

I am writing to protest the proposal by Verdant Earth Technologies Limited to restart the disused Redbank Power Station near Singleton by burning 850,000 tonnes of biomass from native forests on either private or public land each year. The original intent was to obtain the biomass from intensified logging operations, yet now it is proposed it will mostly come from land-clearing. This will result in significant increases in the rate of land-clearing, at a time when it should stop.

There is nothing ecologically sustainable about clearing tens of thousands of hectares of native vegetation inhabited by millions of native animals, and converting it into carbon dioxide to worsen climate heating. Unbelievably the company is claiming the 1.3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> released when the wood is burnt doesn't really exist. To make matter even worse the company also claims it is clean and green because there are no emissions what-so-ever.

- We're in a climate crisis, and we must de-carbonise the economy immediately. Whichever way you cut it, burning carbon (plants) for electricity creates CO<sub>2</sub> (and incidentally, CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O which are many times more destructive). In fact, it's worse than burning coal because it emits 50% more CO<sub>2</sub> per MWh of energy produced than coal.
- The claim of 'carbon neutral' (or 'near zero carbon') is a fallacy. It ignores the time it takes to replace the burned carbon, for vegetation to grow back. The time lag from CO<sub>2</sub> emission to recapture can be decades – and we don't have that time. Furthermore, VET is proposing to get most of its biomass from 'invasive native species' (INS) clearing on private land, to create more agricultural land – so there's no intention to replace that vegetation.
- NSW is a biodiversity hotspot, which means we're in a biodiversity crisis. The main reason is accelerated land clearing, which is so poorly regulated that most of the flood of 'unexplained' clearings hasn't been investigated. This project will further accelerate land clearing on private land. Habitat clearing on freehold land is now the biggest cause of environmental loss in NSW.
- 'Invasive native species' create scrub with habitats. Again, accelerating native species clearing by creating a market for the wood will deny animals shelter, feed, and places to breed.
- Investment in this project (whether public or private) undermines investment in genuine renewables such as solar and wind.
- Burning biomass for electricity is increasingly discredited overseas. In 2019, 800 scientists from across the world signed a petition condemning burning biomass for electricity.
- The figures for projected employment created by this project are inflated. They estimate up to 35 full time jobs at the finished plant, plus 56 truck drivers every day and come up with 174 full time jobs. Doing what?
- There are serious air quality issues with burning biomass for electricity. Air pollutants include particulates, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide, lead, mercury, and a host of other goodies.
- There's no limit to the amount of forestry sawmill 'waste' they can burn. A potentially unregulated source of forest wood.
- And then there is 'construction waste' and who knows what ends up in that!
- All the biomass needs to be trucked hundreds of kilometres in B-double trucks. At least 56 arriving (and leaving) every day.
- It's not clean, it's not green and it's not renewable!

In conclusion, we need to reduce our emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, not dramatically increase them as intended by this proposal. The use of solar and wind as alternative power sources need to be considered, rather than just comparing the proposal to coal.

As a citizen I feel compelled to write to express my horror at the prospect of a new wave of land clearing and environmental destruction as vast areas of native forests are burnt for electricity under the pretence that its clean energy.