

## **The installation of more wood-fuelled boilers in southern New Zealand by organisations with large energy requirements could have a big impact on air quality.**

That's the view of Living Energy Ltd Managing Director Rob Mallinson, who's specialist bioenergy heating company installs commercial and industrial wood-fuelled boilers around New Zealand.

Living Energy installed a woodchip plant at Dunstan High School in March and another at its hostel in Alexandra in April, replacing its traditional coal-fired system.

This project was a pilot programme funded by the Ministry of Education and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). Several other Dunedin schools have since converted their coal systems to wood pellets, with more following, and it's expected that a majority of New Zealand schools will have converted to using wood pellets or wood chips for energy over the next five years.

The Dunstan High School boiler has been in full-swing since the end of April, and the Central Otago community is keenly following the environmental impact of the installation. Mr Mallinson is fully expecting the improvement in air quality this winter to be visible.

"Replacing coal smoke in the air with cleaner burning woodchip is a big quality issue for a place like Alexandra that suffers from temperature inversion and smog build-up in the cold season. All but eliminating this type of smoke from one of the biggest energy users in the town is going to be noticed," he predicted.

Bioenergy and biofuel production from wood and harvest residues has been identified as a potential revenue stream for forest growers by the Southern Wood Council. The Council believes Otago and Southland's 200,000 plus hectares of forest is able to sustainably produce and supply wood as energy regionally.

Dunstan High was the first commercial woodchip boiler Living Energy has installed in the south this year, and Mr Mallinson said that the school should be applauded for proactively taking a leadership role on this issue.

He's experienced strong interest in bioenergy systems following the Dunstan installation and is predicting the powerful combination of cost-efficiency and environmental pluses will influence the decision of further major southern commercial sites to switch from fossil-fuelled systems in the near future.

"If we had the right blend of Government Policy – with greater availability of grants – I believe we could be on the edge of a massive swing towards using wood as an energy source as organisations face up to issues of sustainability, reducing carbon emissions and clean air emission requirements," he said.

Renewable wood grown sustainably in New Zealand is a natural resource that ticks all the boxes; it's energy efficient, clean-burning and, as it is carbon-neutral, it lowers the embodied carbon for producers exporting goods, offering a powerful counter to the food miles issue. It is also cost effective and reduces boiler maintenance considerably."

“These modern, fully-automated boilers fired by wood chip or wood pellets have no trouble in meeting industrial energy requirements.”