

MEDIA RESPONSE

Burning forests for charcoal is a climate disaster

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The push by Simcoa to continue burning jarrah trees for the manufacture of silicon shows unwillingness to adapt to the climate crisis.

In the ABC article *Silicon manufacturer may be forced to import coal*, Simcoa director David Miles asserts that the State Government's new and long-awaited forest protection measures mean the silica manufacturer will have to import coal from Colombia.

Jess Beckerling, convener of the WA Forest Alliance, responds that burning biomass produces more emissions per unit of energy generated than coal and gas:

'Ironically, the industry is trying to frighten us with the notion that now we will see more coal burned. First of all, this is nonsense. There's no indication whatsoever that WA will now start importing coal from Colombia to run the silicon plant. And secondly, and very importantly, burning wood for energy produces twice the amount of carbon emissions per unit of energy generated than coal and gas,' Beckerling said.

'All these stories serve to do is remind people that 85% of the timber coming from native forest logging operations becomes waste products that are burned within a couple of years. Simcoa has been a major driver of the logging of the South West's precious Jarrah forests for decades, destroying habitat for endangered wildlife and emitting huge volumes of carbon into the atmosphere. Instead of switching to plantation timber decades ago, Simcoa kept using Jarrah supplied by the Forest Product Commission at \$20 a tonne.

Forests are more valuable for water, wildlife, climate and communities than as fuel for industries. We need forests standing for climate:

'The WA community has made their position very clear - we do not want the remaining South West forests logged and cleared for firewood and charcoal. In the State Government's 2021 survey into forest management, 17 000 people responded to say we want our forests protected from logging for climate and biodiversity.'

The transition of the native forest timber industry to plantations is critical as part of the shift to a greener economy. While we recognise that Simcoa's silicon is being used in the manufacture of solar panels, we can't fix the climate crisis by logging and clearing forests.

Researchers world-wide are also scrambling to find more sustainable materials for use in the renewable energy boom. The use of silicon for photovoltaic cells in solar panels may soon be superseded by perovskite cells, which are more stable and eco-friendly.

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