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Macleay Valley poised to become “Green Power” Valley if wood waste is back in the RET

Australian Solar Timbers (AST), which has led Australia in utilising solar technology to dry hardwoods and produce fine quality timber floors, has called on the Australian Parliament to restore common sense and reinstate native forest wood waste in the Renewable Energy Target.

AST Chairman, Dr Douglas Head said “At AST, in Kempsey, we were poised to innovate again with an Australian designed 10 megawatt co-generative power plant that could supply the entire Macleay Valley with renewable electricity, as well as produce bio char for use as a sustainable agricultural soil enhancer. Regrettably in 2011 the politics of the hung Parliament derailed us, and indeed other similar regional projects designed to reduce carbon emissions sustainably.

Despite the unanimous findings of a 2011 Parliamentary Inquiry, set up and Chaired by Labor, the Greens/ Labor Government decided to remove native forestry operations wood waste from the Renewable Energy system. This action damaged Australian innovators, my workers and was an affront to common sense. It is my hope that Labor in 2015, no longer constrained by the accord with the Greens, can return to its original support for the scientific environmental position, Australian innovation and workers.”

Kempsey Shire Mayor, Liz Campbell said Council supports the recent move to have the Australian Government reinstate native forest wood waste as a renewable energy source. “In recent years, Council supported the initiative proposed by Australian Solar Timbers to use waste timber offcuts as a renewable energy source in building a co-generation plant. Promoting clean energy alternatives not only helps to make our environment safer for future generations, but also helps to grow vitally needed sustainable local businesses within the Macleay,” said Councillor Campbell.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association Mr Ross Hampton said, “Until we grow square trees we will have mountains of offcuts and waste timber. It is common sense to reverse the crazy decision made in 2011 which said that offcuts from trees planted in rows (plantations) is somehow renewable but offcuts from trees in sustainably run natural forest is not. Use of the waste residues from harvesting operations or sawmilling operations would not see a single additional tree cut down. The 120,000 Australians who work in our forest and forest product industries, many in rural communities such as those in the Macleay Valley, are hoping the national Parliament finally corrects this anomaly.”

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

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