

Drive our Economy Forward

Tasmanian
Liberals



Biochar – A threefold environmentally beneficial opportunity

A Hodgman Liberal Government will...

Immediately initiate the development of a business case to assess the viability of a biochar plant for Tasmania.

Should the business case indicate a biochar plant is viable, a Hodgman Liberal Government will investigate partnerships with interested parties and will commit funds required to help build a biochar plant.

We will also fund a Post Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Tasmania's Centre for Renewable Energy and Power Systems to assist in the facilitation of a greater understanding of the possibilities for biochar and other renewable energy sources in Tasmania.

Why this policy is needed

What is Biochar and what opportunities does it present?

Biochar has the potential to benefit Tasmania threefold. It is a method for carbon sequestration (long term, safe storage of carbon stored in biomass). Biochar has agricultural applications including enhancing crop yield, and the pyrolysis process used to generate biochar also produces gas which can be used for carbon negative, renewable energy electricity generation. Generation of biochar is also an effective method to deal with significant waste streams from agricultural and forestry processes.

Technically speaking, biochar is a charcoal produced from biomass, such as such as manure, crop residues or forestry waste, through a thermal treating (heating) process. Its structure means biochar is chemically and biologically more stable than the biomass fixed carbon from which it is produced, making it difficult to break down and thus capturing the carbon potentially for hundreds of thousands of years.

In agriculture, biochar can be used to improve soil qualities, decrease soil acidity, heighten nutrient retention and improve water-holding capacity, amongst other things. Significantly, its use in agriculture is ultimately a practical and effective way to store carbon.

According to the CSIRO, producing biochar and bioenergy is a carbon negative process. Its high chemical stability, carbon content and potential to reside in soils for anywhere up to millennia means it is possible to use biochar as a form of carbon sink and ultimately offset carbon emissions.

Leadership and vision for the future

Authorised by Will Hodgman MP, Parliament House, Hobart TAS 7000

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While we are confident that the possible benefits of biochar are many, we do acknowledge that there are aspects of biochar that should be explored in greater detail. A biochar plant would help us further understand its possibilities in the context of Tasmanian biomass energy supplies, the benefits of biochar applied to Tasmanian soils.

Costings

We estimate that the cost of the initial study will be \$20,000. This will be initiated in 2010-11.

The construction of the plant, if deemed feasible through the study, will be financed through possible partnerships with interested private operators.

The cost of funding a Post Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Tasmania's Centre for Renewable Energy and Power Systems is \$120,000 per annum.

	2009/10 \$'000s	2010/11 \$'000s	2011/12 \$'000s	2012/13 \$'000s
Bio-Char, Business case, partnership for plant and further study	0	20	120	120



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