

**MEDIA RELEASE: PELLET PLANT APPROVAL, KEITH HUGHES, 08.02.2012**

Greens Councillor, Keith Hughes has expressed dismay at today's approval by the Bega Valley Shire Council for a wood pellet plant at the Eden chipmill.

Councillor Hughes, who was one of only 2 councillors who opposed the pellet plant, said that the decision was short sighted, reckless and defied public opinion.

"Shire ratepayers are already facing a possible huge legal bill for earlier shortcomings in the decision making process and I am disappointed that they were so willing to approve this highly controversial plant today.

"I presented a petition signed by more than 730 people today but it was ignored by the majority of councillors."

These signatures were collected in just a few days and while overwhelming are from Bega Valley residents, many were from neighbouring regions and from many overseas countries.

Councillor Hughes said if the pellet plant bolsters the industry as the woodchippers expect, it will intensify the destruction of the remaining regional native forests.

"Woodchipping has been boasting record levels of export sales in the past five years but the recent market collapse has encouraged the industry to look for salvation in dirty, destructive ways to burn native forest and package them as "renewable" energy," he said.

Contact: Keith Hughes

Greens Councillor Bega Valley Shire

0466 338 742