

MEDIA RELEASE: Bushfire grants to the Eden chipmill “a tragic waste of money and opportunity.”

More than a million dollars in grants to the Eden woodchipping industry is a tragic waste of opportunity and money, according to the South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA).

Spokesperson, Harriett Swift was commenting on federal Government “Bushfire Recovery” grants [announced today \[Tuesday\] by Senator Jim Molan](#).

She said that while the justification for the grants is to “to support local economic recovery after the fires”, the cash to the chipmill relates to projects announced last year or earlier, well before the bushfires.

Ms Swift said that a grant of \$945,240 to “South East Fibre Exports” for a **“power upgrade for major SEFE Industry Development in Edrom, NSW” will enable the chipmill** to upgrade electricity infrastructure associated with its new manufacturing facilities for briquettes and pallets.

The other grant of \$180,500 is for a “Pallet Collar Production Line Upgrade.”

Allied Natural Wood Exports (ANWE), the chipmill owners [has had plans](#) to build a facility like this as far back as August 2018.

“To bankroll it now, with bushfire recovery funds is outrageous.”

Ms Swift said that ANWE had applied to the Bega Valley Shire Council for Development Approval for the new processing facilities at the chipmill back in March.

If the Government wants to help the far south coast recover from bushfires there are plenty of better ways to do that, in Eden and other towns.

“Woodchipping is not a major employer and its whole future is under a cloud since the summer bushfires.

“In normal times, the arts and sport employ more people in the region than forestry does.

“There is no justification for squandering taxpayers’ money on activities that will just lead to more industrial scale destruction of native forests.

“In the shadow of last summer’s bushfires it is beyond belief that our government has singled out the native forest logging industry for this generous treatment.

“With 80 % of State Forest available for logging on the South Coast burnt, business as usual is not an option.

“An expansion of the industry is completely fanciful and should not be supported with taxpayers’ money, especially when that money is desperately needed by other community infrastructure and recovery projects.” Ms Swift said.

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