



The Hon Greg Hunt MP

Minister for the Environment

Senators
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senators

The reinstatement of native forest wood waste as an eligible source of renewable energy under the *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2015* is an important reform that will support additional renewable energy generation and secure future employment opportunities regional Australia.

I can confirm that the use of native forests for the primary purpose of generating renewable electricity has never been and never will be eligible to create certificates under the scheme. Eligibility was, and will continue to be subject to several strict conditions, including that it must be harvested primarily for a purpose other than energy production. There is no evidence that its eligibility leads to unsustainable logging.

The Government understands the continuing concerns raised by sectors of the community on the impact of wind farms on local communities. The Government supports the continued deployment of solar technologies in Australia.

As agreed with you, subject to passage of the *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2015* and reinstatement of native forest wood waste as eligible source of renewable energy will commit to the following measures at Attachments A and B to this letter.

Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement

Yours sincerely

Greg Hunt

MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE UPTAKE OF LARGE SCALE SOLAR, OTHER RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

1. Supporting large scale solar and other renewable energy deployment

- a. The Department of the Environment to work with the relevant Departments and agencies to develop a formal government strategy and implementation details:
 - i. Which updates the government, industry and the community on the forecast uptake of solar technologies under the RET, taking into account new information on lower costs of solar technologies and hydro generation and independent modelling which forecast that solar technologies will take at least one third of the additional new capacity developments under the RET; and
 - ii. To consider potential further support for solar and renewable technologies, including:
 - a. Options to support community solar and solar-with-storage projects by providing 'start-up funding' loans or grants to assist with project feasibility and early-stage development.
 - b. Providing incentives for off-grid deployment of solar.
 - c. Opportunities for CSIRO to further develop and implement a solar energy forecasting system for the NEM and SWIS.
 - d. Support development of appropriate safety/quality standards and training for installers of batteries/storage on solar systems.
 - e. Options to enable greater uptake of solar in government housing.
 - f. Options to support and facilitate the development of other renewable energy technologies including hydro-electricity generation.

Commit to enhanced support for solar technologies and other renewable technologies through existing initiatives

- a. The Government will write to the CEFC to ensure significantly increased uptake of large scale solar and energy efficiency, and to promote the original intent of the CEFC to focus investment to innovative and emerging renewable technologies and energy efficiency.

3. Build awareness of existing support opportunities

- a. The Government commits to develop a solar technology information package to:
 - i. Highlight the funding support for solar RD&D and niche deployment being provided through ARENA; and investment support for deployment through CEFC.
 - ii. Promote the potential for the \$20,000 instant asset write-off for small businesses, announced in the 2015 Budget, to be used to invest in solar to reduce energy costs.
 - iii. Highlight the potential for continued strong growth of solar and battery technologies over the period to 2020 and beyond.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT WIND FARMS

1. The Minister for the Environment will issue a statement that the Government will respond actively and in good faith to the findings of the Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines.
2. Subject to the outcomes of the Senate Select Committee, the Minister for the Environment will seek the agreement of relevant Ministers to progress reforms to improve windfarm noise science and monitoring and the transparency of information and help for communities:

Improving science and monitoring

- a. The Government will appoint in consultation with members of the Senate Select Committee and key industry and regulatory bodies, an independent scientific committee to provide research and advice to the Minister for the Environment on the impact on the environment and human health of audible noise (including low frequency) and infrasound from wind turbines.
- b. The Committee will deliver public research to:
 - i. Support the development of Australian methodologies and frameworks in sound measurement and standards for wind farms, including in the field of infrasound and low frequency sound – to improve planning and compliance decisions by state and territory authorities.
 - ii. Innovation in cost-effective, continuous noise monitoring of wind farms.
 - iii. Options for wind farm operators to provide information on wind speed, operational statistics, operating hours and sound monitoring.

Empowering Communities

- c. The Minister for the Environment will establish a National Wind Farm Commissioner to handle complaints from concerned community residents about the operations of wind turbine facilities. The Commissioner will be able to refer complaints to relevant state authorities and help ensure that complaints are addressed.
 - i. The Commissioner will publish data on wind farm operational statistics, operating hours and sound monitoring formation based on options independent determined by the independent scientific committee
- d. The Minister for the Environment will seek agreement from states and territories to update and implement National Wind Farm Guidelines which each state and territory government should reflect in their relevant planning and environmental frameworks, and with the aim of finalising the Guidelines within 12 months. The Minister for the Environment will:
 - i. Raise this with state and territory Environment Ministers at the July 2015 Meeting of Environment Ministers: