

Letter to the Editor, 1 June 2010

To: Eden Magnet, Merimbula Weekly News, Bega District News, Batemans Bay Post, Snowy River Mail, Bairnsdale Advertiser, Gippsland Times, Latrobe Valley Express

Biomass Myths Spread By Anti-Everything Groups

On 1 June Shelly Nundra, also known as Michelle Barnes, spoke on ABC Gippsland Radio on behalf of a group known as Native Forests Not Furnaces.

This latest group aims to deprive communities of renewable energy and jobs and hinder governments from reaching their 20% renewable energy targets through its opposition to the timber industry and use of timber residue to fuel biomass power stations.

Three wood biomass plants are proposed in Australia; one in WA, another in the Huon Valley in Tasmania and the third at the Eden woodchip mill all utilising wood waste that has been purchased by processing mills. Waste is currently either incinerated on site or sold as garden products, whereby it rots down and releases to the atmosphere as the greenhouse gas methane.

Shelly Nundra's group is part of a coalition of anti-timber activists including Environment East Gippsland, Chipstop, SERCA, CONSACT and The Wilderness Society. The groups are using former ABC gardening presenter Peter Cundall as its celebrity face. The local timber industry has no "celebrity", just the faces of hardworking local harvesting and haulage crews and timber processing workers.

Australia has 10 years to reach its 20% renewable energy target. Already there is widespread opposition to wind generators which, because of their numbers, can ruin the amenity and view of entire landscapes. Solar power is in its infancy as there are no large scale power stations under construction in Australia.

The International Energy Association estimates that by 2030 15% of world primary energy will come from biomass compared to 9% for other renewable energy sources.

One of the groups organising the "action" is The Wilderness Society (TWS). This organisation has grown its revenue from \$4,067,000 in 2002 to \$15,900,000 in 2009 on the back of opposition to anything to do with native forest harvesting. It can be assumed that the "action" is driven by the need to continue to grow their revenue base.

The current action is designed purely to upset the planning process for SEFE's Eden power plant. This plant will utilise the company's own wood waste as well as that from other mills in SE NSW and Cann River.

All of these groups are smearing the biomass power industry with a litany of lies but refuse to acknowledge the facts: the Eden biomass power plant will utilise only mill waste and there is NO proposal in place for a similar plant in East Gippsland, just public discussion.

You can safely conclude if you read or hear anything about biomass power plants from names listed on the joint media release from the aforementioned groups – Jill Redwood (EEG), Noel Plumb (Chipbusters), Harriet Swift (Chipstop), Luke Chamberlain (TWS) or Prue Acton (SERCA) then it will portray a jaundiced view.

What we do not know is why, as so-called conservationists, they truly oppose a proven and growing form of renewable energy and are so hell-bent on denying the benefits from it to their own communities.

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