

MEDIA RELEASE

31 August 2018



BORAL DIESEL BITUMEN PLANT DEPENDENT ON ONGOING NATIVE FOREST DESTRUCTION

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance (AFCA) condemns Taxpayer funds being handed to BORAL by outgoing energy Minister Josh Frydenberg for a feasibility study into a diesel/ bitumen plant based on native forest biomass 'residue'.

AFCA spokeswoman, Frances Pike said, "Key to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency grant are the terms 'waste' and 'residue'. This is how the NSW Department of Industry (DPI) described trees of north coast native forests when spruiking that they be burnt for power in November 2017.¹

Close examination of its 'residue report' reveals 'waste' and 'residue' can include whole logs, trees from native forest trees that will never get a chance to mature.²

"The proposed diesel/bitumen plant is dependent on industrial logging of native forests continuing for decades to come. This is despite the fact that a 2017 map shows the continent's forests in peril.³ Most pre-1800 forest no longer exists and what remains is mostly highly degraded. The consensus of scientific opinion is that industrial logging should end, now.

"Presumably BORAL has secured renewed long term access to NSW native forests via a recent wood supply agreement with the NSW government. Without having secured that access, this BORAL grant wouldn't be feasible.

Early this year NSW DPI issued Expressions of Interest for hundreds of thousands of tonnes of NSW forests, ignoring thousands of submissions against renewal of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) that legitimise NSW native forest logging.⁴

"BORAL has been progressing its planned entry to the 'biofutures' market⁵ despite warnings by scientists not to permit native forests as raw material for the dangerous wood to fuel/energy industry. In 2012 scientists clearly explained this use of native forests would increase CO2 emissions.

"Gifting half a million dollars to BORAL for a native forest based diesel/bitumen facility under the guise of 'renewable energy' is misgovernance, based on fallacious arguments that native forest wood energy/fuel is 'renewable' because 'trees regrow', and the assumption that the biomass is derived from 'sustainably' logged native forests.

"It will take hundreds of years of uninterrupted regrowth to restore native forests to their optimum carbon sequestration and storage capacity; time this planet doesn't have. Australia is a world leader in

¹<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/media-centre/releases/2017/north-coast-forests-offer-untapped-bioenergy-opportunity>

² https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/747672/North-coast-residues-report.pdf

³ Map – attached, courtesy Wilderness Society Australia

⁴ https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/747672/North-coast-residues-report.pdf

⁵ https://www.boral.com/sites/corporate/files/media/field_document/Issue%201%2C%202016.pdf

native forest degradation; globally, carbon emissions from forest degradation doubled between 2011 and 2015.⁶

“As of 2009, 70 per cent of what remains of Australia’s original forests was ecologically degraded.⁷ By 2016 Australian and international scientists called **on all levels of Australian government to immediately halt further forest and woodland destruction.**⁸ A Senate enquiry is underway - right now - into Australia’s extinction crisis.⁹ This is the enormity of the forest climate crisis we face.

“In 2016 Frydenberg determined to strip 1.2 billion dollars from ARENA and withdraw its grant funding mechanisms.¹⁰ But he found time in his last week as Environment and Energy Minister to endorse this ARENA grant to advance a project that could see BORAL meet up to 15% of its annual diesel consumption from logging imperilled native forests ecosystems.¹¹

“BORAL’s Timber’s native forest diesel refinery/bitumen manufacturing plant might assist BORAL’s financial sustainability of BORAL’s but it will be at the expense of the country’s *most efficient carbon sink and storage facility* that could be ours - for free – if we stopped logging it out of existence.”

Frances Pike

AFCA

0448899684

⁶ Forest degradation emissions increased from an average of 0.4 Gt CO₂ yr⁻¹ in the period 1991–2000 to an average of 1.0 Gt CO₂ yr⁻¹ for 2011–2015, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4470e.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090728102301.htm>

⁸ Scientists’ Declaration: Accelerating Forest, Woodland And Grassland Destruction in Australia <http://scboceania.org/policystatements/landclearing/>

⁹ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Faunalextinction

¹⁰ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/frydenberg-to-push-ahead-with-repeal-of-arena-grant-funding-39600/>

¹¹ <http://www.portnews.com.au/story/5603796/minister-to-inspect-potential-biofuel-refinery-site/>