

TIMBER QUEENSLAND MEDIA RELEASE

Timber Industry Urges Queensland Participation in Greenhouse Emissions Trading

As Brisbane prepares to discuss climate change as part of this weekend's Earth Dialogues, Queensland's timber industry has urged the State Government not to walk away from a national greenhouse emissions trading system.

Amid media reports that Premier Beattie has decided against Queensland participating in the proposed scheme, Chief Executive of Timber Queensland, Rod McInnes, warned that the state could miss out on a range of carbon trading benefits. He also warned that going it alone would make cost effective abatement of greenhouse pollution harder to find in Queensland.

"Queensland is on the verge of becoming the biggest greenhouse polluting state and without a carbon price signal we have no hope of reducing net emissions in any realistic timeframe," Mr McInnes said. "Forest plantations can play an important role in any emissions trading scheme by generating low cost carbon offsets that can be sold to polluters looking to reduce their net emissions."

"This can generate additional revenue in the forestry industry and further justifies investment in the 110,000 hectares of new plantations that Queensland desperately needs if we are to avoid dependence on imported timber—much of it coming from illegal and unsustainable sources."

"As it happens, Timber Queensland will host a Plantations Roundtable on the 18th of August in Brisbane involving corporate and government leaders to work on ways to accelerate investment in plantations. The potential of carbon trading is a significant part of the agenda for that event and a Queensland Government decision to opt out of a national emissions trading scheme would make the task that much harder."

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Mr McInnes rejected comments attributed to the Premier suggesting that Queensland should only participate in an emissions trading scheme once so-called clean coal technology including carbon capture and storage was ready for roll-out.

“This is putting the cart before the horse. We need a carbon price signal in the form of an emissions trading scheme so that the investments required to roll-out new technology happen as soon as possible. With no price signal on the horizon there is simply no incentive. That means that the technologies that some are relying on could take decades—time we simply don’t have.”

Mr McInnes said he hoped that the Queensland government would take the kind of holistic view of Queensland’s interests as was evident in previous statements from the Premier on a national emissions trading scheme, rather than focusing on the interests of one or two sectors of the state economy.

“For example, the vast majority of our coal is exported so the emissions associated with its use is effectively exempt from a domestic emissions trading scheme,” noted Mr McInnes. “As for metals processing, this is globally a sector for which *clean* energy is becoming at least as important as *cheap* energy.”

“We should not forget Queensland’s broader interests. Some sectors of our economy like forestry, agriculture and gas, for example, can benefit significantly from an emissions trading scheme, not to mention renewable electricity and biofuels.”

“I’ve no doubt that on balance Queensland will be better off in the scheme than waiting on the sidelines for technological magic bullets. We encourage the Premier to put the market to work as soon as possible to deal with this environmental challenge through a broadly based national emissions trading scheme.”

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