

INFORMATION BRIEF FROM THE SOUTH EAST REGIONAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE,
PRUE ACTON, SPOKESPERSON 12.02.2012

This week Bega Council approved Australia's first native forest wood pellet plant. Nippon Paper now owns the Eden woodchip mill which 40 years ago was the first woodchip mill, producing 5000 tonnes which has since grown to one million tones.

This "pilot" approval was immediately followed by announcements that they will expand the plant whilst conservationists called for a market campaign against "Dead Koala Pellets". Currently Nippon's SEFE company employs 80 people.

The native forest sector is desperate for new markets - they see burning forests as their life line.

The building and paper Industry has moved to plantations; the Japanese prefer plantations and China and Korea can buy cheaper from SE Asia and Brazil..

Public forests which supply chip logs to Nippon Paper are logged under RFA's, which cannot be legally challenged yet do not cover climate or water; despite the Hawke Review, they are not covered by EPBC Act so species such as the last 30 coastal koalas in the far south coast are in danger of extinction from logging.

Rob Oakeshott, backed by Tony Windsor has called for native forests to be eligible to be burnt as renewable energy.

This is one of Australia's most subsidized industries, yet Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor want them further subsidized under as Renewable energy programs. Why go against scientists and economists who argue against burning native forests for power or heat? The electrical retailers call it "dead koala power" and won't touch it.

Native forests are not renewable in any reasonable time frame - to quote Ken Henry, then Secretary to Treasury. It takes hundreds of years to restore carbon, water and biodiversity lost from logging.

Native forests are worth more in the ground as carbon stores than as energy which is several times more polluting than dirty coal fired power.

At least 7% of Australia's GHGs come from logging native forests, yet under Kyoto rules Australia counts them as carbon neutral. SERCA calls for honest Carbon accounting; giving forests renewable energy subsidies and credits would undercut true renewables such as wind, wave and solar. 90% of trees in SE NSW are wood chipped; Nippon Paper's chip mill is responsible for producing effectively 3% of GHGs.

SERCA calls on governments to join the CMFEU, to stop industrial scale logging, and move to plantations and recycling for timber and fibre, and to resist this scientifically unfounded move to burn native forests as renewable energy.

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