

Harriett Swift - Agenda item 13.2

This motion is asking for a subsidy, upwards of \$270,000 , from Bega Valley ratepayers to destroy local native forests.

Let's not beat around the bush – it's a subsidy. According to the council staff advice – without spending at least this amount Council cannot get through the bureaucratic processes involved to change the LEP.

So, if councillors vote for this motion, they are voting for a subsidy from ratepayers to enable logging of privately owned forests on **RU2 Zoned Land** within the shire.

You might think that compared to subsidies that the native forest logging industry is used to receiving, \$270,000 is pretty modest. And it is.

In the last 6 months last year, public native forest logging in NSW lost more than twice that amount every week. The Forestry Corporation made a trading loss of \$14.9 million on it.

But that's not the end of it. Since 2020, the Forestry Corporation has lost almost \$90 million on native forest logging. Under the Forestry Act, it is required to operate as a business. It's expected to make a profit which will be handed over to the NSW Treasury.

In addition to trading losses, it has received \$246.9 million worth of grants since 2019/20 financial year.

As well, it gets a grant every year from the Treasury; it's known as the Community Service Obligation usually about \$20million for specific expenditures such as recreation facilities.

But there's more. In December 2024, the federal Minister for Forestry [announced](#) a grant of \$300 million which she described as an "investment by the Albanese Labor Government in the future of the forestry industry."

There was nothing unusual about that. The industry expects it and it gets it, just as it expects that the ratepayers of the Bega Valley will bankroll it now for the cost of changing the Local Environment Plan to enable more logging on private land.

Don't get me wrong – this proposal would be wrong even without the subsidy, but to expect ratepayers to foot the bill is outrageous.

Either ratepayers will pay with higher rates, or some other more worthy community project will miss out because this money has gone towards enabling this additional logging.

Worse still, the costs involved in changing the LEP are not the full story.

With more logging comes a whole lot of other extra cost that the Mayor's motion doesn't even mention.

More logging means more heavy vehicles and more heavy vehicles means more damage to local rural roads.

Even the Forestry Corporation makes a contribution to the roads that it uses. It's small and inadequate, but it's something. Log trucks using Edrom and Imlay Roads pay a levy which contributes to the cost of maintaining the roads. The log trucks that will carry the logs from this **RU2 Zoned private land** will pay nothing.

A heavy vehicle causes vastly more damage to road surfaces than light vehicles. A single fully loaded truck, weighing 40 to 50 tonnes, may cause as much road damage as more than 10,000 standard passenger vehicles

Maintenance costs for heavily used rural roads in New South Wales can exceed \$70,000 per kilometre each year.

By rejecting this motion, councillors can do the right thing and be on the side of public opinion. Poll after poll has shown that public opinion is strongly in support of ending native forest logging – usually between 60 and 70%.

Councillors can do the right thing by ratepayers and be popular.