

TIMBER ALLOCATION CONTRACTS, MARRI, JARRAH, KARRI AND WANDOO

Hon PETER FOSS to the Leader of the House:

- (1) When will the Government be in a position to announce final annual contract quantities of marri, jarrah, karri and wandoo?
- (2) What obstacles are there to the making of these announcements?
- (3) To what extent is the delay attributable to the processes of government and, in particular, the inability of the Government to agree within itself?
- (4) Does the Leader of the House still accept that businesses, individuals, families and communities anxiously await and need these decisions to enable them to make central decisions about their own future?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Peter Foss for some notice of this question.

- (1) The announcement cannot be made until the forest management plan is finalised and approved. The member specifically asked about contracts. I hope that is what he meant to ask. Clearly, contracts cannot be negotiated legally unless the forest management plan is in place.

Hon Peter Foss: Does that mean there is something else you can announce in the meantime?

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, and I will address that, but I want to specifically answer the question because the member worded it carefully and it should be answered properly.

- (2) The Conservation Commission and the Environmental Protection Authority have statutory responsibilities in this area, and those responsibilities must be satisfied.
- (3) None. The delay relates to provisions of the Conservation and Land Management Act and the Forest Products Act, which were put in place by the previous coalition Government.
- (4) My answer is unequivocally yes, I do accept that people have been hurting very badly in the time that they have waited for an announcement.

Hon Peter Foss also asked, separate from the question of which some notice was given, whether the Government could do something in the interim. The answer is most certainly yes. At one o'clock this afternoon the Government made an announcement about the nature of what it can do. I believe that announcement will bring a great deal of certainty to an industry which has been lacking certainty. However, I must make something very clear. I am grateful to Hon Peter Foss for asking the question in the way he did. I am sure he thought it out very carefully. The challenges facing a Government in bringing forward a forest management plan are serious. We have sought to bring it forward by a full 12 months. However, we are compelled by law to await the advice of the Conservation Commission and the environmental protection agency before a government decision can be made. I presume that is the proper process, which I believe was approved, generally speaking, by both sides of both Houses of the Western Australian Parliament in November 2000 when the legislation was introduced. There may have been some disagreement on the decision about the borders. It would be inappropriate for the Western Australian Government to try to subvert that process. However, in the process announced at one o'clock this afternoon the Government endeavoured to find a degree of certainty of supply within the confines of the legislation. That is precisely what we have done.

The former Government set a path towards achieving that by the conclusion of the arrangements for Greenbushes with Blue Leaf Timber Pty Ltd. In Government we have concluded a similar arrangement in Nannup. In the second stage of the request-for-proposals process, which we announced at one o'clock today, we have opened the way for a far more extensive conclusion of those issues. However, it would be improper and irresponsible of the Government to seek to conclude arrangements that might exceed the volume finally identified as sustainable under the forest management plan.

Hon Peter Foss: You have much more available on the forest management plan.

Hon KIM CHANCE: No.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Derrick Tomlinson.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: You have taken me by surprise, Mr President, I usually have a turn after Hon George Cash. I had intended to ask a question without notice of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. However, by gesticulation he has been indicating that he does not have

an answer. If I ask the member the question that he thinks I intend to ask and he does not provide an answer, will you count that as my question, Mr President?

The PRESIDENT: Indeed I will.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: In that case I will wait until he has sorted out his gesticulations.