

**'Will Australia Vote for Climate Change Action that is Logging and Burning its Native Forests?'**

Tonight 15<sup>th</sup> April, key representatives of major parties, Independent Kerryn Phelps and ex Liberal Prime Minister Dr John Hewson discuss *'Is Australia Ready for an Election on Climate Change?'* as panelists at a Sydney event hosted by Bioenergy Australia.

Bioenergy Australia, now chaired by John Hewson, is an industry lobby group that includes proponents of burning native forest wood as a 'renewable' energy. According to Frances Pike, Co-ordinator of the Australian Forests and Climate Alliance, (AFCA)

"Bioenergy Australia allows industry to perpetuate the simplistic argument that because trees regrow they will re-absorb the carbon emitted to the atmosphere when they are burnt. **But that won't be in our lifetimes.**

"If an industry group that considers it's ok to burn native forests – our nation's and the world's carbon stores and sinks - as a coal substitute, feeds such mis-information into a serious discussion on climate change tonight, then Australia isn't ready to vote about climate change. The prefix 'bio' might sound nice in front of the word energy, but it can't change the fact that emissions from burning wood exceed those from coal. Forest bioenergy is a con job.

"People need to understand the immense political power the logging industry exerts on climate-energy policy. It's not less than the mining lobby. It's mandatory for Coalition leaders to have dinners with the logging industry and re-affirm access to the nation's native forests between and before elections.

"Last December a trade delegation went to Japan to spruik the availability of Australian forests for export to supply the international wood pellet trade, where corporations can profit from subsidies provided by corrupt carbon accounting loopholes whereby burning wood is deemed renewable because trees re-grow.

"The world's scientists have told governments repeatedly: forest bioenergy is highly dangerous. Since large-scale bioenergy increased in Europe, global forest degradation emissions have doubled. (1) Governments ignore the science because they claim that by increasing renewables (and counting burning wood in this category) they're acting on climate change. So they are burning the world's forests, increasing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, destroying biodiversity, reducing water supplies and facilitating desertification.

A primary school child knows wood combustion releases CO<sub>2</sub> to atmosphere. Forest bioenergy is political opportunism, rapidly hastening the rate at which we enter a dangerous burning, drying and dying world.

80 organisations endorse a National Position Statement against Forest Bioenergy which AFCA will release this week. Six sane political parties, multiple independents, all major conservation and climate change groups including the Climate Council and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, and thousands of scientists, insist logging and burning the nation's forests not proceed. It is more than policy corruption. It is ecocide.

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance asks that Labor re-visit its former rejection of the forest bioenergy scam and go further, actively protect forests. The Coalition have made it clear they won't be listening. Meanwhile people, hearing the science and informed by their own common sense, are signing on, for sanity and survival.

<https://www.bioenergyaustralia.org.au/news/15th-april-panel-lunch-is-australia-ready-for-an-election-on-cli/>

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<sup>1</sup> From an average of 0.4 Gt CO<sub>2</sub> yr<sup>-1</sup> in the period 1991–2000 to an average of 1.0 Gt CO<sub>2</sub> yr<sup>-1</sup> for 2011–2015Ibid, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/j9345e/j9345e07.htm>. Note, this is unrelated to deforestation for agriculture; it is a forest degradation, not a deforestation statistic.