

The Director
Renewable Electricity Markets Team
Department of Climate Change
GPO Box 854
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Fax 02 6274 2970
Email: RET@climatechange.gov.au

Submission by Prue Acton on draft legislation on the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target scheme currently under consideration by the COAG Working Group on Climate Change and Water.

Native forests are not 'renewable'.

Under no circumstances should native forests be burnt in furnaces to create electricity.

The time frame for recovery after logging is 80 years to replace carbon and water and 200 years for essential hollows for gliders; these ancient and unique forests have developed remarkable relationships, i.e., soil mycorrhizal fungi - 7000 types - associated with eucalypts which can be lost in repeated loggings and burning regimes.

Natural, native forests continue to evolve and sequester carbon, especially in their soils, for at least 800 years. Other long time frame eco-systems, such as peat are not considered as renewable; native forests must also be excluded.

In such a short time Australians had cleared 50% of her forests and 75% of woodlands. Only 10% of the continent is covered by Reserves and these are mainly on poor soils and steep slopes. The very integrity of native forests is at risk and their ability to adapt to hotter and drier conditions. The eastern areas were once well covered by rainforests, cool, wet and wonderful - no longer - putting rainfall, water supplies and carbon sequestration at risk.

The remaining native forests are degraded, with the carbon dense, southeast forests at 40% of their carbon carrying capacity. Why? For greed and in ignorance of their true values, all in spite of clear scientific evidence.

Native forests are essential for the continuation of life on earth

- 35% of anthropogenic atmospheric carbon comes from deforestation and degradation.
- Native forests are our best, cheapest and quickest way to cut emissions, cool the planet and increase water supplies; why even consider any more uses for this precious and irreplaceable natural system.
- Historically, Australians have viewed forests as timber for human use; no blame- we all use timber products. Now science tells us how critical forests are for atmospheric balance and the interconnection with plants, CO2 and animals, oxygen.
- Our sense of beauty and wonderment at the resilience and unique qualities of Australian species, including the soil mechanisms surely tells us that natural forests are essential to the continuation of life on earth, as we know it.

Native forests should not be used for burning in furnaces to create electricity, whether as 'renewable' energy or as 'waste'.

- Already trial shipments of Tasmanian native forests have gone to Japan - enough!
- The majority of the public does not like wood chipping native forests (up to 94%) and is horrified at proposals to log and burn forests for electricity generation. NSW and VICTORIAN people have spoken. Politicians should not undermine public trust. Do not listen to Industry and State Forestry, as they are obviously vested interests.
- Native forests logging emissions are counted as zero, for ETS purposes, despite current industrialized methods of logging responsible for 7% GHG. This is leading to perverse outcomes here as it has already done in developing countries rainforests.
- If native forests were considered as 'renewable', they will under price true renewable energy such as solar, wind and bio-thermal.

- Wood fired furnaces are not emissions free – a new coal fired plant produces less emissions; wood fired plants produce dangerous particulates putting local communities at risk.
- If you must burn trees for electricity, use the taxpayer subsidized plantation glut. However, Australia has ancient, tired soils that need nutrients returned to the soil.
- Forests make rain; In the south, there is lower rainfall after tree removal and lower stream flows caused in part by plantations, and regrowth native forests, which suck up precious water during the early growing stages; up to 40% of runoff is lost.
- Australia does not have, as do some northern hemisphere countries, 60% or so forest cover, high rainfalls, rich soils and no continuing threat of bush fires. These forests are also degraded however- only 30% are 'primary' and these sequester 10% of the world's fossil fuel emissions.

Chip logs extraction is driving logging rather than high quality saw logs.

- SEFE needs to sell one million tonnes of woodchips to collect the 'waste' to fuel its proposed bio- energy plant. This is double the amount sold prior to RFA's. 71% of the fuel is proposed to come from manufacturing 'waste.' The financial downturn has put recent high volume sales of at risk.
- In most areas servicing the Eden chip mill, logging rotations are as low as 15 years; this mean only trees such as silver top ash monocultures are growing. These not suitable for high quality sawlogs. Which end use is driving managed native forestry?
- Royalties have not kept up with inflation and yields have halved. For the sake of very few jobs and little revenue plus declining yields, Victorian and New South Wales taxpayers are propping up a Japanese owned company's profits, when existing MIS hard wood plantation supplies can be used for virtually all Australia's domestic and export timber uses.
- Tourism and downstream businesses, such as oyster growers and fishing are adversely affected by siltation caused by industrialized logging; loss of water supplies from regrowing forests, is up to 40%, affecting water tables, stream and river flows.
- NSW RFA's are now almost 5 years overdue; State Politicians and Forestry NSW, etc. cannot hide behind RFA's much longer, with the loss of the resilience of bio-diversity and increased fire proneness of regrowth, water catchment losses, costs to business, taxpayers and ratepayers plus loss of amenity.
- Providing Forestry and Chippers with a secondary income stream to cover up their losses is not defensible.
- Government policies favoring new truly renewable and clean, green industries in the regions as well as the cities will make Australia's new low carbon economy strong

Change we can - from *man against nature* and recognize the true value of Australia's ancient native forests.

Change we must, from attitudes where we can even consider burning native forests for electricity- they are not renewable in any time frame - to recognizing the value of these forests for oxygen, rain, water, carbon, and the beauty of resilient, species diverse, self regenerating eco-systems.

This change is good for Australia, and it's not difficult. Governments can make it happen and quickly.

All states should repudiate burning native forests as renewable bio-energy or waste from all sources.

No native forests electricity generation or bio-fuels, no way.

Prue Acton O.B.E. Dr. of Arts honoris causa RMIT University

"Many Swans" 1476 Sapphire Coast Drive

Wallagoot NSW 2550

ph./fax 0264945144

m. 0419393203

prue.acton@bigpond.com