

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 219
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Clean Energy Regulator
Topic: Voluntary survey of power stations results
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rice asked:

Senator RICE: Hello, everyone. Last estimates, in response to questions on notice from the Greens, you discussed the results of a voluntary survey of power stations as to whether they were planning to burn wood from native forests for energy under the renewable energy target, and five responded that they were. Can you tell us which five they were?

Ms Munro: Mr Williamson will be able to identify those. Essentially it is a subset of power stations which were previously accredited for native timber wood waste as a fuel source. They have said they have certainly kept that option open. It does not mean to say that they are. In fact, our overall observation of this is really that we have seen no change. There have been no new power stations seeking registration for this. We have seen no change in the number of certificates that have been issued for this narrower class of fuel. I think Mr Williamson will have all of that to hand now.

Mr Williamson: I believe I might need to seek some advice from Mr Purvis-Smith. I do not believe I can name those from the survey. What I can say in addition to what Ms Munro has said is that, of those five, only one since the legislation passed has created any wood waste large generation certificates, and there is no suggestion that any of those wood waste certificates relate to native forest wood waste.

Senator RICE: So which one was that?

Ms Munro: I am sorry; I think we are advised that we cannot disclose that. There is quite a lot of information that is protected under the legislation.

Mr Purvis-Smith: Under the Clean Energy Regulator Act, any information that we obtain in the course of our duties is what is called protected information, and it should only be disclosed in very certain circumstances. I think the nature of this information would contain some commercial-in-confidence information. I understand that the normal practice of the Senate committees is that commercial in confidence would not ordinarily be a reason not to disclose, but we have the added impact of the protected information provisions. I think it is important that when we conduct these surveys we are able to receive that information from industry so that we can do an assessment of what is happening. Perhaps the better course might be for us to take that question on notice and for us to consider how we might be able to release that information.

Senator RICE: If you could, that would be much appreciated.

Mr Purvis-Smith: Thank you.

Answer:

The Clean Energy Regulator publishes details of power station accreditation and Large-scale Generation Certificate (LGC) validation in the REC Registry (www.rec-registry.gov.au).

The REC Registry discloses that there are 28 wood waste accredited power stations as at 4 March 2016. Please refer to Question on Notice number 119 (Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015).

In September 2015, the Clean Energy Regulator contacted these 28 wood waste accredited power stations via a questionnaire. The questionnaire sought information about the amount of wood waste that the power station had used in 2014-15 and whether they had any plans to use native forest wood waste in the future.

Operators of five wood waste accredited power stations indicated future use of wood waste may contain biomass derived from native forest wood waste. These responses were indicative only and not a statement of clear intent to use native forest wood waste in the future.

The five power stations are:

- Isis Central Sugar Mill
- Mossman Mill
- Racecourse Mill
- Reid Bros WW Biomass Generator - Vic
- Farleigh Mill

Wood waste LGCs have never been created by Farleigh Mill or Reid Bros WW Biomass Generator – Vic.

Isis Central Sugar, Mossman and Racecourse Mills have never created LGCs which have been attributed to use of native forest wood waste.