



25 October 2018

Martijn Wilder,
Chairman,
Australian Renewable Energy Agency,
GPO Box 643, Canberra ACT 2601,
arena@arena.gov.au,

GRANT TO BORAL TIMBER FOR BIOFUELS STUDY

Dear Mr Wilder,

I am writing to voice the concern of the Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN) about the decision of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to give a \$500,000 grant to Boral Timber. ([Media Release, 24 August 2018](#))

It is understood the \$500,000 grant has been given to Boral Timber to investigate the feasibility of building a biofuels refinery using the waste sawmill residues from the Boral Timber Hardwood Sawmill at Herons Creek near Port Macquarie.

Labor and LEAN support the proliferation of genuinely renewable resources which are compliant with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Projects such as the one at Port Macquarie are not compliant with these principles.

We do not believe this is an appropriate use of the taxpayers money:

- (1) Biofuels using timber from this resource on the NSW Mid-North Coast are not sustainable due to the impact on local flora and fauna, most notably koalas.
- (2) Labor is opposed to the burning of native forest timber and cleared vegetation for electricity production and by implication other forms of fuel.

The burning of native forest timber is not a clean and renewable energy and forms no part of a credible strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Upon election, and under the New South Wales Labor Platform¹, a state Labor government will reinstate the prohibition on burning native forests and cleared vegetation for electricity.

¹ The NSW ALP Platform 2017 states in Chapter 1, paragraph 80, *Burning of native forest timber and cleared vegetation for electricity production is not clean or renewable energy, and forms no part of a credible strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Labor will reinstate the prohibition on burning native forests and cleared vegetation for electricity.*

Labor has taken a strong stand on this issue in federal parliament as well. It was the Labor government that removed the burning of native forest timber out of the renewable energy scheme some years ago. It was inserted originally under the Howard government. Labor has opposed attempts to reinsert native wood waste under the Abbott and Turnbull Governments. Labor takes the view that native wood waste is neither clean nor renewable, in the sense that term is used in the modern parlance for the renewable energy.

Further, Labor is greatly concerned about the welfare of forests and their inhabitants. The decision of NSW Liberal and National Government to clearfell 140,000 hectares of forests on the state's mid-north and north coasts from Taree to Grafton is an environmental catastrophe. The North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) believes the very survival of koalas in the region is threatened by increases in logging intensity and extensions of timber contracts. Further, they estimate approximately 50 per cent of the region's koala population has been lost since the late 1990's. The koala population is not going to increase with the removal of more trees. Further, much of the Heron's Creek catchment are examples of high quality koala habitat, as identified by NSW Department of Primary Industry.

The Boral Timber contract runs until 2028. If this intensive logging in these areas continues for that time, there will be few koalas left in the area. With younger forests, there will be less habitat; less water for the catchment; less carbon storage and it will be more fire prone as smaller in diameter trees have less fire resilience than larger tree trunks. The NSW Chief Scientist in her report on koalas in NSW called for a study into the impacts of 'regeneration harvesting' on koalas. This is yet to occur.

Logging koala habitat to create bio-fuels does not pass the 'pub test' of what Australians imagine renewable energy to be.

Given the concerns about the legitimacy of burning forest timber as a 'clean and green' technology; knowing the devastating impact the supply of timber will have on flora and fauna, most notably koalas, and recognising the increased fire threat to life and property from forestry practises, LEAN calls on ARENA to reverse its decision to fund this study by Boral and invest funds into legitimate renewable and sustainable technologies.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicity Wade". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

FELICITY WADE

National Convenor

Labor Environment Action Network