



# Harvesting energy from forest waste

By **Ray Frawley**

THE Central Highlands community has been challenged to consider establishing energy plants that would produce electricity from forest wastes.

Essentially, forest residues left after timber harvesting as well as forest thinnings and other woody material often looked upon as waste, including, trim, shavings, woodchips, sawdust, bark and other residues, would be harvested to make electricity, biofuels and other products.

The timber state of Oregon on the north-west coast of the United States is putting this into practice.

The benefits of this approach are seen as:

- Restoring forest health, fire resilience and wildlife habitat;
- Finding renewable energy alternatives; and
- Revitalising rural economies.

Professor Loren Kellogg issued the challenge last week at a Central Victorian Farm Plantations committee meeting in Ballarat.

Professor Kellogg, who is Lematta Professor of Forest Engineering at Oregon State University, is coming to the end of a 12-month visit to Australia where he has been working with the CRC (Cooperative Research Centre) for Forestry based in Hobart and more lately as a senior research fellow with the School of Forest and Ecosystem Science at the Creswick campus of the University of Melbourne.

He will return to Oregon next month via New Zealand where he will be presenting a paper at a forest summit.

Appropriately, Professor Kellogg addressed the farm plantations committee on World Environment

Day.

After giving a detailed explanation of the formation of the biomass industry in Oregon, Professor Kellogg presented two conclusions for consideration by the central Victorian region.

They were:

- A regional working group could help accelerate the sustainable development and use of woody biomass; and
- Commissioning a biomass energy and biofuels study that collects information and summarises opportunities, barriers and recommendations relevant to the central Victorian region could help significantly change the landscape.

In the question time following Professor Kellogg's presentation, farm plantations committee executive officer David Fiskien said there was an opportunity to be involved in biomass energy production in this area.

Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum executive officer, Laurie Norman, who also attended the meeting, said: "This has maintained my enthusiasm for getting something going in this region."

In his presentation, Professor Kellogg told of the formation of the Oregon Forest Resource Institute, which commissioned a study into biomass opportunities.

The website for the institute is [www.oregonforests.org](http://www.oregonforests.org)

Subsequently, in 2007, the Oregon legislature passed energy legislation aimed at meeting renewable energy goals.

In the conclusion of his address, Professor Kellogg said biomass could help solve forest health and habitat problems, create economic prosperity in rural Oregon and produce renewable energy.



Loren Kellogg