

Letter to Mr O'Farrell from Prue Acton August 2009

Dear Mr. O'Farrell

I write to you as a member and spokesperson for South East Region Conservation Alliance Incorporated (SERCA) which represents over a dozen environment groups on the south coast of New South Wales; we are also a founding member of the newly formed Australian Forests and Climate Alliance (AFCA)

Regarding Climate change and policies that the Liberal Party plans to take to the next election:

- It is not enough to cut fossil and waste emissions; we must draw down CO₂ from the atmosphere and prevent acidification of the oceans and potential degassing adding to already high atmospheric greenhouse gasses.
- Forests are the best way of doing this, quickly and cheaply - the science is confirmed –our southeast forests are the most carbon dense, more than the tropical forests we all rightly are trying to save. Yet here in NSW as well as in Victoria and Tasmania, we continue to degrade native forests using industrial logging practices: virtually clear felling, burning off and ever shorter rotations, turning many into single species, single aged production forests, plantations by any other name.
- SERCA recognizes the vital role of native forests in storing and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and therefore rejects any use of native forest wood, whether described as waste or otherwise, for woodchips and for the generation of electricity or production of biofuels.
- With the passage of the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) legislation in August 2009, biomass projects around Australia are set to precede using native forest wood “waste” as fuel.
- The Eden chipmill, for example is currently preparing an Environmental Assessment for Section 3A approval by the Minister for Planning. Fuel for this plant will be 71% native forest wood, which is only be available because the mill is chipping and exporting a million tonnes of native forest trees each year. What “adds fuel to the fire”, Forest NSW is losing money supporting the profits of the Nippon Paper mill by around \$8ml per annum.
- The industry nationally is working to get the policy go ahead to burn the native forest wood that is currently chipped. In some regions this can be as high as 95% of the timber felled.

We ask for your assurance that your party will not support the planning application for the Eden chip mill or changing the legislation against using woodchips as fuel. Your own member was helpful in bringing this important safe guard legislation, after massive public protest actions against the proposed charcoal mill near Mogo.

We ask you to seriously consider the science, economics and the social and environmental advantages of stopping the practice of woodchipping: for paper, biomass or biofuels.

I have asked Andrew Constance to forward this letter and SERCA Information Pack to you after our SERCA briefing to him on Tuesday 24 August.

Yours sincerely

Prue Acton www.serca-online.org