

OLD-GROWTH FOREST, DEFINITION

1321. Hon. M.G. House to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Will the Minister provide details of the Labor Government's definition of an old growth forest?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

Under the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement the Commonwealth and State Governments agreed to a strategy to conserve and manage areas of old-growth forest across Australia as part of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system. To clarify the NFPS objectives, national criteria have been established for the conservation of old-growth forests in a report known as the JANIS report. These criteria were endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council in November 1996, and by the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture in early 1997.

The NFPS definition of old-growth is:

Forest that is ecologically mature and has been subject to negligible unnatural disturbance such as logging, roading and clearing. The definition focuses on forest in which the upper stratum or overstorey is in the late mature to over mature growth phases.

The Government's 'Protecting our old-growth forests' policy is based on the JANIS interpretation of the definition:

Old-growth forest is ecologically mature forest where the effects of disturbance are now negligible.