

Submission in opposition to the proposed 'Restart of Redbank/ Verdant Power Station' by
Biomass Action Group
SSD-56284960

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1. "Australia's Timber Fibre Strategy 2025" by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)

- aims towards further entrenchment of the destructive Native Forestry Industry at the behest of its own vested interests, and part of its stated mission is Bioenergy.
- Complains that there is no social license for forestry. That is because it is, in reality, it's not sustainable, contrary to greenwashed claims. The science is clear, the word is out, and that is not going to change because of some well-funded propaganda. In the same breath, the Strategy suggests that 'active management' is required to 'keep forests healthy'. The industry's idea of active management is harvesting. How can the removal of the foundation of a forest keep it 'healthy'? It is a complete contradiction, and this industry is fraught with similar contradictions. We have seen the various terms used as excuses to justify logging ranging from 'balanced' (ie. the industry wanting to stake claim on our public resources) to 'sustainable' (ie. sustained supply to the industry), to 'management' (ie land clearing), then if all else fails, as in Victoria, the industry resorts to the diabolical 'forest gardening' or 'thinning' approach to continue logging under a different guise.

The Panel needs to be aware of the semantics this industry uses to get its way in order to continue to plunder our forests. As always, the devil is in the details.

2. Biodiversity conservation advice by other arms of the NSW Govt't is continually ignored by the Forestry arm, and Redbank would further entrench the losses seen over the past decades by creating more incentivisation for clearing not just the contentious public native forests, but private as well, which is extremely difficult to monitor and enforce. There is already a lack of enforcement.

There is scant clear indication of materials sourcing in Redbank's plan. Bana grass has been slated, which is one of the worst noxious weeds ever listed in Australia, so should never be purposely grown for any reason. I've had to deal with it myself- an absolute nightmare. It will spread to neighbouring areas, and is nearly impossible to get rid of. Not worth it, even if this claim were true.

The NSW Government must act urgently to reform tree-clearing laws and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, as recommended by the Independent Review of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act. Central to these reforms are much stricter controls on land clearing and the closure of the major loophole that currently allows destruction of native vegetation under the false pretext of 'Invasive Native Species.' This misleading label has enabled widespread clearing of ecologically important regrowth and must be removed if the government is serious about protecting biodiversity

3. Bioenergy has been the biggest fail of the IPCC, undermining its very core by validating the flawed assumption that trees regrow immediately — as though it were acceptable to

cut and burn them, depleting the most vital living structures for both life and carbon removal on this planet. As highlighted in Nature (Anderson & Peters, 2016) and by Chatham House (Brack, 2020), large-scale bioenergy is not a climate solution but a dangerous distraction that accelerates land clearing, biodiversity loss, and near-term emissions.

Forests are extraordinarily complex living systems—intricately layered, teeming with interdependent species, and woven into a delicate web of life. This structure is not only breathtaking and deeply restorative for humans but also delivers critical ecological checks and balances that have held naturally in place for millennia. Yet when humans impose control—under the guise of ‘management’—the outcomes have often been catastrophic. ie 1% of The Big Scrub remains.

- These places are extremely important to keep intact, and should not be seen as just a collection of sticks available to burn or take for human uses, biomass being the lowest value use of logging combined.
- Redbank would drive and incentivise the clearing of thousands more hectares of land, compounding the already unacceptable amount as reported by NSW government:

The 2023 Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) report—released by the NSW Government—made headlines for reporting a 40–47% increase in land clearing compared to 2022. 66,498 hectares of native vegetation were cleared in 2023 (up from about 45,252 hectares in 2022) [Nature Conservation Council of NSW](#)[WWF Australia](#)[Mirage News](#)[The Guardian](#).

Redbank WILL intensify this current crisis by driving the clearing of all forms of vegetation—right when regeneration is desperately needed to repair what has been already been lost.

Conclusion

Against all conservation advice, the Australian timber industry’s stated mission is to push bioenergy, and we should not be naïve about this proposal’s intentions to that end. The leading executive director of Redbank/Verdant, Richard Poole, was found by ICAC to have engaged in corrupt conduct in relation to coal deals—hardly grounds to trust that this project will operate in good faith in accordance with its claims of no Native Forest material use.

With no transparent plan for sourcing the 700,000 tonnes feedstock annually (reduced by 75% after drying = extra emissions), it is abundantly clear that the proponents will turn to native forest logging once this highly questionable project is approved, just as they attempted previously under the ‘sawmill residue’ loophole, which remains open to exploitation. This project threatens forests, climate, land rehabilitation efforts, and The Hunter’s future as a credible renewables hub.

Please do not approve it. If you are pressured to do so, the loophole stated above must be closed so as to exclude all Native Forestry and sawmill material, along with a solid set of well-thought out conditions to prevent this dodgy enterprise from becoming a ‘green hydrogen’ power plant.

Regards,
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