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Renewable outcomes for NSW timber industry and the environment

The NSW Forest Products Association (NSW FPA) representing saw milling and associated timber industry services welcomes the announcement today by the NSW government that changes to the Protection of the Environment Operations Regulation will now permit biomaterials from regulated timber harvesting and processing to be used in the generation of electricity.

“This common-sense move brings NSW regulations closer to the other states and helps bring Australia up to speed with the rest of the developed world” said Maree McCaskill, General Manager of the NSW FPA.

“Using biomass is good for the environment as it displaces fossil fuels with a renewable carbon-neutral resource and over the longer term the use of biomass is considered carbon neutral” she said.

The use of woody biomass is carbon-neutral, because the carbon contained in wood originates from the atmosphere and is absorbed as a tree grows and is released when converted to energy.

“While I am sure this change is being portrayed by some in the environmental movement as opening the door to increased harvesting and clearing of our forests, nothing is further from the truth. This change ensures there is no increase in the intensity of clearing or logging” she said.

Ms McCaskill pointed out that there is no impact on the sustainability of forest management, the comprehensive legislative controls, the protection of environmental values or the habitats of native species, threatened species or biological heritage.

There is a significant positive impact on the social and economic return from forest management and a significant positive outcome for the carbon balance. There is a beneficial impact when renewable energy is used to substitute for fossil fuel electricity to whatever extent is possible.

This sensibly paves the way for real environmental and commercial outcomes for NSW.

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