

MEDIA RELEASE: OAKESHOTT THROWS LIFELINE TO WOODCHIPPERS, FRIENDS OF THE NCEC, SUSIE RUSSELL, 13.02.12

“Rob Oakeshott's decision to inflict a whole new round of devastation on forests around the country is heartless” said NCEC President and long-time forest activist Susie Russell.

Mr Oakeshott, Federal Member for Lyne, announced on Thursday that he was planning to move a motion in Federal Parliament to allow native forest 'waste' burnt in power stations to get renewable energy credits.

“It is incredible that Mr Oakeshott can believe that current forest management around Australia is sustainable.

“In Tasmania some of the biggest, tallest trees in the world are still being felled. In Victoria, conservationists have the State Forestry agency in court again for trying to destroy the last patches of habitat of Victoria's state emblem the Leadbeater's Possum. And in NSW, forests are being cut faster than they can regrow in order to meet unsustainable wood supply contracts. This is leading to many breaches of environmental laws but the public has no legal right to pursue these breaches in court and the Government regulator has no teeth.

“Most Australians want the vandalism of our forests to stop.

“And yet Mr Oakeshott plans to throw vandals a lifeline. If his motion is successful not only will forests be woodchipped and fed into the power stations, it will be called 'green'.

“In our region for example, koala habitat will be destroyed and consumers will be asked to pay extra for it as 'green power'. In fact, there is nothing renewable about it – it is dead koala power that consumers do not want and do not need.

“Mr Oakeshott needs to get out in to the forests across Australia and see what impact the last forest 'waste' industry has had. We were told woodchipping would only take the 'forest waste that would otherwise be left on the forest floor', but it instead it takes whole trees.

“Mr Oakeshott said he was acting on his conscience when he helped pass the Clean Energy Act last year, but this move will dramatically undermine clean energy in Australia. Destroying native forests results in major carbon emissions because old trees store large amounts of carbon which takes hundreds of years to replace once logged.

“We are asking Mr Oakeshott to come on an urgent inspection of local forests with us to hear the concerns of the local community before he goes through with his motion. We believe it is crucial that he understands that the results of his motion will be widespread forest destruction,” Ms Russell said.

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