

LETTER: TO HON DR MIKE KELLY 08.10 Dan Katz

Dear Mike,

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. We also really enjoyed meeting your wife.

I did a bit of searching for around-the-world scientific output on wood-fired power. There is a lot of material out there, and both proponents and opponents of wood power can find something to support their individual cases. However, all the scientists agree on the following:

1. Burning wood emits carbon dioxide. Supporters of wood-fired power claim that there are methods to make the fumes less noxious, but no one tries to say that wood burning is not a major emitter of carbon dioxide.
2. Trees, particularly old growth trees, are good stores for carbon. Proponents of burning wood to generate power claim that because trees regrow, the carbon store is being 'recycled,' that is, you emit carbon, but then soak it up again with the regrown trees. Of course, these people fail to count the years it takes the trees to regrow. However, many, many scientists throughout the world are saying that this is false carbon accounting.

You say that because we don't cut down native trees specifically for power generation, we aren't 'wasting' these carbon stores. However, the trees are being cut down, whether for wood chips or timber or whatever, which means they aren't there to soak up the carbon emitted by burning them. Thus, the carbon accounting is still in the red.

Furthermore, in Australia, the eucalyptus trees are amongst the most carbon dense trees in the world. They also take generations to regrow into the carbon sinks that were cut down.

I must admit, I was surprised at how common wood-fired power is in the US and particularly in Europe. This surprise was tempered by the number of scientific and environmental organisations in both the US and Europe that are fighting this influx of wood-fired power plants.

In Australia, not only do we have a large number of lovely carbon-dense eucalyptus trees, but we also have a lot of sun, wind, and sea. We are uniquely placed to become leaders in generating power via these truly renewable resources.

Following are links to some sites of interest:

<http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2010/06/carbon-bomb.html>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/wuerthner01122010.html>

<http://www.manomet.org/node/322>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/06/2535565.htm>

Thanks and cheers, Dan