

PRESCRIBED BURNING OF NATIVE FOREST - RELEASE OF CARBON DIOXIDE

4938. Hon Paul Llewellyn to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Climate Change

With respect to the Department of Environment and Conservation's support of prescribed burning of our native forest, I ask -

- (1) How many tonnes of CO₂ were released into the atmosphere in 2005 and 2006 as a consequence of the Department of Environment and Conservation's (previously Conservation and Land Management) prescribed burning policy?
- (2) What percentage of released CO₂ was due to the loss of control of the prescribed burn?
- (3) What percentage of the state's total CO₂ emissions came from prescribed burning in 2005 and 2006?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1)-(3) There have been no measurements of CO₂ emissions from prescribed burns or wildfires in Western Australia. As indicated in its National Inventory Report (2005), the Australian Greenhouse Office follows the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2003 guidelines in not reporting on CO₂ emissions from planned fires as it is assumed that an equivalent amount of CO₂ is replaced by regrowing vegetation in subsequent years.

The Environmental Protection Authority report "Fire Management in the Kimberley and other Rangelands Regions of Western Australia" (Bulletin 1243) in December 2006 stated, in reference to Greenhouse Gas emissions, that "Carbon Dioxide is not an accountable gas as it is assumed that new growth will take up emissions from burning in the previous season."

Wildfires generally release significantly greater quantities of CO₂ per hectare than prescribed burns because of the amount of fuel they burn. Wildfires also consume large woody debris, releasing CO₂ that would otherwise be locked up for many decades..