

Media Release

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Great Koala Myth: New National Park won't help koalas but will cost thousands of jobs, \$billions in economic activity on North Coast NSW

A flawed report commissioned by an anti-forestry group grossly underestimates the cost of closing down the NSW North Coast's hardwood timber industry and fails to take into account the scientific evidence that the modest, regenerative timber harvesting operations in the State Forest have no impact on koala prevalence, the Australian Forest Products Association said today.

AFPA CEO Mr Ross Hampton said previous [independent economic modelling](#) of the impact of the so-called Great Koala National Park on the NSW North Coast found it would lead to a \$757 million-a-year hit to the NSW economy and cut almost 2000 jobs, devastating communities across the region where the timber industry is a major employer. This conservative estimate by respected economic modeller Ernst & Young would amount to billions of dollars and thousands more down-stream jobs over the 15 years than the report published today considered. The report was commissioned by the Greens aligned Bellingen and Coffs Harbour Councils

"The flawed report fails to recognise their plan would mean the closure of the native forestry industry on the North Coast, and with it thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity in our regions," Mr Hampton said.

"Forest industries are the biggest employer on the North Coast. Shutting down a sustainable, renewable industry would be disastrous for these communities and the NSW economy, and would deliver no environmental benefits."

Mr Hampton said the activists' campaign to close down the native timber industry ignored the scientific evidence shows that timber harvesting in NSW has no impact on koala occupancy in the forest.

"Only 0.2 per cent of NSW native forests are harvested annually for timber production and they are all regenerated by law," Mr Hampton said.

"The latest research from the NSW Department of Primary Industries' koala expert Dr Brad Law, who has surveyed millions of hectares of NSW koala habitat using breakthrough 'sound monitoring' techniques, found:

*Past timber harvesting did not influence koala occupancy. There was no difference in results between heavily harvested, lightly harvested and old growth sites. Time since harvesting and the amount of harvesting in the local area did not influence occupancy. There was also no difference between National Park and State forest sites.**

Mr Hampton said Australians loved the quality hardwood timbers produced by the North Coast timber industry and closing it down would only lead to more imports from questionable sources.

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“Closing down Australia’s sustainably managed native timber industry won’t stop the demand for quality appearance-grade hardwood timber for floorboards, staircases and furniture. It will just increase imports from countries with weaker regulations, including those where rainforests are logged unsustainably and illegally,” Mr Hampton concluded.

*<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/media-centre/releases/2018/acoustics-provide-new-insights-on-koalas-in-hinterland-forests>

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