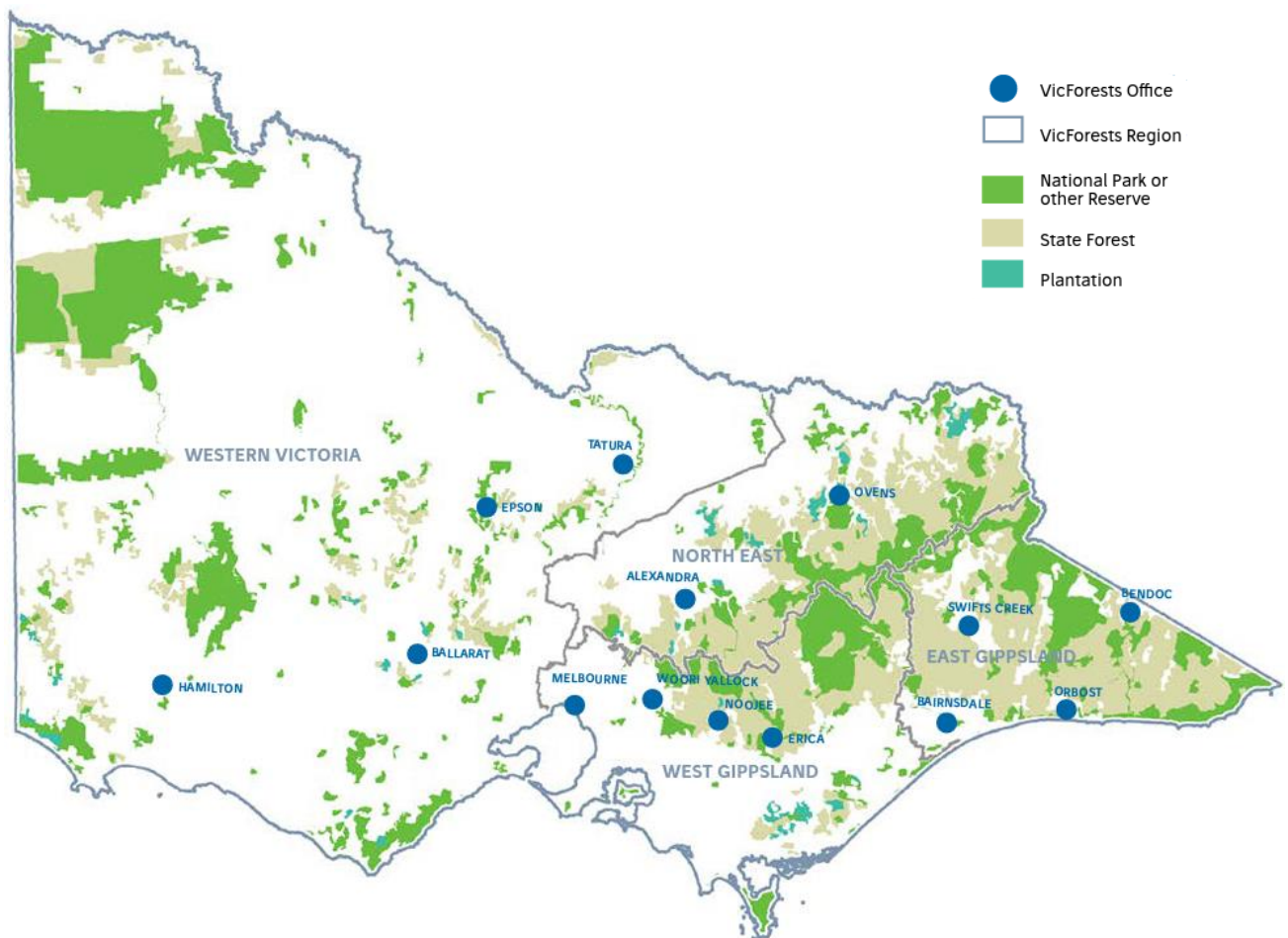
¹¹⁴ Australian Government ABARES, Overview of Australian forestry industry, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>



VicForests is a State-owned business responsible for the harvest, regrowing and commercial sale of timber from public forests on behalf of the Victorian Government. **Figure 14** shows the 3.2 million hectares of state forest managed by VicForests, of which 367,000 hectares VicForests has modelled as suitable for commercial harvesting. VicForests harvest around 3000 hectares of public native forest every year.

VicForests is also beginning to invest in plantation resource. In 2022, VicForests planted nearly 80,000 pine seedlings on 64 hectares, following the 2019 establishment of Blue Gum plantations.¹¹⁵ VicForests's current plantation crop now measures more than 500 hectares in size, with plans to further expand this area of its business as the VFP is executed. These plantation resources will become a source of revenue for VicForests in approximately 30 years.

Figure 14: Victoria's national parks, state forest, and plantation estate



Source: VicForests 2021, *Annual Report VicForests 2020–2021*, <https://www.vicforests.com.au/static/uploads/files/vf-annual-report-2021-final-161121-wfdkuowjlnpm.pdf>

¹¹⁵ VicForests 2022, *Trees in the ground as VicForests supports the Victorian Forestry Plan*, 2 March, <https://www.vicforests.com.au/publications-media/latest-news/trees-in-the-ground-as-vicforests-supports-the-victorian-forestry-plan>



VicForests' 2021-22 Annual Report acknowledges that VicForests is no longer able to operate as a going concern without ongoing further taxpayer support. Key indicators of VicForests' weak financial state are:

- a \$54 million financial year operating loss (despite receiving \$25 million in additional income from Victorian Government entities);
- \$19 million in debt (which it has little ability to repay); and
- a negative equity value (of -\$3 million) despite contributed capital of \$45 million.

It was not unexpected that VicForests would incur a substantial loss in 2021-22 as it has been required to suspend its operations under court orders relating to environmental breaches. However, even in years when it is fully operational it is barely covering costs and has accrued significant debt.

A driver of NFL in Victoria is VicForest's insufficient wood resource following 2009 Black Saturday fires and 2019/20 bushfires in East Gippsland. VicForest's will therefore conduct NFL harder and deeper into forests that it previously would not have logged. It appears that the Office of Conservation Regulator (OCR) has not delivered expected regulatory outcomes and VicForest's activities are largely constrained only by court decisions following challenges by anti-logging NGOs.

9.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The Victorian Government has committed to end public NFL on 1 January 2024, bringing forward its prior 2030 deadline.¹¹⁶

The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan and the 2023 bring forward of the cessation of NFL

In 2019, the Victorian Government announced a 30-year forestry plan to support the native timber industry shift entirely to plantation timber while protecting as many jobs as possible. In explaining the rationale behind the plan, the Victorian Government noted that, 'since the 1980s the amount of native timber available for harvest has more than halved and is increasingly vulnerable due to the impact of bushfires and environmental protections.'

Under the Victorian Forestry Plan the native timber industry was to have a continued supply until 2024, then supply levels would step down until 2030 when native timber harvesting ceased. The announcement included a commitment to cease logging of old growth forests immediately. However, it appears that logging of old growth forests continued after the announcement.¹¹⁷

The Victorian Forestry Plan does not include ending NFL on private land. The Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 provides direction to VicForests as the managing authority, harvesting entities and operators to ensure that timber production is compatible with the conservation of

¹¹⁶ Victorian Government 2023, *Forestry Transition Program*, 22 June 2023, accessed 28 June 2023, <https://djsir.vic.gov.au/forestry/forestry-plan>

¹¹⁷ ABC News 2022, *the vanishing old-growth forests*, 13 November, accessed 3/02/2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-13/our-vanishing-old-growth-forests/101641964>



values associated with forests.¹¹⁸ The Victorian Government does not administer the Code of Practice on private land or within plantations.¹¹⁹

On 23 May 2023, the Victorian Government bought forward the date of cessation of NFL to 1 January 2024 with an expanded transition support package. The Victorian Government stated that its decision:¹²⁰

Removes the uncertainty that has been caused by ongoing court and litigation process and increasingly severe bushfires, with an additional \$200 million in support for workers and their families to transition away from native timber logging earlier than planned – by 1 January 2024.

This brings the Government's total support for the forestry transition to more than \$875 million, including existing worker support services and investments to support the transition to plantation timber.

9.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

9.3.1 Community support

The Victorian Government is providing community support for the cessation of NFL. The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan provided transition support, and in May 2023 the Victorian Government announced an additional \$200M in support for workers to transition away from NFL earlier than planned.

The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan

The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan committed over \$200M to phase out NFL and expand plantation resources. The Victorian Forestry Plan supports the transition of the native timber industry while protecting as many jobs as possible. The Victorian Forestry Plan offers transition support to workers, businesses and the community to ensure that supply chains and workers relying on

¹¹⁸ Victorian Government 2022, *Timber harvesting regulation*, accessed 17 January 2023. <https://www.vic.gov.au/timber-harvesting#private-land>

¹¹⁹ Victorian government advises readers to contact local government authorities for more information on timber harvesting on private land and plantations. See <https://www.vic.gov.au/timber-harvesting#private-land>

¹²⁰ Andrews, D (Premier of Vitoria) 2023, *Delivering Certainty For Timber Workers*, Media Release, 23 May 2023, Government of Victoria, <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/delivering-certainty-timber-workers>



native timber can adjust as native forest logging is phased out from 2024 to 2030.¹²¹ Key features of the plan included support for:¹²²

- Mills and harvest haulage contractors: Plant and equipment redundancy payments of up to \$250,000 per business, available from 2024, and mill site rehabilitation payments of up to \$75,000 available from 2023;
- Mill, harvest, and haulage workers: From 2023, top-up of redundancy payments of up to \$120,000, relocation support payments of up to \$20,000, per person, and access to training and retraining programs;
- Communities: A \$36 million Regional Growth Fund and a \$22 million Community Transition and Development Fund to support actions from the local development strategies, particularly targeting job creation that is relevant for the location, timing and skills of affected native timber workers; and
- Plantation wood supply: \$120 million investment in plantation development 'to leverage and accelerate private investment and boost new plantation development in Gippsland.'¹²³ New plantations will not be ready for the planned native timber reductions in 2024 or 2030 and are not intended to replace native timber tree-for-tree which has caused concern in industry about job losses.¹²⁴ This investment is in partnership with Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP) who will match the government's investment to 'buy, lease and manage more than 14,000 hectares of softwood plantations.'¹²⁵

Under the plan, the industry would have held continued supply of native timber until 2024, after which supply levels would have stepped down until ending in 2030. It was envisaged that between 2024 and 2030, a competitive process would have been applied to allocate native timber. In this period mills can enter an 'opt-out scheme' rather than participate in the competitive process for native timber.¹²⁶

The 2023 Forestry Transition Program

The Victorian Government decided to bring forward and scale up existing supports to facilitate and end to NFL by 1 January 2024.¹²⁷ New initiatives include:

- Sawmill Voluntary Transition Packages which will be modelled on the opt-out Scheme;

¹²¹ The Victorian Government 2019, *Victorian Forestry Plan*, accessed 3/02/2023, available at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/DJPR-Inclusion-Forestry-Plan-1.pdf>

¹²² The Victorian Government 2019, *Victorian Forestry Plan*, accessed 3/02/2023, available at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/DJPR-Inclusion-Forestry-Plan-1.pdf>

¹²³ The Victorian Government, *Forestry Plantations*, viewed 19 May 2022, <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/forestry/plantations>

¹²⁴ Australian Forest Products Association 2021, *Daniel Andrews' sham forestry plan felled*, viewed 19 May 2022, <https://ausfpa.com.au/daniel-andrews-sham-forestry-plan-felled/>

¹²⁵ Australian Rural & Regional News 2022, *Planting millions more trees for thousands of jobs: Tierney*, 3 October, <https://arr.news/2022/10/03/planting-millions-more-trees-for-thousands-of-jobs-tierney/>

¹²⁶ The opt-out scheme provides for redundancy payments for workers of up to \$120,000, plant and equipment redundancy payment of up to \$250,000, relocation support increased from \$20,000 to \$45,000 and a doubling of mill site rehabilitation funding from \$75,000 to \$150,000 among other initiatives. Refer: The Victorian Government, *Victorian Forestry Plan*, viewed 19 May 2022, <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/forestry/forestry-plan>

¹²⁷ Victorian Government 2023, *Forestry Transition Program*, accessed 28 June 2023, https://djsir.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2175244/Forestry-Transition-Support-Summary.pdf



- A boosted worker support package which will include access to a Free TAFE program to help retrain workers to get jobs in growing regional industries. Harvest and haulage workers will be offered alternative work in forest and land management, enabling them to continue to work in the forests and contribute to bushfire risk reduction; and
- A Supply Chain Resilience Package will support manufacturers of native timber products to make informed business decisions.¹²⁸

The Victorian Government states that longer-term programs to support local economies to diversify into new and expanding industries will continue, as will the assistance for timber businesses seeking to transition from reliance on native timber to plantation fibre.

9.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan provided \$120 million for investment in plantation development 'to leverage and accelerate private investment and boost new plantation development in Gippsland.'¹²⁹ New plantations are not intended to replace native timber tree-for-tree which has caused concern in industry.¹³⁰ This investment is in partnership with Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP) who will match the government's investment to 'buy, lease and manage more than 14,000 hectares of softwood plantations.'¹³¹

9.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan sought to prioritise high conservation value areas. When the Victorian Government announced the Victorian Forestry Plan, it also announced a commitment to cease logging of old growth forests immediately. This referenced 90,000 hectares of Victoria's remaining old growth forest. Under the release of the Greater Glider Action Statement, a further 96,000 hectares of State Forest was exempted from timber harvesting to protect the Greater Glider, as well as over 35 other native species.¹³²

The transparency and integrity of this commitment has been called into doubt by some stakeholders. It appears that logging of old growth forests continued by VicForests after the announcement through amendments by the Victorian Government to the technical definition and tests for identifying what an 'old growth' forest is.¹³³

¹²⁸ Victorian Government 2023, *Timber Supply Chain Resilience Package*, accessed 28 June 2023, <https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/timber-supply-chain-resilience-package>

¹²⁹ The Victorian Government, *Forestry Plantations*, viewed 19 May 2022, <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/forestry/plantations>

¹³⁰ Australian Forest Products Association 2021, *Daniel Andrews' sham forestry plan felled*, viewed 19 May 2022, <https://ausfpa.com.au/daniel-andrews-sham-forestry-plan-felled/>

¹³¹ Australian Rural & Regional News 2022, *Planting millions more trees for thousands of jobs: Tierney*, 3 October, <https://arr.news/2022/10/03/planting-millions-more-trees-for-thousands-of-jobs-tierney/>

¹³² DEWLP 2019, *Greater Glider*, Victorian Government, accessed 18 January 2023. https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/440371/267-Greater-Glider-2019-Action-Statement.pdf

¹³³ ABC News 2022, *the vanishing old-growth forests*, 13 November, accessed 3/02/2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-13/our-vanishing-old-growth-forests/101641964>



9.3.4 Land Justice

Traditional Owners are involved in managing state forests. The 2019 Victorian Forestry Plan included the establishment of a Consultative Committee with representatives from industry, VicForests, unions, local councils and government to help manage the transition. The Consultative Committee did not appear to include Traditional Owners and Indigenous Communities.

VicForests has stated its commitment to partnering with Traditional Owners to ensure that land management practices are informed by the knowledge of Australia's Indigenous Peoples.¹³⁴ In outlining the Victorian Forestry Plan, the Victorian Government stated that:¹³⁵

The ending of native timber harvesting is an opportunity to establish new ways of using and managing our forests. This includes managing forests for Traditional Owner and community needs while protecting natural value for all to enjoy.

We note that forests managed by Parks Victoria partners with Traditional Owners in a range of ways – through joint and co-operative management as well as in delivering cultural heritage.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ VicForests 2022, *We are forest people*, accessed 17 January 2023. <https://www.vicforests.com.au/publications-media/latest-news/we-are-forest-people>

¹³⁵ Victorian Government 2022, *Victorian Forestry Plan*, accessed 3/02/2023, <https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/futureforests/immediate-protection-areas/victorian-forestry-plan>

¹³⁶ Parks Victoria, *Partnerships with Traditional Owners*, <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/managing-country-together/traditional-owner-partnerships>



10 Western Australia

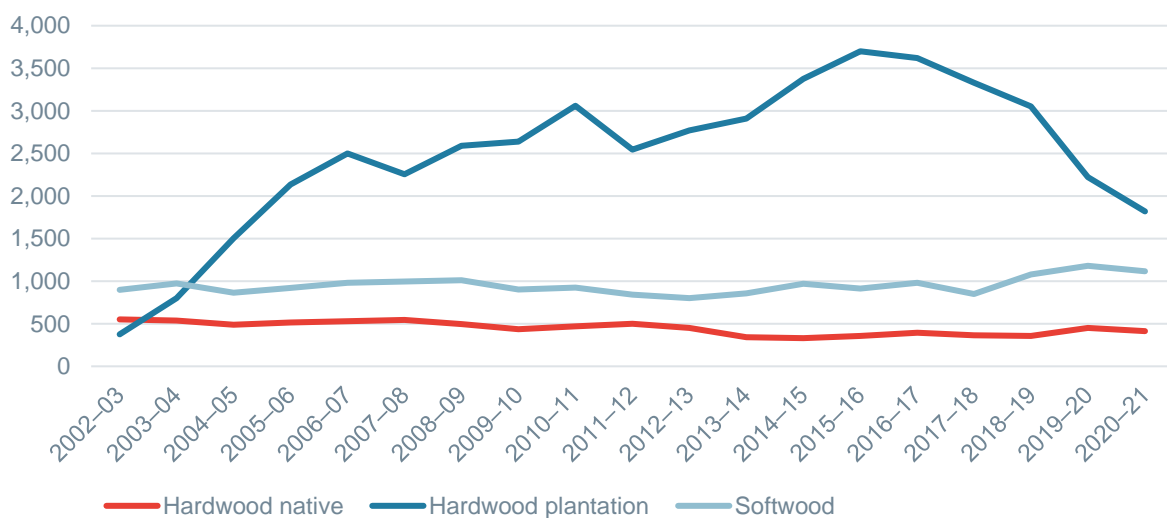
This section provides a summary of information related to the commitment and actions undertaken by the WA Government to cease NFL. The next section provides a brief background and context for Western Australia.

10.1 Background

Western Australia has close to 18 million hectares of forests and woodlands. The WA Government is responsible for managing much of WA's native forests and woodlands. This includes the jarrah and karri of the south-west, the remnant areas of rainforest in the Kimberley, and the Great Western Woodlands, which represents the largest and most intact eucalypt woodland remaining in southern Australia.¹³⁷

Figure 15 shows that NFL in WA has been relatively low over the past two decades compared to plantation logging. Plantation hardwood logging peaked in 2015/16 declining steadily since.

Figure 15: Western Australia log harvest volume, '000 m³



Source: Australian Government ABARES, *Overview of Australian forestry industry*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/forests/forest-economics/forest-wood-products-statistics#download-the-overview-report-and-datasets>

The WA Government has committed to end NFL in the south west of the state by 2024 – in line with the commencement of the Forest Management Plan (FMP) 2024-2033.

¹³⁷ Government of Western Australia 2021, *Forests*, accessed 27 February 2023, <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/forests>



10.2 Commitment to phase out industrial, high impact native forest logging

The WA Government has committed to end NFL in South West WA from 1 January 2024 onwards. The commitment will be enabled through an updated Forest Management Plan 2024-2033.

In September 2021, the WA Government announced an end to large-scale commercial timber harvesting in South West WA (**Figure 16**). Minimally, this will allow for the preservation of 400,000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests in the South West from commercial-scale timber harvesting (though not mining activities).¹³⁸ This is in addition to the 1.6 million hectares already protected from commercial timber harvesting.¹³⁹

The WA government stated that its decision, ‘was driven by the impacts of climate change, the importance of maintaining biodiversity and forest health, the need for carbon capture and storage, and declining timber yields.’¹⁴⁰ Further, the WA Forest Products Commission has experienced poor financial results over recent years with poor NFL financial performance a driver of these results.¹⁴¹

The WA Government’s commitment will be enabled through an updated FMP covering the South West. The updated FMP is expected to commence on 1 January 2025 and will apply for a term of ten years. Timber taken from the South West’s native forests will be limited to management activities that improve forest health and clearing activities for approved mining operations.¹⁴²

The apparent carve out for mining operations is significant. Under the Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033 areas of native forest will remain vulnerable to logging as a result of new or existing mining operations for bauxite, coal, gold, mineral sands, lithium and other minerals which occur throughout the planning area.¹⁴³

The primary cause of deforestation in Western Australia’s south west forests is bauxite mining. The WA Forest Alliance reports that bauxite mining has cleared at least 32,130 hectares of publicly owned forest and fragmented 92,000 to 120,000 hectares of the Northern Jarrah Forest up to December 2019, and the rate is accelerating – of that 32,130 hectares, 11,290 hectares (or more than a third) were cleared between 2010 and 2020.¹⁴⁴

Under the Draft Plan approximately 85% of the northern forest area (approximately from Bunbury to north of Perth) would remain unprotected (i.e., outside of national parks) and

¹³⁸ <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/forests/forest-management-plan-faq>

¹³⁹ <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/wa-native-forest-logging-ban-enters-endgame-20221018-p5bqqp.html>

¹⁴⁰ The WA Government, *Native Forest Transition*, viewed 4 April 2022, <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-jobs-tourism-science-and-innovation/native-forest-transition>

¹⁴¹ Forest Products Commission 2022, *Forest Products Commission Annual report 2021–22*, <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2022-09/FPC-Annual-Report-2021-22.pdf>

¹⁴² <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/wa-native-forest-logging-ban-enters-endgame-20221018-p5bqqp.html>

¹⁴³ Government of Western Australia 2022, *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*, October, <https://www.conservation.wa.gov.au/publications/management-plans/draft-forest-management-plan-2024-2033-open-for-public-comment>

¹⁴⁴ WA Forest Alliance 2022, *A thousand cuts mining in the northern jarrah forests*, https://www.ccwa.org.au/a_thousand_cuts_mining_in_the_northern_jarrah_forests



vulnerable to mining.¹⁴⁵ Conservation peak bodies report that most of WA's clearing of forests over the past ten years has been in this region – unrelated to the south west's timber industry NFL operations.¹⁴⁶

In its response to submissions on the Draft FMP 2024–33, the WA Government noted that mining activities are subject to legislation and agreements that override the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. As a result, submission comments calling for the protection of native forests from mining have not resulted in changes to the FMP 2024–33. The WA Government noted:¹⁴⁷

A large volume of submissions called for all mining in the south-west forests to cease. Some of these comments also called for areas of the forest, particularly the northern jarrah forest, to be incorporated into reserves specifically with an objective of preventing mining. Inclusion of areas of forest into conservation reserves does not in itself preclude mining, with mining in reserves able to continue under relevant mining legislation. DBCA has noted that public education on this issue is warranted.

The WA Government has not publicly committed to amending relevant legislation to provide the protections raised by stakeholders in their submissions on the draft FMP 2024–33.

¹⁴⁵ Osborne, D (2022). 'Last chance: new WA plan will profoundly impact our jarrah forests', WA Today, December 12, <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/last-chance-new-wa-plan-will-profoundly-impact-our-jarrah-forests-20221208-p5c4xc.html>

¹⁴⁶ Hikewest 2022, *A not-so-historic plan to protect WA's forests*, accessed 23 February 2023, <https://www.hikewest.org.au/not-so-historic-plan-to-protect-was-forests/>

¹⁴⁷ Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions 2023, *Summary of public submissions on the Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*, p. 22, accessed 28 June 2023, <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/managing-natural-areas/forests/forest-management-plan>



Figure 16: South West WA covered subject to the Forest Management Plan 2024–33



Source: Government of Western Australia 2023, Forest management plan newsletter, accessed 23 February 2023, <https://mailchi.mp/dbca/work-has-commenced-on-the-forest-management-plan-2024-2033?e=900116a0ad#mctoc1>



10.3 A clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway

The WWF-Australia's scoring rubric has several elements to characterise a clear, resourced, inclusive transition pathway out of NFL, including how NFL transition packages:

- Support communities in the transition;
- Whether there is committed funding for the transition, including for plantations;
- Whether a transition plan sees an immediate end to the logging of high conservation value areas; and
- Matters related to land justice.

10.3.1 Community support

The WA Government is providing community support for the cessation of NFL.

As part of the transition, the WA Government has developed a \$80 million Native Forestry Transition Plan (NFTP) aimed at supporting affected workers, businesses and communities and \$350 million to expand softwood timber plantations. Key features of the NFTP include:

- An immediate 12-month freeze on the logging of 'two-tier' karri forests in the South West region which exhibit characteristics of old-growth forest;^{148,149}
- A \$80 million Native Forest Just Transition Plan which is intended to provide support to affected workers and businesses and drive further diversification of local economies (increased from an initial \$50 million).¹⁵⁰ A \$4 million Community Small Grants Fund was announced to support economic diversification;¹⁵¹
- \$350 million over ten years for the creation of new softwood plantations across the South-West. This investment is expected to fund the purchase of 33,000 hectares of farmland to plant up to 50 million pine trees and sequester between 7.9 million and 9.5 million tonnes of carbon;¹⁵² and
- A \$26.9 million Business Transition Program to support native timber sawmills and harvesters before native forestry ends in 2024. The Program provides for an Industry Restructure Payment based on contract volumes, further support of up to \$225,000 for redundancy

¹⁴⁸ The WA Government, *Protective Western Australia's Native Forests*, viewed 24 February 2023, <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-09/Announcement%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Conservation Council of Western Australia 2020, *Ancient Southwest forest spared the chainsaw this year but protection must become permanent*, viewed 24 February 2023, https://www.ccwa.org.au/ancient_southwest_forest_spared

¹⁵⁰ WA Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation 2022, *\$30 million boost to support native forestry transition*, viewed 24 February 2023, available at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/30-million-boost-support-native-forestry-transition>

¹⁵¹ Jarvis, J (Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; Small Business), *\$4 million available to support projects in WA timber communities* [media release]. 17 February 2023, [https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2023/02/\\$4-million-available-to-support-projects-in-WA-timber-communities.aspx](https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2023/02/$4-million-available-to-support-projects-in-WA-timber-communities.aspx)

¹⁵² Daily Business Alerts (Australia), *3,000ha bought under softwood scheme*, 7 December 2022, <https://www.businessnews.com.au/article/3000ha-bought-under-softwood-scheme>



payments, site-clean up, and equipment reimbursement, and funding of up to \$50,000 for firewood processors who exit the industry.¹⁵³

Some industry participants criticised an apparent lack of consultation behind the NFTP^{154,155} and some members of the logging sector expressed concern about alternative employment options¹⁵⁶ – it was reported that up to 400 forestry jobs will be lost by the decision to stop native forest harvesting.¹⁵⁷ It should be noted that the Western Australian Government provides a range of existing grants and programs to support industry.¹⁵⁸

There limited publicly available detail on how the \$80 million Native Forest Transition plan was developed, nor assurance it is sufficient to achieve (largely unstated) community and industry outcomes. Notwithstanding this, the support package appears to be well designed and funded when compared to historic forestry transition packages implemented in Australia.¹⁵⁹

10.3.2 Is there a plantation plan?

The NFTP included an announcement of \$350 million over ten years for the creation of new softwood plantations across the South-West. Some land purchases have been made to implement this plan.

Plantation investment under the NFTP is expected to provide at least an additional 33,000 ha of softwood timber plantation for a budgeted \$350 million. The WA Government considers that this investment in softwood plantation will help to create a sustainable future timber supply and avoid the emergence of a critical timber shortage.^{160 161}

¹⁵³ WA Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation 2022, *Business Transition Programs*, viewed 24 February 2023, available at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/business-transition-programs>

¹⁵⁴ Zimmerman, J & Law, P 2021, 'Logging of native forests to be banned in WA from the end of 2023', *The West Australian*, 8 September, available at: <https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-politics/logging-of-native-forests-to-be-banned-in-wa-from-the-end-of-2023-ng-b881997499z>

¹⁵⁵ Morton, A 2021, 'Western Australia to ban native forest logging from 2024 in move that blindsides industry', *The Guardian*, 8 September, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/08/western-australia-to-ban-native-forest-logging-from-2024-in-move-that-blindsides-industry>

¹⁵⁶ Shine, R et al. 2021, 'Logging of WA native forests to be banned under state budget plan unveiled by Mark McGowan' *ABC news*, 8 September, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-08/logging-of-wa-native-forests-to-be-banned-in-state-budget-plan/100443070>

¹⁵⁷ Zimmerman, J & Law, P 2021, 'Logging of native forests to be banned in WA from the end of 2023', *The West Australian*, 8 September, available at: <https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-politics/logging-of-native-forests-to-be-banned-in-wa-from-the-end-of-2023-ng-b881997499z>

¹⁵⁸ WA Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation 2022, *Grants Assistance and Programs Register for WA industry*, viewed 24 February 2023, available at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-jobs-tourism-science-and-innovation/grants-assistance-and-programs-register-wa-industry>

¹⁵⁹ Frontier Economics 2022, *Transition support for the NSW native forest sector*, 8 August, <https://wwf.org.au/blogs/transition-support-for-the-nsw-native-forest-sector/#gs.wc8f35>

¹⁶⁰ Government of Western Australia 2023, *Native Forestry Transition Plan*, 23 February, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/native-forestry-transition-plan>

¹⁶¹ Parliament of Western Australia 2021, *Question Without Notice No. 488 asked in the Legislative Assembly on 8 September 2021 by Ms E.J. Kelsbie*, <https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/pquest.nsf/viewLAPQuestByDate/BD1EB9898FE797E94825874C002DA1BB?opendocument>



As of December 2022, nearly 3,000 ha of South West land had been acquired for softwood plantations while several other blocks of land were under negotiation.¹⁶² This suggests that the WA Government has spent approximately \$6.2m of the announced \$350m.¹⁶³

10.3.3 Does the plan see an immediate end to logging of HCV areas?

When announcing the NFTP, the WA Government announced about 9000 hectares of high conservation-value karri would receive immediate protection, with other high value forest areas to be recommended for national park status.¹⁶⁴ These ‘two-tier’ karri forests in the South West region which exhibit characteristics of old-growth forest.^{165,166}

10.3.4 Land Justice

The WA Government intends to involve Traditional Owners in the management of native forests.

Over the term of Forestry Management Plan 2024-2033, new conservation reserves will be created following consultation with traditional owners to ensure permanent protection of high conservation value areas.¹⁶⁷

The Noongar people and the WA Government’s Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) will enter into formal agreements to recognise their mutual rights and obligations in managing the South West Conservation Estate. The extent, exact nature, and limitations of these agreements is not clear.

DBCA states that it will collaborate with Noongar Traditional Owners to protect cultural heritage in accordance with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and protocols established under Cooperative Management Agreements and Cooperative Management Committees. DBCA will work with Traditional Owners through management partnerships, including in gaining knowledge of cultural fire practices and how these principles can assist in sustainable forest management.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Kelly, D 2022, *Growing momentum in softwood plantation expansion* [media statement], 7 December 2022, <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2022/12/Growing-momentum-in-softwood-plantation-expansion.aspx>

¹⁶³ Daily Business Alerts (Australia), 3,000ha bought under softwood scheme, 7 December 2022, <https://www.businessnews.com.au/article/3000ha-bought-under-softwood-scheme>

¹⁶⁴ The WA Government, *Protecting Western Australia’s native forests*, viewed 3 May 2023, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/protecting-western-australias-native-forests>

¹⁶⁵ The WA Government, *Protective Western Australia’s Native Forests*, viewed 24 February 2023, <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-09/Announcement%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ Conservation Council of Western Australia 2020, *Ancient Southwest forest spared the chainsaw this year but protection must become permanent*, viewed 24 February 2023, https://www.ccwa.org.au/ancient_southwest_forest_spared

¹⁶⁷ Government of Western Australia 2022, *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*, October, <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Draft%20FMP%202024-2033%20Web%20version%20v4.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ Government of Western Australia 2022, *Draft Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*, October, <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Draft%20FMP%202024-2033%20Web%20version%20v4.pdf>



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