INQUIRY INTO ILLEGAL LOGGING PROHIBITION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

University of the Sunshine Coast Submission

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The University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) welcomes the opportunity to lodge a brief submission on the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment (Strengthening Measures to Prevent Illegal Timber Trade) Bill 2024 [Provisions]* (the Bill) which provided through the lens of our expertise in forestry and climate change.

The Bill seeks to update the *2012 Illegal Logging Prohibition Act* (the Act), which was pathbreaking at the time. In our view, the amendments would make the Act more enforceable and likely to address the problem of illegal trade and processing of timber. We consider the changes warranted, based on the latest science, and fair. While some importers may object to the additional regulations, which strengthen the capacity to detect illegal wood and the consequences of being caught importing it, overall the amendments appear positive for Australian forest industries as well as for exporting countries trying to control illegal timber harvests.

However, if research on the geographical origins of timber does not accelerate, it will be decades before scientific verification data is available to support regulators to combat illegal logging. The most promising techniques for which additional field data are needed are Stable Isotope Ratio Analysis (SIRA) and Trace Element Analysis (TEA), as exemplified in the recent study *A framework for tracing timber following the Ukraine invasion*[1].

UniSC recommendations

1. The amendments are supported.
2. Additional research funding be provided to determine the geographical origins of timber, as described in *Tracing the world's timber: the status of scientific verification technologies for species and origin identification*[2] published by an international team led by Australian researchers.

UniSC would welcome the opportunity to elaborate on any aspect of our submission. If this is of interest, please contact Professor Francis (Jack) Putz, Professor of Ecology and Management in the Forest Research Institute, UniSC at fputz@usc.edu.au.

About UniSC

UniSC is one of Australia's youngest and fastest growing universities, and the first greenfield university to open in Australia since 1975 on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Today, our award-winning facilities span five campuses across Queensland. Located in an area of unique geographical importance, UniSC is the world's only university with campuses on three connecting UNESCO biosphere reserves and World Heritage Listed K'gari.

Consistent with our mission to enrich our regions by championing environmentally sustainable principles and practices, UniSC has strategically focused on building a contemporary, sustainable, and accessible university. UniSC is home to two world leading research concentrations working in the areas of climate change and sustainability. The Sustainability Research Centre, established in 2007 with the goal of conducting cutting-edge research into pressing local, regional, and global challenges of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The Forest Research Institute, which undertakes work in the broad spectrum of forestry research areas that make direct and meaningful contributions to the sustainability of our wooded landscapes. We partner with industry, community organisations, and all levels of government to deliver innovative, high-quality research with real impact.

Our research also informs our teaching. UniSC offers multiple programs and courses in climate change and sustainability to our 18,000 current students, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. On the world stage, UniSC is recognised by The Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings as a global leader in climate action, clean water sanitation, life on land, and life below water. This ranking comes alongside the Australian Research Council's recognition of UniSC as a producer of world-class research in 26 speciality areas, including environmental science, medical and health sciences, neuroscience, technology, and psychology.

[1] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378867272_A_framework_for_tracing_timber_following_the_Ukraine_invasion

[2] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362474455_Tracing_the_worlds_timber_The_status_of_scientific_verification_technologies_for_species_and_origin_identification