Nature Conservation Council of NSW
The voice for the environment since 1955

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MEDIA RELEASE

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New report unearths systemic illegal logging practices in NSW's native forests

Environmental regulations intended to prevent unsustainable logging and protect threatened species are frequently and systemically breached in NSW's native forests, according to an Environmental Defender's Office report commissioned by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

The report, *If A Tree Falls* [attached], details a pattern of illegal logging operations that has resulted in the destruction of old growth forest, endangered ecosystems and habitat for threatened wildlife across the state. Forests NSW has failed to observe even basic precautions such as marking up habitat trees for exclusion and monitoring forestry contractors.

"The Nature Conservation Council's report has uncovered that an alarming number of the trees falling in our native forests today have been illegally logged," according to Nature Conservation Council of NSW Chief Executive Officer Pepe Clarke.

"The native forests of NSW are home to a remarkable diversity of native animals and plants, including many species now threatened with extinction. Illegal logging practices have resulted many times in the destruction of the homes of threatened and native species, including koalas, sooty owls and the smoky mouse.

"Many forestry breaches would remain hidden if not for the hard work and vigilance of local and regional community groups and individuals.

"Government and industry assure us that logging in the state's native forests only takes place on a sustainable basis, but the large number of compliance failures featured in our report demonstrates the reality is far from an environmentally sustainable ideal," he said.

Last month, Forests NSW was prosecuted for undertaking post-logging bushfire hazard reduction burning that contravened a Threatened Species Licence by destroying the habitat of the smoky mouse. Presiding Judge R A Pepper said, "[I]n my view, the number of convictions suggests either a pattern of continuing disobedience in respect of environmental laws generally or, at the very least, a cavalier attitude to compliance with such laws".

"Given the diverse and unique natural values of our forests, the community has a strong and legitimate interest in ensuring that the management of our native forests is both legal and sustainable," Mr Clarke said.

"The Government must get tough on forestry operators who engage in unlawful environmental vandalism and bring penalties for forest breaches into line with other environmental regulations.

"The findings of this report represent a compelling call to action for the NSW government. It is time to restore law and order to our public native forests," Mr Clarke said.

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