

Examiner

Thirteen organisations to benefit from Wood and Fibre Processing Innovation Program

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RESOURCES: Resources Minister Guy Barnett and East Tamar Maintenance Services managing director Chris Barcza hold up pyrethrum waste used for biomass with wood fibre.

Bioenergy and biomass are at the forefront of 13 grants revealed under the state government's \$1.25 million Wood and Fibre Processing Innovation Program.

However, the Wilderness Society believes the grants will be used by the government as a justification to pursue logging of 400,000 hectares of forest, locked up until 2020.

The Meander Valley Council, Dorset Renewable Industries and East Tamar Maintenance Services are just a few of the organisations to benefit, with projects ranging from bioenergy generation to pellet production.

Resources Minister Guy Barnett said the 13 grants, valued up to \$100,000, would allow the government to unlock \$7.15 million of investment in the forestry industry across regional Tasmania, creating more than 30 jobs.

East Tamar Maintenance Services managing director Chris Barcza said the grant would allow him to progress production on biomass fuelled heating appliances and a fuel production facility.

“It gives us an opportunity to enlarge a facility that already exists in Bell Bay, and potentially take it interstate,” he said.

Meander Valley Council Craig Perkins said the \$100,000 grant would go towards undertaking a \$375,000 feasibility study into bioenergy and production at the Valley Central Industrial Precinct.

He said the study, partly funded by council, could look at how other businesses such as Tasmanian Alkaloids could utilise bioenergy – with significant private investment opportunities.

Wilderness Society spokesperson Bicka Bayley said he believed opening up the hectares would undermine market confidence.

“No amount of feasibility studies will hide the fact that the government clearly has no plan when it comes to forestry,” he said.

“There’s a whole range of different critiques around biomass – it’s not sustainable, and there’s question marks over native forest logging – it’s not carbon neutral.”

Mr Barnett said he would have more to say on obtaining early access to the 400,000 hectares in the near future, after questions were raised on whether the viability of the projects would depend on this plan.

“What it’s contingent on is resource security (the grants), what is important in Tasmania is that we have ongoing resource security, obviously for the private sector and Forestry Tasmania,” he said.

Successful applicants:

- Meander Valley Council: \$100,000 to develop a business case for bioenergy generation and distribution
- Mondelez Australia Pty Ltd: \$100,000 towards a feasibility study for conversion of boiler from natural gas to biomass
- Norske Skog Paper Mills (Australia) Ltd: \$100,000 to build a residue processing and engineering plant
- Pentarch Forest Products Pty Ltd: \$96,500 to enhance current timber processing and manufacturing centre
- East Tamar Maintenance Services Pty Ltd: \$95,000 for the construction of a biomass fuel production facility and a fabrication facility for appliances
- Dorset Renewable Industries Pty: \$100,000 to further develop a project for a wood pellet plant
- Wood Pellets Tasmania: \$69,000 for the integration of a shaving process and baling operation into an existing pelleting operation
- Botanical Resources Australia – Manufacturing Services Pty Ltd: \$87,500 for the evaluation of a pellet production using a range of products
- Huon Valley Timbers Pty Ltd: \$100,000 towards changing a timber drying kiln for an LPG gas-fired system to biomass fuel technology using mill residue
- ARTEC Australia Pty Ltd: \$100,000 towards processes to allow for all docking waste to be dried for sale