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NPA's Vision: Our forests provide safe, well-connected habitats for native wildlife; the benefits forests provide to the people of NSW are maximised; and forests help NSW become a world leader in nature-based tourism, recreation and outdoor education.

The current state of play

We have two million hectares of public native forests along our coast. This beautiful country is home to diverse wildlife and a myriad forest ecosystems. But the primary use of these forests is timber production. Native forest logging takes place under Regional Forest Agreements.

The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) believes it's time to rethink whether the focus on forests as a timber resource is the best use of this precious shared asset. The expiry of the RFAs provides a glorious opportunity to shift the use of our forests from logging to conservation, recreation, tourism and education. This would provide a way for regional communities to make full use of our most important and unique asset—nature—and take proactive steps to protect workers from the long term decline in logging jobs by providing new opportunities in plantation forestry, tourism and park management.

During the development of the National Forest Policy Statement in 1995, Prime Minister Paul Keating said “our forests are a national treasure and their management must be ecologically sustainable and economically clever”. At the moment it's neither. But it could be both under our plan. We want to see our forests better protected and used more inclusively. We want our communities to flourish and we want your support to make it happen.



EnviroPrint Australia is proud to support Forests for All. We've joined the combined effort to save habitat for species, improve human work-life balance through nature experiences and to inspire connection to country for all Australians.

EnviroPrint Australia is an innovative business based on the philosophy of

We support those that support us.

Working together, we can help to build new bridges within Australian communities, stimulate caring in others and assist to ensure the environmental future of the planet we share.

We provide affordable professional communication solutions, with environmental consideration and genuine caring. We minimise waste, maximise the use of our skills, support, encourage, and offer ourselves to create networks and long lasting friendships between like-minded individuals and organisations.

EnviroPrint Australia actively promotes our worthy projects and shares resources.

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Impacts of logging

Logging threatens forest species because it drives a loss of habitat, tree hollows and forest dieback. Logging compacts soils, reduces water supplies from forests, lowers forest carbon stores and can make forests more fire prone. These are hidden costs to logging that outweigh the value of timber.



What are Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs)?

RFAs are 20-year agreements between the NSW and Commonwealth Governments that permit logging. The aim of the RFAs was to allow timber production while protecting nature. Unfortunately, despite the intentions being good, they haven't worked as planned.

The agreements have failed to protect threatened species, they violate the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management, and they are witness to a decline in a native forest logging industry that becomes more dependent on government subsidies as jobs decline.

In 2016, NPA conducted a thorough analysis of the performance of the RFAs against their stated aims that clearly showed that the RFAs have not optimised the use of forests for the entire community. Rather, timber extraction has been the overriding priority at the expense of all other forest values (nature, recreation, tourism, water supplies, carbon storage and Aboriginal cultural heritage).

Potential benefits from forests

Public forests could become cornerstones of regional economies, provide jobs and small business opportunities and places for everyone to enjoy. Aboriginal people could benefit culturally and economically from forests becoming Indigenous Protected Areas and offering business and employment opportunities.

We have a great chance to end the failed RFA experiment!

NPA's 2016 analysis showed that the RFAs failed to meet nearly all of their stated aims. The RFAs failed to:

- ✘ Protect threatened native species**
- ✘ Secure forestry jobs**
- ✘ Deliver a full reserve network of Forest Ecosystems**
- ✘ Adhere to Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management**
- ✘ Resolve the 'Forest Wars'**

“Our forests are a national treasure and their management must be ecologically sustainable and economically clever”

– Former Prime Minister Paul Keating

Logging is not the optimal use of our precious forests

Timber is currently the only thing afforded any value in production forests, but it's not the only valuable thing forests provide to us. When water and carbon are factored into decision making, it makes no sense to log forests at all. This makes intuitive sense when you consider that every person living on the east coast of Australia relies on forested catchments for water. Unlogged eucalypt forests are huge carbon stores, but logging drastically reduces these stores. This drives climate change and undermines efforts that ordinary citizens make to reduce emissions. The Paris Agreement, signed by 192 countries, afforded forests a separate article because they have such an important role to play in helping us tackle climate change.



Plantations and alternative fibres

Plantations already account for about 85% of timber in NSW, and industry sources will tell you they're the future. They're cheaper to plant, maintain and harvest and produce better pulp wood than native forests. It's easier to achieve Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification via plantations than industrial logging of diverse native forests, because logging has huge impacts on forest ecosystems. FSC is increasingly demanded by conscious consumers. Almost all timber used in construction these days is plantation, and with engineered timber technology such as acetylation, fast-growing, FSC-certified softwood timbers can have the strength and beauty of hardwoods.



The truth about forestry jobs

The RFAs have not secured the logging industry. Jobs have steadily declined and governments have had to step in to buy out timber contracts with ratepayers shouldering substantial hidden costs.

The plantation industry now dominates jobs, profits and wood output.

In 2015, native forest logging directly employed approximately 600 people in NSW and jobs are in long-term decline due to mechanisation and market forces.

All the direct and indirect jobs in native forest logging account for just 0.03% of all primary industries employment, or 0.0008% of total employment in NSW.



New logging laws

New logging laws proposed by the NSW Government in May '18 will see highly intensive logging occur over 140,000ha of forests on the north coast, rendering them useless for gliders and other wildlife. These forests are a biodiversity hotspot and should be protected, not clearfelled!

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We're proposing that native State forests become a mix of protected area categories under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs), decided via widespread community consultation. This would mean conservation and sustainability were primary objectives, while ensuring communities had better access to forests. This model could incorporate dog walking and horse riding opportunities close to urban areas; higher impact sports and recreation; and ecologically sensitive infrastructure needed to support these activities. Importantly, this approach would promote Aboriginal ownership, joint and co-management arrangements, traditional management practices and provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to benefit economically from businesses centred on forests.

With clever cross-tenure and regional recreational planning, these forests could be used alongside other protected area categories to support recreation, eco-tourism and major events throughout regional NSW. NPA envisages a scenario where the Government puts forward initial investment to fund public infrastructure (such as roads, signage, trail development, cabins and lodges), but small business is encouraged to take the lead in areas of service provision. Protection of the forests is key to stimulating small business, as the certainty that forests will remain attractive places to bring visitors is a pre-requisite to investing in a business.





New South Wales – The **New** New Zealand

Let's face it, the Kiwis are miles ahead of us at the moment. They take tourism and nature conservation seriously and have recognised the inherent link between the two. New Zealand is considered the adventure playground capital of the world. Yet NSW has the potential to be the new world leader in nature-based tourism! The terrain is ideal for adventure sports and the weather is perfect to run these sports year-round. Plus we've got the advantage of abundant wildlife like koalas, gliders, quolls and cockatoos and World Heritage forests that already attracts tourists from around the world.

In NSW's forests, there are landscapes perfect for multi-day bushwalks, downhill and long-distance mountain biking, multi-day four-wheel drive routes, hang-gliding launch spots, canyoning adventures, extreme events like rogaining, ultra-marathons and bungee jumping. Or, for the less active, there's great locations for idyllic eco-lodges and glampsites.



Mountain biking

Good recreation planning can permit high speed sports like mountain biking to occur alongside more sedate pastimes like bushwalking and birdwatching.



Outdoor centres and ecolodges

Heavily degraded clearings from logging offer potential locations for eco-lodges, outdoor education centres and glampsites. Using these areas for development means national parks can remain development free.



Planning for success

A high-value nature-based ecotourism industry requires security that the scenic and natural values upon which it's based will be there for the long term. At the moment, that certainty is lacking. Conflict arises regularly, such as in Tasmania in 2016 over plans to log close to a valued mountain bike track and in Mogo State Forest in 2017 when parts of bike tracks were destroyed. Mountain bike tracks in Currumbene State Forest in the Shoalhaven are located in the harvest area which means their future is not assured. And in 2016 NSW community members were horrified when logging took place along a scenic drive near Narooma.

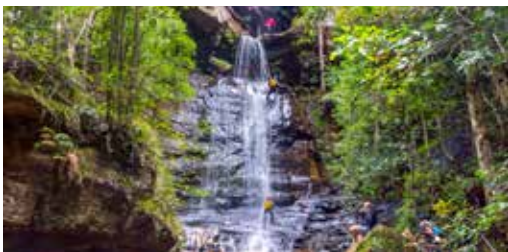


Nadgee State Forest. This type of destructive logging has been historically confined to the Eden area to feed the Eden chipmill. New proposals will see it extended to 140,000ha of coastal forests in northern NSW.



Multi-day walks

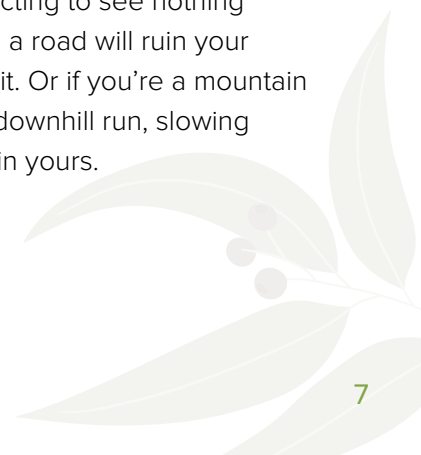
Linking up cabins and campsites in State Forests via multi-day walks would create fantastic recreation opportunities and avoid development in national parks.



Adventure sports

Our plan offers great scope for high-value tourism and recreation, including adventure sports. This could provide new opportunities for local business creation, attracting and retaining young people in regional areas.

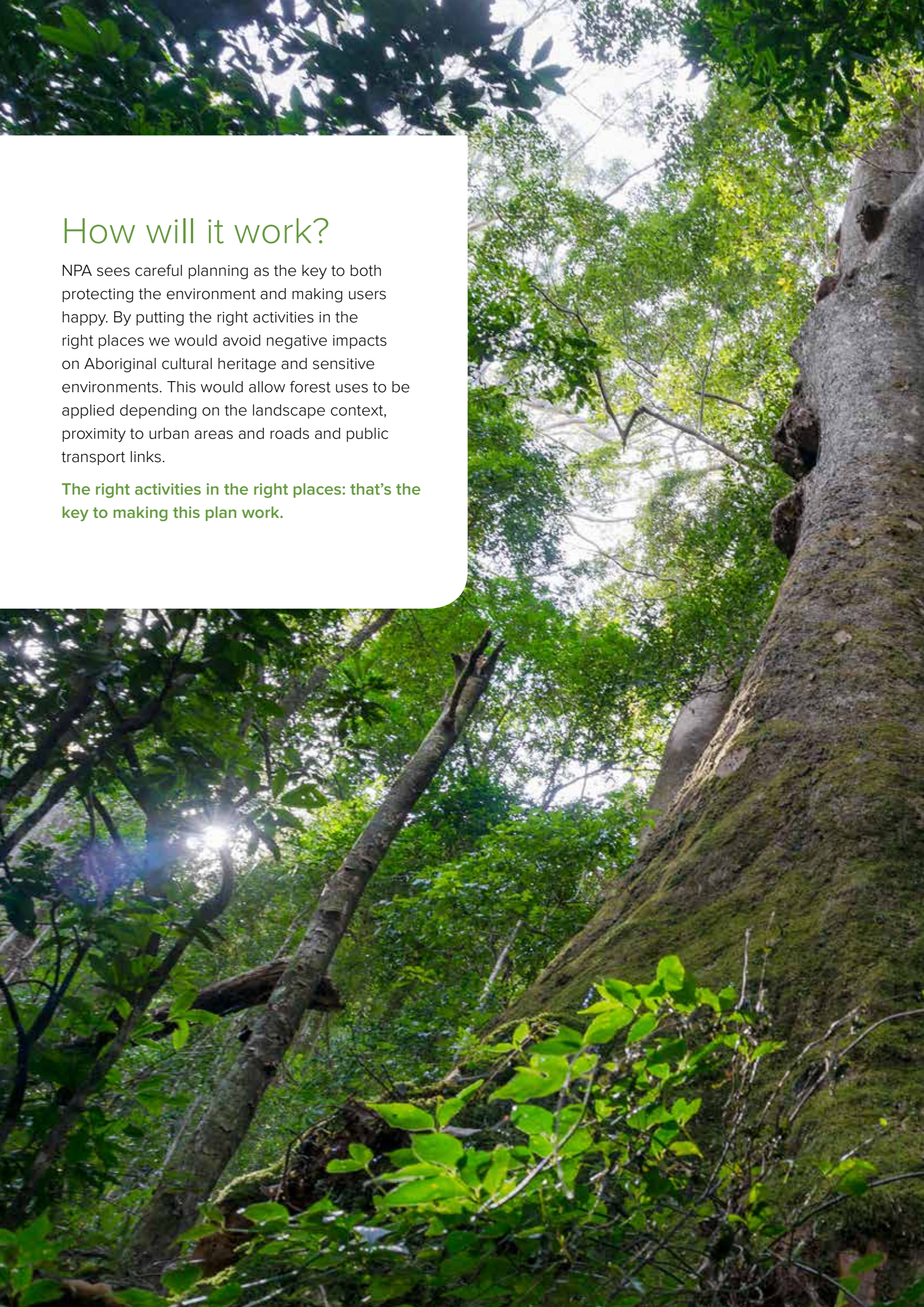
Because nature-based and adventure tourism completely depends on nature and a high quality environment, recreation can't come at the expense of nature. Conservation and recreation must be two sides of the same coin. Some forms of recreation aren't compatible with each other because one undermines another's enjoyment. This inevitably leads to conflict between user groups. For example, if you go hiking expecting to see nothing but bushland and birds, noise from a road will ruin your experience—even if you can't see it. Or if you're a mountain biker seeking an adrenaline-filled downhill run, slowing down constantly for walkers will ruin yours.



How will it work?

NPA sees careful planning as the key to both protecting the environment and making users happy. By putting the right activities in the right places we would avoid negative impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage and sensitive environments. This would allow forest uses to be applied depending on the landscape context, proximity to urban areas and roads and public transport links.

The right activities in the right places: that's the key to making this plan work.





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- ✓ New opportunities for Aboriginal people
- ✓ Showcase cultural heritage
- ✓ Improve regional economies
- ✓ Sustainable jobs for forestry workers
- ✓ Health and wellbeing
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Protect threatened species
- ✓ Mitigate the effects of climate change

Creating opportunities for Aboriginal people

Under our plan, Aboriginal ownership of forests and traditional management approaches would occur. There would be opportunities for Aboriginal business development and Aboriginal use of forest products would be possible under Plans of Management. Given that many forests will need management and restoration after decades of damaging logging, this is a huge opportunity for regional Aboriginal communities.

Showcasing cultural heritage

Cultural tourism is absent from much of the east coast. Adding Aboriginal knowledge and skills to tourism offerings would deepen the tourist experience and be a major international tourist drawcard while recognising the cultural heritage of the first Australians. This would also provide genuine opportunities for Aboriginal self-determination, in the form of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses based on Aboriginal forest management and tourism.



Arakwal as an example

Arakwal National Park near Byron Bay is an example of joint-managed protected area. The Plan of Management provides for Aboriginal use of traditional foods and fibres. The success of this approach has led to Arakwal being one of only three protected areas in Australia to be recognised on the IUCN Green List of protected areas—the gold standard for protected area management.



Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)

IPAs provide cultural, environmental, social, health and wellbeing and economic benefits for Aboriginal people. Our plan would offer the chance for Aboriginal communities to identify, own and manage new IPAs in order to take advantage of these benefits.

Investing in our forests = investing in our future

Initial government investment would be needed to upgrade infrastructure, begin the restoration of forests and provide the certainty for people to take advantage of the fresh opportunities.

It's important that small businesses are encouraged to kickstart employment in regional areas. Of every visitor dollar 44 cents are spent regionally, and a further 87 cents are generated in other parts of the economy. Yet only 14% of tourism investment is located regionally, so there's huge room for improvement.

Creating jobs for forestry workers

Logging jobs have been in long term decline and ignoring this helps no-one. We want to protect workers through new opportunities in the plantation industry and in NPWS to manage forest restoration. By doing this, and promoting small business creation and Aboriginal employment, we can increase the number of skilled, well-paid jobs in regional NSW.



Economic benefits from protected areas

Tourism is not the only economic benefit that comes from protected areas. Research shows a range of financial benefits accrue to local government including stimulation of local businesses, increased housing values and increased local funding. Besides these are the huge values of carbon and water that are already part of our economy.



Australia's visitor economy

\$107 billion is generated every year and 534,000 people are directly employed in tourism in Australia. In NSW national parks receive almost 40 million visitors every year, while tourism generates \$32.5 billion annually and directly employs more than 261,000 people.

Health and wellbeing

It is well established that outdoor exercise is good for us, so promoting public access to forests for a diverse range of activities will help ensure that our growing population has opportunities to get outdoors in natural areas and stay physically fit. Besides physical fitness there is also an ever-increasing body of evidence that contact with nature is vital for our mental wellbeing by reducing depression and anxiety while increasing productivity and creativity.

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) state that “climate change is widely regarded as the biggest threat to health in the 21st century”. Climate change will impact health via extreme heat, bushfires, floods, nutrition, disease and pollution. Threats will be greatest to the most vulnerable in society including children, the elderly, pregnant women and Indigenous communities. Our plan would reduce climate-related risks to health by reducing emissions from logging and increasing carbon stores.



Reducing childhood obesity.

One of the NSW Premier’s Priorities is reducing childhood obesity. This plan would help achieve that reduction by providing a pathway by which children can play and exercise in a natural setting, spend more time outdoors and become active early to help set the tone for their lifestyles.



A natural solution to mental health

The cost of depression in Australia is estimated at \$12.6 billion per year. Exposure to nature for longer periods can reduce the incidence of depression in our population by 7% and high blood pressure by 9%! On top of reduced healthcare costs via increased physical activity, our plan would pay for itself many times over by reducing medical bills.

Education

Outdoor education should be a key part of any child’s upbringing: it offers the chance to form bonds, build trust, develop problem solving skills and of course, play. For children, outdoor learning and contact with nature can benefit reasoning and improve concentration, calmness, empathy and self-esteem.

Under NPA’s model, we could develop a network of outdoor education and field study centres to introduce kids to activities like orienteering, climbing, abseiling and kayaking and learn about the natural world. This would help young people develop a love and understanding of the outdoors and an environmental education which in turn would lead to better health and conservation outcomes. Nature schools, common overseas, are not yet recognised by the NSW Government as an education facility. But they may in future offer a complementary approach to educating children, and this plan would provide for that eventuality.



Outdoor education

Forests could be used as sites for outdoor education centres to offer young people the chance to leave urban environments, experience new activities, learn new skills, create friendships and experience the Australian bush.



Connecting kids with nature

In many areas it will be possible to better incorporate forest visits into childcare and preschool education. Unstructured play in natural areas benefits child development, and developing a love of nature early in life will help prepare the next generation for the challenges of being stewards of nature.

Nature

Australia has world renowned wildlife found nowhere else on earth. Tourism Australia, a government agency, tells us that this nature is the single biggest drawcard for international visitors. Our plan would help reverse the rapid declines in species like koalas and greater gliders by restoring forests and safeguarding our prize asset.

NPA's plan will protect nature and allow NSW to take advantage of its natural assets to become a world leader in adventure and eco-tourism. Our plan would deliver real economic and social benefits to regional communities in NSW, as well as protecting our natural environment and helping in the fight against climate change.



New South Wales' threatened forest species

The Forests of East Australia is one of just 36 global biodiversity hotspots. This is in recognition of their huge biological diversity but also reflects the high threats. Eastern Australia, including the NSW coast, is a deforestation front - the only one in the developed world. This is driven by logging, agriculture and urban development.

Forest specialist species like koalas, gliders and pygmy possums are in decline in our forests. The near extinction of koalas in southern NSW is a sobering lesson against complacency.

Support a plan that supports you

With your help we can grow this plan into something truly special! By bringing together diverse groups that all have something to gain from protecting our forests we can make this plan a reality. Become a partner or find out more: www.forestsforall.org.au



How can this plan benefit you?



Group	Benefits
Aboriginal Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest ownership and management • Protecting and showcasing cultural heritage
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor education for young people • Nature schools and field centres
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and mental health benefits from time in nature • Be part of the solution to climate change
Nature & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A future for forest species and ecosystems • New protected areas
Recreation & Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of world class activity locations • Long-term job security and regional employment
Regional Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for small business establishment • Increased visitors to regional areas

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This booklet is a shortened version of a larger report.
The full, referenced report is available at www.forestsforall.org.au

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