

BIOMASS POWER PLANTS

Statement by Member for Gosnells

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [12.58 pm]: My statement is directed to the Minister for Environment and it regards the risk of power plants being built to burn timber from our native forests. I refer to the expiry on 13 March 2014 of the five-year authorisation period for a 40-megawatt biomass power plant at Diamond Mill between Manjimup and Pemberton. I highlight that the project has not met the conditions in ministerial statement 791 of 13 March 2009 requiring that it be substantially commenced within five years. As the ministerial statement provides no condition for an extension of time of authorisation, I call on the minister to confirm the authorisation is now lapsed and void. The plant was to require 380 000 tonnes of fuel a year, so it seemed inevitable that the proponent and operator would apply for a switch from the sourcing of blue gums as fuel to the destructive burning of native forest trees, especially karri, marri and jarrah.

Let me be clear that WA Labor supports biomass plants that use only plantation timber. I call on the minister to confirm his opposition to any changes to federal laws that would allow the issue of renewable energy certificates for the burning of native forests. There was great community anxiety about the location of the plant in the heart of the \$120 million-a-year Manjimup food bowl. The public record shows a high level of community opposition to the plant. I call on the Minister for Environment to allay community concern by confirming that the 40-megawatt biomass power plant no longer has the necessary authorisation and that it will not proceed.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm