

Mill boss meets MP over energy

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Luke Horton

THE operator of a local timber mill is concerned the industry is not being included in the debate on renewable energy options and solutions.

Australian Solar Timbers (AST) director Douglas Head said the timber industry was the only carbon positive industry in the country but was not being recognised as such.

“Internationally biomass represents 77 per cent of renewables,” he said.

“It’s one disadvantage is the production of carbon dioxide.”

He said the two most frequently talked about renewable energy sources - wind and solar power - represented just a small fraction of renewable energy production in Australia while the leading renewable energy source - biomass - was nearly 10 times more productive but was almost never discussed.

Mr Head said without increasing production the energy AST could generate through a wood-fired power plant at its Kempsey factory would be sufficient to power both the Macleay and Port Macquarie-Hastings.

But he said the country’s current political climate meant biomass was being ignored as a renewable energy source - particularly woody biomass.

“I think there’s been a deliberate attempt to suppress information about biomass and its potential,” he said.

Mr Head met with Lyne MP Rob Oakeshott to discuss industry fears that the current political landscape was not capturing the full potential of forestry to reduce national emissions through carbon farming initiatives.

“I was happy that Rob made time to hear AST’s concerns and how it would affect our business and the industry as a whole,” Mr Head said.

“I was also pleased to hear that industry concern was not how Rob considered matters would eventuate and that he expected forestry and the timber industry could play an important role in decreasing carbon emissions and capturing carbon.

“Rob requested further specific detail of where industry felt legislative conflict may be present and undertook to test the validity of these fears.”

Ultimately, Mr Head hopes woody biomass will be considered as a legitimate renewable energy source.

“My hope is the legislators will say woody biomass can be used as long as it comes from certified forest,” he said.

A summary of Mr Head’s concerns has been forwarded to Mr Oakeshott’s office for consideration.