



TIMBER NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

RESPONSE TO DEBUS COMMENTS ON MID NORTH COAST FOREST RESETS

3 October 2017: Timber NSW wants to correct the recent erroneous and irresponsible comments from former Carr Government Environment Minister Bob Debus (retired 2007) in relation to native timber harvesting in State forests on the mid-north coast of New South Wales.

Timber NSW General Manager Maree McCaskill said, “The NSW timber industry wants to set the record straight about the context in which native timber harvesting occurs in NSW State forests. In accordance with prudent and proven silvicultural (forest growth and health) practices, the Forestry Corporation conducted a forest reset in the Kalang River area. This entirely legal activity relates to a small proportion of the forest and was approved by the EPA in accordance with its regulatory processes for forest management activities in NSW.”

Foresters carefully assess the forest to determine the best silvicultural technique to apply. Factors taken into account include both biodiversity and timber values, with special consideration given to forest age, health and the species mix. In some forests, only a few individual trees will be harvested, while in other areas larger blocks of trees will be removed to open up the canopy for the seedlings to regrow.

Maree McCaskill said, “Forest resetting can be visually confronting and is often mistaken for clear-felling. However, this resetting technique is a highly effective method for producing vigorous regeneration, as vital seed trees are retained. Surrounding areas are retained for high habitat and refuge areas. Forest resetting occurs across NSW as part of forest regeneration to improve forest health and quality. This practice has been particularly applied to Blackbutt and Flooded Gum species for more than 70 years. In fact, forest resetting occurred as part of normal practice while Bob Debus was NSW Minister for the Environment.”

Timber is a renewable, recyclable, energy efficient natural resource and the regulation surrounding the production and harvesting of NSW timber is among the strictest in the world. Only a very small proportion of NSW forests are available for timber production. The state-owned Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has been responsible for managing State forests for timber production, recreation and conservation for more than 100 years. FCNSW employs many highly-qualified foresters, who are skilled in the practice of silviculture and environmental science.

Maree McCaskill said, “In the past twenty years, the conversion of State forests to National Parks has halved the amount of timber that is produced and more than halved the land area available to supply it. Meanwhile, demand for NSW timber has more than doubled. We now have a situation where only ten per cent of public forests are available to meet the State’s hardwood timber needs.

“The impact of this decision by the previous Carr ALP government – in which Bob Debus was a Minister - has meant that supply is coming from an increasingly small area. In the past a small amount of timber used to be drawn from a larger area of forest, as part of appropriate forest management activities. Now, that same amount of timber must be drawn from a much smaller pool of forest.

A SMALL FOOTPRINT

In any given year less than two per cent of native forest is harvested for timber.
NSW contains:



(Source: <http://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/our-estate>)

“The Carr government’s decision was short-sighted for at least two reasons. Firstly, the shortfall in NSW timber supply necessitates increased imports. Currently, Australia runs a \$2bn annual timber trade deficit, importing large quantities of timber from developing countries whose native forests are largely unregulated. We suggest Bob Debus takes a helicopter over some of those native forests and reports back.

“Secondly, forests of all types need to be carefully managed to protect against fire, pests, weeds and other forest threats. Selective harvesting of timber is a useful and scientifically proven technique in maintaining forest health and biodiversity. Yet by locking up increasing portions of NSW’s forest estate as National Parks, this critical silvicultural practice cannot be used. The resource is wasted and the forest becomes bushfire prone.”

Wildfire and storms are a natural part of the Australian ecosystem. Prior to white settlement, Indigenous Australians used fire as a forest management practice, to reset the forest for successful regrowth. Forests are dynamic and contain a mix of wildlife and flora, some that respond well to disturbance and thrive in young regenerating forest and others that do not respond well to disturbance. The science of silviculture looks at the best way to maintain biodiversity across the whole landscape in a productive forest.

Maree McCaskill said, “It’s time that the careful scientific management of NSW forests and the highly regulated timber industry in this state are recognized for the important, long term contribution they make not only to regional employment and the State’s economy, but also to forest health and biodiversity”.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For more than 100 years, Timber NSW has represented the timber and forest products industry in NSW.

Timber is a critical resource for the NSW construction industry. It is also a critical part of regional economies in NSW, with the timber and forest products industry contributing \$2.4bn to the NSW economy each year and employing more than 22,000 people in NSW. For more information see www.timbersw.com.au.

Extensive information on silvicultural techniques and different harvesting methods employed in NSW State forests can be found at www.forestrycorporation.com.au.