

The General Manager
Singleton Council
PO Box 314
Singleton NSW 2330
council@singleton.nsw.gov.au

Submission opposing S4.56 Modification to allow use of biomass as a fuel source for Lot: 450 DP: 1119428, 112 Long Point – West Road WARKWORTH. DA 183/1993

I wish to register my strong opposition to the proposal to restart the Redbank Power Station using native forest biomass for energy generation.

I have personally witnessed the devastating impact of logging on our native state forests, driven by so-called “forest residue” from “timber harvesting”, here on the south coast of the state. In the Eden Zone, only a small 2½ % of the volume taken is used for sawlogs, with the rest classed as “residue” and used for woodchips and firewood. A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry recently recommended that native forest biomaterial not be classed as renewable energy or eligible for renewable energy credits as it is not a renewable or sustainable source of energy.

This proposal would burn more than 1 million tonnes of biomass per year and generate more than 2 million tonnes of CO² into the atmosphere each year - this is damaging to the climate right at the time we must urgently reduce emissions. Burning trees for electricity is a driver of climate change, destroying forests that must remain as carbon sinks. We are in climate and extinction emergencies and need to urgently protect our forests and reduce our carbon emissions. Forests are worth more standing: for biodiversity, carbon storage and water catchment integrity.

Burning wood produces more CO² than coal to produce an equivalent amount of electricity. The claims that this energy generation generates net zero emissions relies on the reabsorption of CO² by newly planted trees is not sustainable - even if complied with, it has at the very least a 30-year lag between combustion and absorption. These 30 years are some of the most critical for climate change and reining in carbon emissions, meaning this delay cannot be tolerated or reasonably considered net zero.

Converting a coal fired power station to wood uses more fuel, generates more pollution, has widespread environmental impacts on forests, and involves tens of thousands of truck movements through rural towns and on local roads. Transporting the trees to the furnace will require 70 B-double trucks daily, significantly increasing local congestion and reducing amenity for the surrounding area.

Burning trees for energy also generates significant air pollution including fine particulate matter. The health impacts of these on the community of Singleton are likely to be significant. Singleton LGA has had 10 air quality alerts this September already. Re-opening the Redbank power station will see air quality in the area get worse. Poor air quality is creating serious health issues in the local community.

Western Australia has just banned burning native trees for electricity because of the climate and environmental damage and Singleton Council should reject this proposal for the same reasons.

Sincerely,

Seán Burke
burkesean53@gmail.com