

17. From North Coast Residues: A project undertaken as part of the 2023 North Coast Forestry Project,

1.2 Forest harvest residues: 1.2.1 Native forests - Public

“For native forests, residue estimations were conservative, as we only considered logs that met the specifications for pulpwood as available for extraction (typically 10 cm small end diameter overbark, and a minimum of 2.5 m in length – no species restrictions – and the crown was typically left in the forest). This was partly due to the fact that the local industry already has experience harvesting and transporting pulpwood from the forest.”

Though it is made clear that whole trees are defined as residue, in the same document claims are made that using “biomass that would have otherwise been left in the forest to burn and/or decay” demonstrates the GHG benefits of this technology. A ‘carbon neutral/ residue’ argument is promulgated by state forest agencies to draw attention away from the intention to use whole trees to supply the bioenergy market.

“Although many studies demonstrate the GHG benefits of using forestry residues for energy generation, others argue that this practice does not result in GHG benefits, with some claiming worse outcomes than the use of coal for electricity generation. The greenhouse gas balance carried out here clearly shows that, from a climate perspective, using biomass that would have otherwise been left in the forest to burn and/or decay for bioenergy generation results in positive outcomes, especially if biomass is used to produce electricity displacing the use of coal. This is true even when the carbon dioxide emissions from burning the biomass to generate energy are included in the calculations. In practice, the CO₂ released will be reabsorbed by the growing of trees in a sustainable harvest system, eventually negating the impact of such emissions”. p.3, North Coast Residues: A project undertaken as part of the 2023 North Coast Forestry Project, Published by the NSW Department of Primary Industries, November 2017. Authors: Fabiano Ximenes, Rebecca Coburn, Michael McLean, John Samuel, Nick Cameron, Brad Law, Caragh Threllfall, Kate Wright and Shane Macintosh