

Submission regarding the EIS for Verdant Earth Technologies to reopen Redbank Power Station burning biomass.

I would like to preface my submission with a brief statement about how angry and frustrated I feel with the greenwashing and sheer dishonesty surrounding biomass burning. It should have been ruled out long ago. In our five-to-midnight climate crisis, it is simply incompatible with reason.

It is chilling that corporations with deep pockets can just keep shooting their hideous propositions up the flagpole, and waiting quite confidently for the day when they will be approved. They don't give a tinker's cuss about the environments and communities they damage. For them, it's only a matter of time and patience until they get what they want... and this is deeply disturbing. This is the process by which we have got into this climate and extinction crisis.

Please do not let your community down. This EIS is full of nonsense. Don't be fooled. Use your own powers of reason and observation. Do not let this biomass burning power plant happen.

MY SUBMISSION

Wake up. We are in a climate crisis.

We have to de-carbonise the economy immediately. We have to stop burning things for energy. Anthropogenic climate change is upon us. We have baulked at the necessary economic change for so long we have literally run out of time. It is entirely possible that in the next 100 years, the mass extinction we are in now will have also eliminated the human species. Are you listening yet?

Burning plants is even worse than burning coal

Burning plants for electricity creates CO₂. And CH₄ and N₂O which are many times more destructive. In fact, it's worse than burning coal because it emits 50% more CO₂ per MWh of energy produced than coal.

The claim of "carbon neutral" or "near carbon zero" is a fallacy - it ignores the time it takes for vegetation to grow back

It takes decades for vegetation to grow back. We don't have that time. Furthermore, Verdant Earth Technologies is proposing to get most of its biomass from "invasive native species" clearing on private land. This clearing is intended to create more agricultural land - there is no intention to replace that vegetation.

Habitat clearing on freehold land is now the biggest cause of environmental loss in NSW

NSW is a biodiversity hotspot - we are in a biodiversity crisis. Accelerated land clearing is the main reason. This project will further exacerbate clearing on private land.

"Invasive Native Species" is still habitat

It may not be pristine, but it still provides habitat and shelter for all manner of creatures. Creating a market for this will exacerbate further clearing. And as cited earlier - there is absolutely no intention to replace this with other vegetation.

SCIENCE CONDEMNS THE BURNING OF BIOMASS

In 2019, 800 scientists from across the world signed a petition condemning burning biomass for energy.

The merchants of doubt kept the tobacco industry scot-free for decades after it was known it was toxic. And it's still legal to buy tobacco. They protected the fossil fuel industries for decades after it was known to be damaging the atmosphere. And they continue to protect it.

We know that large corporations with their own interests at stake are capable of twisting facts, sowing doubt and panic, falsifying information... it's all stock in trade. And yet we continue to allow it to happen. Is it any wonder we are in trouble?

We should listen to independent scientists.

Not scientists who are paid to write reports supporting the vested interests of their clients. The EIS is simply a document written in service to VET. It is not written to serve community, climate or environment.

Serious air quality issues

Air pollutants include particulates, VOCs, methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide, lead, mercury, and a host of other filthy, poisonous things.

Sawmill "waste" is a loophole

There is no limit to the amount of forestry sawmill waste they can burn. The lion's share of logs that are harvested are considered "waste". It's a potentially unregulated source of forest wood.

Can we trust their employment and transport estimates?

It is stock in trade for low job density industries to overstate how valuable they might be in terms of economy and employment, and to downplay their many potential disbenefits.

VET is presenting this as a State Significant Project. As such, this EIS needs to be interrogated by qualified, independent personnel with sufficient high level skills to actually see through the smoke and mirrors.

And assuming this can be done, you need to listen to their findings.

Yours faithfully,
Cherie Saxby
27 March 2024