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NATIVE FORESTS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A BARGAINING CHIP, SAYS CONSERVATION GROUP

The Australian Forests and Climate Alliance (AFCA) today expressed deep concern over the proposed inclusion of native forest biomass in the Renewable Energy Target.

"It seems our forests have become a bargaining chip between the Coalition government and Labor to come to an agreed Renewable Energy Target", said Lorraine Bower of the Australian Forests and Climate Alliance.

"The Coalition government should not be supporting this destructive industry. We applaud the Labor opposition for standing firm on their opposition."

"This proposal is clearly aimed at propping up a dying native forest logging industry with a new and more rapacious reason to keep logging – now that export woodchipping is out of favour", said Ms Bower.

"It is not renewable energy" said Frances Pike of AFCA. "It is a dirty way to generate electricity, and both the logging and the burning of forests result in large CO2 emissions[1] , totally opposite to the intention of the Renewable Energy Target. Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) would give perverse incentives for both, on top of the large subsidies already given for logging".

"If this new use of native forests is backed by Renewable Energy Certificates, power companies will demand on-going and increasing access to public forests that are already severely degraded from over-logging, said Ms Pike."

"Decades of over-logging of public native forests has led to environmental degradation of vast tracts of native forest, loss of water yields from catchments and rain-making capacity. Australia now faces a wildlife crisis in many regions, and loss of habitat from logging is a major cause. The last thing we now need is forests being degraded and destroyed as a source of power production" said Ms Pike.

For comment
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[1] *Re-evaluation of forest biomass carbon stocks and lessons from the world's most carbon-dense forests. Heather Keith, Brendan G. Mackey and David B. Lindenmayer, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, vol. 106 no. 28, March 2009 http://www.pnas.org/content/106/28/11635.full*