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Submission on the Restart of Redbank Power Station (SSD-56284960).

Introduction:

The Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition (CVCC) is a community group based in the Clarence Valley in the NSW Northern Rivers. Formed in 1988, the CVCC has been involved with environmental issues – both locally and beyond – since that time. It has had a long-term interest in the conservation of biodiversity, climate change, waste management, the water cycle and protecting the environment of our local area and further afield.

Over recent years the CVCC has made a number of submissions opposing the conversion of the former coal-fired Redbank power station to a power-station burning biomass. The CVCC continues to oppose this latest plan from Verdant Earth Technologies. Our major concerns are listed below.

Climate Impacts of the Proposal:

The planet is facing a major crisis as a direct result of human induced climate change, something that has been driven by the burning of fossil fuels - coal, gas, and oil - since the start of the industrial revolution.

In more recent times, it has been the burning of those fossil fuels, mostly coal, to generate electricity which has been the major contributor to the atmospheric build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The need to stabilise and reduce the concentration of those greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has long been acknowledged as being crucial if we are to avoid the catastrophic impacts of global heating.

As the vast majority of Australians are fully aware of the above facts, it seems ludicrous that we see the need to highlight them. However, it is clear that someone hasn't got the message, because **you**, the NSW's Independent Planning Commission, have been asked to approve the burning of 850,000 tonnes of wood (biomass) annually at the disused coal power plant at Redbank, near Singleton.

Simple commonsense should dictate that burning timber to produce electricity, a process that actually produces more carbon dioxide per kilowatt of electricity produced than coal, is demonstrably counterproductive.

To attempt to justify increasing greenhouse gases by referring to the burning of wood as producing "renewable energy", somehow trying to place this process alongside emissions free processes like wind and solar, is even more ridiculous.

When the original Redbank proposal was put forward several years ago, the proponents claimed they would obtain the biomass from intensified logging operations, but are now suggesting it will mostly come from land-clearing.

Another contributor to the atmospheric build-up of greenhouse gases, has been the world-wide clearing of forests, nature's mechanism for removing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and providing us with life-giving oxygen.

So, not only does the Redbank proposal add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, it reduces nature's ability to remove and store that carbon by clearing forests.

Biodiversity Impacts:

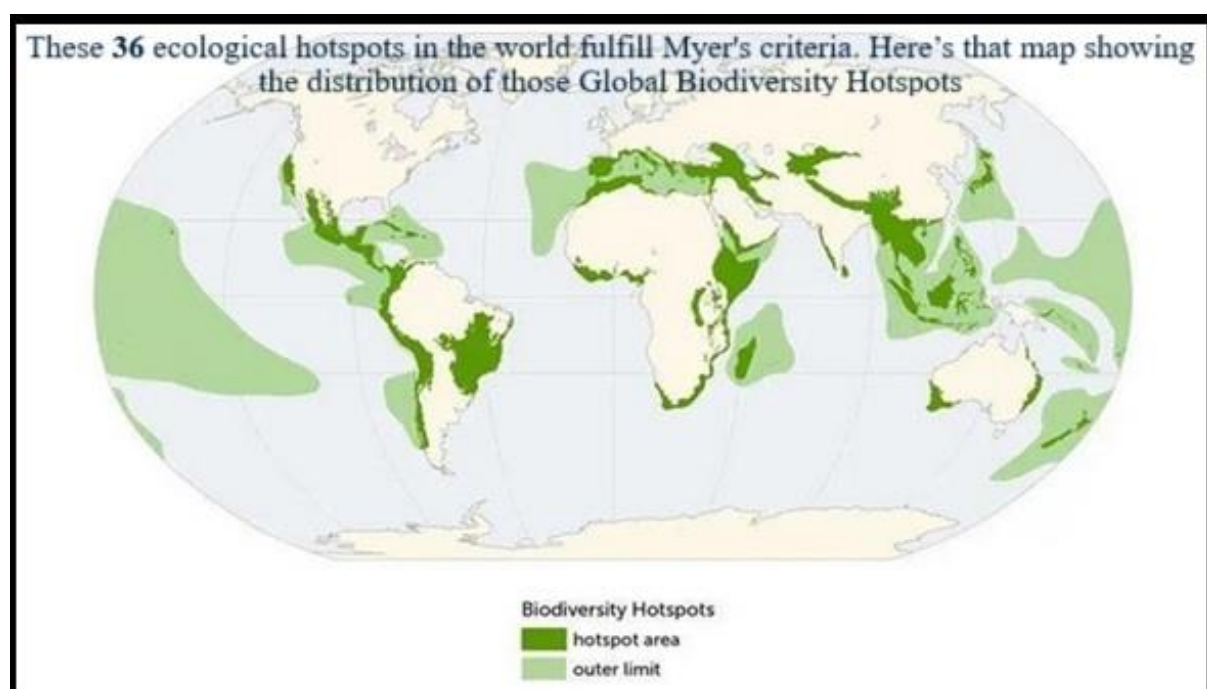
The forests of eastern NSW have been subjected to extreme logging ever since European occupation close to 250 years ago. It took loggers just 50 years to send the magnificent Red Cedar close to extinction, and a further 50 years to do likewise to the equally impressive Hoop Pine, which was cut for boxwood.

However, forests are not exclusively timber suppliers. They support an amazing collection of millions of interdependent life forms that collectively are referred to as biodiversity, and it is this biodiversity that sustains life on Earth.

As well defined in the NSW Biodiversity Management Strategy, Biodiversity provides us with everything we eat, much of what we wear, and many of the medicines that keep us alive. Biodiversity provides us with oxygen and filters our water, two elements without which life on Earth could not exist.

Here on the east coast of NSW, we are blessed by living in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Biodiversity hotspots, as defined by British ecologist Norman Myers, are regions with high levels of plant endemism and significant habitat loss. These areas are crucial for conservation efforts because they harbour a large number of unique species and are under significant threat from human activities. There are currently 36 recognized biodiversity hotspots worldwide.



Most of Australia's coastline, east of the Great Dividing Range is identified by Myer as a biodiversity hotspot. However, the northeastern region of NSW is often referred to as the "MacPherson-Macleay Overlap", stretching from MacPherson Range in southeastern Queensland to the Macleay Valley in New South Wales.

Essentially it is the Clarence Morton Basin, where a mix of subtropical and temperate plant and animal species coexist, where species reach their northern or southern limits, creating a zone of high biodiversity and endemism, that is recognised internationally, and listed in Australia as one of this country's biodiversity hotspots.

The high rate of biodiversity is not confined to land but is also reflected offshore, with sea grasses and corals intermingling to provide habitat for a wide range of marine life.

The north coast region is also home to **Globally significant World Heritage listed Gondwanan rainforests** including some of the last remaining Littoral Rainforests in the Southern Hemisphere. The region is also known for its Eucalypt diversity unsurpassed anywhere else in the world.

As a direct result of what we humans have done to those forests, they are now home to literally hundreds of species of flora and fauna that are listed as threatened, a status granted when the NSW Scientific Committee determines that those species will become extinct if the current threats are not eliminated.

Loss of habitat through land clearing, logging, and urban development, is the greatest key threatening process, and the proposed Redbank power station will massively add to that threat.

Conclusion

Land clearing and associated habitat fragmentation are the single greatest threat to biodiversity in NSW. Certainly, there is nothing ecologically sustainable about clearing tens of thousands of hectares of native vegetation, home to millions of native animals, in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, and converting it into carbon dioxide, thus exacerbating the threat of catastrophic climate change.

The proposal to reopen the Redbank power station using biomass to generate electricity is a looming environmental catastrophe, and certainly not in the public interest and must be rejected once and for all.

John Edwards
President

17th August 2025