



12/3/2012

OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

We are writing to you to ask you to act at a critical time for the future of not only Australia's forests, but also our climate. The native forest logging industry is currently experiencing market driven changes that provide the opportunity to shift Australia's wood and paper production industry onto a sustainable path, based on plantations. The opportunity to transition the forest industry at this critical time will be lost if new incentives are created that will drive ongoing native forest logging.

The disallowance motion put forward by Mr Oakeshott that would allow native forest wood 'waste' burnt for electricity to be eligible for Renewable Energy Certificates under the government's Renewable Energy Target should not be supported.

This disallowance motion must be opposed for the following reasons:

1. The 'high value clause' states that any material from a forest logged primarily for burning or woodchipping would not be eligible for Renewable Energy Certificates. The Oakeshott argument that the 'high value clause' would prevent forests being logged primarily for the 'waste', would not work.

In many parts of Australia this very situation has gone on for decades and still goes on now with the 'waste' product accounting for between 85 - 95% of all logs taken from public forests. For example in East Gippsland, pulp logs have sold for a royalty as low as 11c a tonne, with the top quality regrowth pulp logs sold for about \$2.50. The quality sawlogs can fetch a \$30-50 royalty. You can see how this clause is meaningless and could easily be abused to facilitate an escalation in native forest logging specifically for any biomass fuel industry.

In south eastern NSW, Forests NSW has raised only sawlog royalties but has not increased pulp log prices, despite the fact that 95% of the logs in the region are pulp logs destined for woodchips. This has meant that it is virtually impossible for any logging in south eastern NSW to fail the 'high value' test, where the value of the sawlogs must be more than that of the 'waste', thus making the clause unworkable.

2. Native Forest biomass energy would effectively take away from the production of genuine renewable energy.

The certificates available to suppliers of 'renewable energy' are capped. This will mean that genuine clean renewable energy sources like wind, solar and geothermal will receive fewer Renewable Energy Certificates, resulting in Australia producing less truly renewable energy.

3. Burning Australia's native forests for power is not renewable.

Calling this kind of power 'renewable' is based on the premise that the carbon absorbed in regrowing forests balances the carbon released during the logging and burning of native forests. The emissions released during the logging and burning would enter the atmosphere within months but it would take many decades to absorb an equivalent amount of carbon. Native forests are typically logged before they reach ecological maturity, so the carbon dioxide emissions will never be fully reabsorbed by the regrowing forests. Burning native forests for energy cannot be considered as clean or renewable. For a long period of time the Australian Government has not been required to account for the carbon emissions that have resulted from the logging and management of forests. It is these flawed land use, land use change and forestry carbon accounting rules that the forestry industry have used in their misleading public relations efforts to falsely label the logging industry 'carbon neutral'.

4. It would create new incentives for logging of our native forests at a time when the industry needs to transition to a sustainable plantation based industry.

This disallowance motion, if passed, would create incentives to prolong the native forest logging industry at a time when it could be progressing through a market led transition that would be good for Australia's forests, climate, water supplies and will benefit forest workers by providing a certain and secure long term future in a sustainable plantation based industry. The environmental requirements that Mr Oakeshott argues will protect forests cannot be enforced.

5. Investment should not be made into native forest power stations. What's needed is support for a transition to plantations.

Australia needs to move towards ending all commodity native forest logging because it's uneconomic and unsustainable. The wood and paper markets will continue to result in a shift towards a plantation based forest industry. Building expensive plants to burn native forests for power will shift the industry from a positive pathway forward to a logging industry that results in the continued destruction of ecosystems and loss of critical wildlife habit and biodiversity at a time when Australia is facing an unprecedented biodiversity and climate crisis.

6. The proposed amendment is based on recommendations from a Forestry Industry report which has a strong forestry industry bias.

The Forestry Industry report 'Seeing the Forest Through the Trees' which Mr Oakeshott says is reflected in his disallowance motion was based primarily on input from forest industry lobby groups and was written to provide a platform for them. The committee, by its own admission, ignored any submissions critical of the industry, stating that "submissions that have simply criticised the industry and called for an end to particular kinds of forestry have not been included in the report". Its terms of reference were very narrow.

This motion, if passed, will create a new incentive to log Australia's last remaining native forests, prevent the rapid transition into a viable plantation based industry. Australia's public native forests are much more valuable as carbon sinks, biodiversity habitats, water providers and purifiers, and as tourist destinations.

We urge you to seriously consider this matter and not support Mr Oakeshott's ill-conceived disallowance motion.

Yours sincerely,

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance <http://forestsandclimate.net/>

100% Renewable Energy

Albany Community Environment Centre

Ararat Greenhouse Action Group

Australian Youth Climate Coalition [Tasmania]

Beyond Zero Emissions

Climate Action Canberra

Climate Action Newtown

Climate Change Australia [Clarence Branch]

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle

Climate Emergency Network

Climate Rescue of Wagga Inc

Colong Foundation for Wilderness

Conservation Council A.C.T. Region

Communities Combating Climate Crisis, Healesville

GET UP

Great Lakes Environment Association

Healesville Environment Watch Inc

Healthy Soils Australia

LIVE

Nativesrule

North Coast Environment Council

North East Forest Alliance

North Shore Climate Action

Rainforest Information Centre

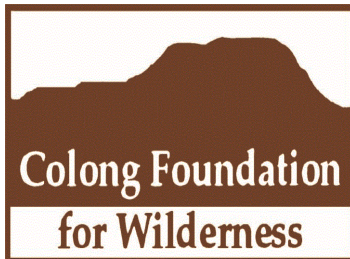
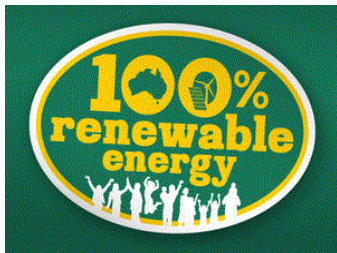
Ryde Gladesville Climate Change Action Group.

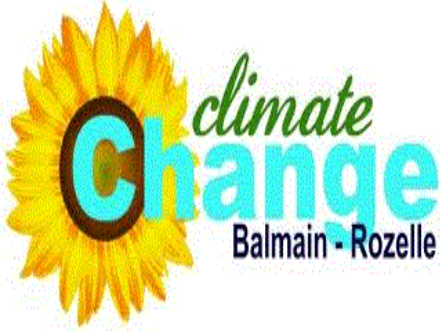
SEE-CHANGE

South East Region Conservation Alliance

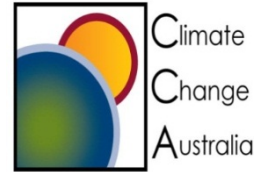
South East Forest Rescue

The Wilderness Society





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Clarence Branch