

12 February 2015

Senator Muir talks sense on wood waste and bioenergy

Last night, Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party Senator Ricky Muir told the Senate that any deal on the Renewable Energy Target (RET) should include a reinstatement of the use of offcuts and wood waste from sustainable forestry and processing operations as an eligible bioenergy source. Senator Muir has made it clear that he “does not support the clearing and burning of old growth or native forest for the purpose of including it as a source of renewable energy within the RET”.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association, Mr Ross Hampton said “Senator Muir is 100% right to draw attention to this required amendment and the forest industries support his clarification that it is applied to off-cuts and wood waste from regrown natural forests, which are produced as a normal by-product of sustainable forest management practices.”

“Senator Muir’s strong background in Australian sawmilling operations means he is well aware of the vast amount of wood waste and offcuts which are produced by our sustainable forestry and processing operations. There is wide-scale and well-accepted use of such material in Europe and the United States as a renewable bioenergy source which qualifies for renewable energy credits,” said Mr Hampton.

An amendment was made in 2011 such that wood wastes and off-cuts sourced from sustainably managed regrown natural forests were no longer eligible for renewable energy certificates, effectively removing it as an eligible source of bioenergy under the RET.

Mr Hampton said “In parts of Europe they achieve around 10% of their renewable energy needs from biomass. In Australia we sit at less than 1% for electricity. Bioenergy could contribute significantly to our lower carbon future if it was just given an equal chance.”

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

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