

LETTER TO ANDREW WILKIE (MP), OAKESHOTT PROPOSAL RE NATIVE FOREST BIOMASS ELECTRICITY ELIGIBILITY TO EARN RECS. HEATHER KENWAY, 16.02.12

Dear Mr Wilkie

I am very concerned at the attempt by industry and the Coalition Parties to use native forest biomass for energy generation. And all the more concerned by the proposal now from your Independent colleague Rob Oakeshott to put a motion in the House of Representatives to disallow the proposed new regulation that would make burning native forest wood biomass for electricity generation ineligible to earn RECs. I ask you not to support this measure, and to use your influence with your colleagues to ensure that it cannot slide quickly through the House virtually without consideration.

Attached are two recent explanatory comments by forestry industry economist Judith Ajani and climate law expert Andrew Macintosh, both from ANU, on why this proposal is bad policy, that will seriously weaken the effectiveness of the package of climate measures agreed in the Climate Change Multi-Party Committee and the Senate.

Here in the South East of NSW we have had plenty of experience in seeing what the "its only waste" argument meant. In the Eden Regional Forest Agreement area it means that over 90% of near clear felled compartments, with perfectly healthy trees, many of sawlog standard, are treated as waste and sent to the Eden chipmill (South East Fibre Exports) for the export woodchip market. Overlogging over decades to the point where Forests NSW could not meet its wood supply commitments, and was sued by Boral in the north east, and before the GFC struggled to supply the Eden chipmill in the south east.

The Eden chipmill is operating at a loss; the Japanese market for woodchips has shrunk and potential buyers in other countries would buy only at even lower prices than the Japanese.

This issue is important for all of Australia not just the SE of NSW. There are many more proposals in the pipeline, a number in Tasmania.

Please do not breathe new life into this damaging, failing industry by allowing it to earn RECs from native wood fired electricity generation. Native forest logging is close to collapse, rapidly overtaken by the plantation supplies buyers prefer. Australia has plenty of plantation wood for almost all of its domestic and export needs: it does not need to import wood from illegally logged rainforest from overseas, as claimed by the industry. The plantation sector is profitable, has the lion's share of the processing industries, and can improve productivity. It is the future of the forestry industry and jobs in it. The transition out of native forest logging is manageable.

Native forests cannot recover from industrial scale logging in anything like the time-frames within which the scientist say we need to act to avoid catastrophic climate change. Many would dispute that they are renewable in the full sense of the term after losing soil and the wildlife and micro-organisms needed to keep them healthy. Logging native forest is not carbon neutral, the emissions are simply not included in Kyoto based reporting; it is only "deemed" to be carbon neutral by Governments that have not developed the native forest carbon accounts (though work is now being done by agencies and academics). It

will compete unfairly with solar and wind power that are genuinely renewable sources of energy.

Please do not support Mr Oakeshott's proposal, and please do your best to ensure that the Opposition cannot take advantage of absences from the House to gain its approval.

Yours sincerely

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