



## Thriving, healthy and biodiverse natural environments

For the biodiversity and health of our waterways, habitats and wildlife to be protected and enhanced to deliver environmental, economic and recreational benefits for current and future generations of residents and visitors.



### **Advocate for changes to Forestry policy and planning regulations to encourage native plantations and re-forestation**

The previously endorsed engagement by NRJO of a Biodiversity Officer is a linked project to support and strengthen this advocacy area.

**Goal:** *Strategic Action #1.2* – Enhance biodiversity across the region. Increase volume of healthy, stable interconnected habitat. Increase populations of threatened species.

**Background:** The private property primary processing sector on the North Coast directly creates \$145 million turnover for the regional economy and 490 jobs. This supports the need for increased private land owner involvement in biodiversity conservation and recognises the vital contribution biodiversity makes to the region's economy.

Applying best practice silviculture has the potential to generate income, create new jobs and create forests that are healthier and more productive.

In economic terms, the forest sector contributes more than AUD\$580 billion to the global economy. In Australia, the forest and wood manufacturing industries generate more than AU\$23.5 billion a year and employ an estimated 64,000 Australians\*.

If forests are to continue to deliver the full range of benefits that people and nature are dependent on, they need to be conserved and managed responsibly.

*Source: Australian Dept. of Agriculture and Water Resources, 2017*

**Policy Context:** The *NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap* sets out the NSW Government’s long-term vision for a sustainable forestry sector. The major reform of the regulatory and policy frameworks governing native forestry in NSW includes a comprehensive review of PNF (closed 15 February 2019), which seeks to balance the sustainable development of the private native timber and agricultural industries while recognising the environmental values of the private forest estate.

Several key factors contribute to the significance of PNF in the region and the subsequent critical nature of addressing existing concerns with the scheme:

- PNF operations are most commonly located in areas of high local and regional ecological significance;
- There is an existing and ongoing increasing trend for lifestyle occupation and use of lands, as opposed to agricultural uses in the region;
- PNF operations can have a significant impact on local infrastructure and commonly occur in locations where the existing infrastructure is not suitable;
- Code assessable impact assessment does not satisfactorily address the significance attributed to ecological values through legislation and policy by local communities in the region;
- The burden of poor implementation of the scheme often falls to local government without a corresponding opportunity to have input to the assessment of proposals for PNF operations with reference to local planning and policy instruments.

**Recent Actions:** The region comprises 9.7 million hectares of land, with 65 per cent of it forested. Over half (3.4 million hectares) of the region’s forests are in private ownership, spread across thousands of individual holdings.

The reforms must ensure sufficient information is provided to the relevant local government authority to enable councils to address community enquiries and concerns regarding PNF operations.

**Problem:** PNF is a significant issue for local government and local communities. The NR has a disproportionately large number of rare and threatened plants, animals and ecological communities and some of the highest number of invasive plants and pest animals in the State. Historical land clearing has also impacted the amount of effective habitat and connectivity between habitats.

**Support and Partnerships:** Communities support the need for change. Residents care deeply about conserving and enhancing biodiversity, improving ecosystem health and resilience, using natural resources wisely, and reducing environmental impact of population growth and economic development. NRJO will pursue engagement with:

- Landcare, Local Land Services and community groups
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Forestry Corporation NSW



- NSW Environmental Protection Authority
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Private Landholders

**Solution and Actions sought:** It is critical that the reform process acknowledges that PNF will only be ecologically sustainable with significant transformation of the existing arrangements, adequate resourcing in proactive monitoring and compliance and definitive action where required.

The basic requirements for a proposed Forest Operation Plan must include:

- identification of the linkages and integration with the existing local road network, including proposed haulage routes.
- land use zoning in accordance with the relevant Local Environmental Plan (map component) and identification and analysis of consistency with, and or any relevant approvals required by, the Plan (written component).
- details (mapped and written components) of proposed management actions to avoid impact on values such as water quality, scenic amenity, retained vegetation and habitat features.
- details (mapped and written components) of proposed management actions to assist regeneration of harvested areas, including preventative and ongoing maintenance actions to be taken with regard to weed establishment.

Additional ways to achieve the desired outcomes could include:

1. Enhanced monitoring and increased compliance activity by authorities
2. Undertake baseline mapping of valuable flora and fauna for respective areas
3. Increased training and resourcing for Private Foresters and potential industry participants to achieve best practice forestry outcomes
4. Regular, formal local roundtables comprising all parties

Benefits will flow from demonstrating a collaborative, integrated approach across all three levels of government and other stakeholders. The increase in private landholder involvement in biodiversity will have a positive impact on the region and our residents assisting to achieve the above goal.

