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## **Power to the people**

The Oil Mallee Association (OMA) supports the suggestion of a \$30 million biomass plant in the Ravensthorpe vicinity and calls on the WA Government to utilize the Royalties for Regions Fund to fast track its development.

Narrogin based OMA Regional Manager Mr David McFall believes there is now a strong alignment across all major political parties on the Bio-energy concept. That bipartisan support can result in real action on the ground.

“Given that Mr Colin Barnett historically signed on the Biomass Energy trials at Narrogin way back in year 2000, as the then Energy Minister, coupled with recent support of embedded regional biomass power plants by the Nationals leader Brendan Grylls and the Greens, I would hope that these bipartisan projects would get the fast track development they deserve?” Mr McFall said.

State OMA President Mr Mike Kerkmans agrees. ‘The OMA is the peak Oil Mallee growers network in WA who have for over ten years been encouraging developments like the bio-energy power plant mooted for the South Coast as they can be easily replicated across regional WA to support the South West Grid.

‘Biomass has the base load capability to deliver consistent green and clean power to many WA regional communities like Ravensthorpe, Jerramungup and Esperance to provide the critical energy and headwork’s capacity needed to stimulate innovative new industry development such as inland aquaculture, water desalination, bio-feeds and value adding processing of agricultural products’ Mr McFall said.

‘In the face of current market conditions primary industries such as mining, fishing and agriculture must operate within a reasonable environmental and economic framework. Providing clean power and/or liquid fuels to existing industries has very credible environmental and socio-economic foundations for maintaining not only community integrity and vitality but also softens our carbon footprint and builds resilient landscapes along the way’.

Trials at the Verve Energy Narrogin 1MW Integrated Wood Plant (IWP) have demonstrated the technical feasibility of taking plantation mallee grown on WA farms

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and gasifying it into renewable clean energy and other potential products like activated carbon and eucalypt oil. The OMA hopes that this proposal breaks through and the government creates something meaningful to make sense of this investment in important research.

The OMA has overseen over 1200 farmers trial oil mallees in WA since 1993. This has involved the planting of over 20 million seedlings on 10,000 hectares to combat salinity and help alleviate rural and regional decline. WA farmers will continue to ramp up their planting programs providing the policy support and price signals are right to reduce the risk. This activity also creates jobs, exportable technology and environmentally sustainable products. This is one very home grown and proud WA industry that can be exported to the world...if we want it.

**Further enquires:**

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