

GOUNDREY WINE, LAND-CLEARING CHARGES

310. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Primary Industry:

I refer to the minister's actions concerning the dropping of illegal land-clearing charges against Goundrey Wine's chief executive, Ted Avery.

- (1) Was the minister acting in his capacity as the Minister for Primary Industry or was he acting as the local member when he lobbied for the charges to be dropped?
- (2) Did the minister write to either the Minister for the Environment or the Executive Director of CALM, Dr Wally Cox, in a bid to get the charges dropped? If so, did the minister write in his capacity as the Minister for Primary Industry or as the local member?
- (3) Did the minister write to either the Minister for the Environment or, if the minister wrote to either the Minister for the Environment or Dr Cox, will he table that correspondence?
- (4) Does the minister believe that the decision to drop the charges was the correct decision? If so, why?

Mr HOUSE replied:

- (1)-(4) The charge should never have been laid in the first place. Has the member for Maylands visited Goundrey Wines and seen what has occurred?

Dr Edwards: I have had eye-witness reports.

Mr HOUSE: Goundrey Wines has put an enormous amount of work into that district and created many jobs. It has extended a grass verge towards the edge of the road. It is the same thing -

Dr Edwards: I thought natural vegetation was regenerating there.

Mr House: Does the member for Maylands mow the verge at the front of her property?

Dr Edwards: No, I have native bushes on it.

Mr HOUSE: I bet the member is one of the few people who does. That is exactly what Goundrey Wines have. It has spent thousands of dollars to revegetate that property. There should be no difference in the law between the city and the country regarding the hundreds of people who beautify their road verges at the front of their houses either with native plants, lawns or whatever. There cannot be two standards; that is, one for people living in the city and one for people living in the country. This company could not be prosecuted if the same principles were to apply. I made a representation for that company and that was the subject. I make no excuse for making that representation, either as the local member or as the Minister for Primary Industry, because Goundrey Wines has done a great deal for employment in rural Western Australia. The company is also ensuring that we have a viable wine industry in the country. As the local member, I am happy to support its application on behalf of the local people. Those charges should never have been laid in the first place. We are asking for the same principle to be applied in the country that is applied in the city. Every person in the city who tends his road verge should face exactly the same charge if this principle is to be applied; that is the important point.