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MEDIA STATEMENT

Catholic Religious Australia signs National Position Statement against Forest Bioenergy

Catholic Religious Australia has joined 80 national and state wide organisations, five political parties and many independent election candidates in signing a National Position Statement against Forest Bioenergy.

In the last decade thousands of scientists have written open letters to Australian, European Union and US policy makers stating that per unit of energy, wood emits more carbon to atmosphere than coal.

That has not been enough to halt the trade in wood pellets that has seen vast swathes of the world's forests logged to supply the forest bioenergy trade which replaces coal with wood in power stations.

This industry claims that burning wood instead of coal is carbon neutral because trees regrow, despite the warnings from climate and forest scientists about its immediate impacts.

"Our surviving native forests are in peril from this trade but neither major party is heeding scientific warning," says Monica Cavanagh rsj, President of Catholic Religious Australia (CRA).

The forest bioenergy trade threatens not only Australia's carbon stores and its carbon sink, i.e. its native forests, but the entire planet.

This industry relies on wood pellets from forests. As large-scale wood biomass for electricity and heating took hold in Europe in the last decade when corporations convinced policy makers to call burning wood carbon neutral, these companies were subsidized to burn forest wood instead of coal, as a 'renewable' energy source.

Since forest bioenergy doubled, from 30 Gigawatt in 2007 to over 60 GW in 2017, so have emissions from forest degradation.

As trade in wood pellets is predicted to increase by more than 250% over the next decade Australia's native forests are in peril as never before. Three million tonnes of wood pellets are predicted to be exported from Australia in the next 10 years and it will not be coming from mill residue. Forest agencies pushing the use of native forests to supply this industry admit whole trees are preferred because they're easier to transport to processing centres for export.

"We call on both major parties to change forest policy now before it is too late for all of us," said Sr Monica Cavanagh rsj.

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