

FIREWOOD, SUPPLIES AND COLLECTION

1108. Hon Barry House to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development representing the Minister for the Environment
- (1) Given the State Government's latest restrictions on the timber industry, can the Minister guarantee ongoing firewood supplies to licensed firewood sellers and the West Australian public?
 - (2) If so, for how long?
 - (3) Will individual West Australians still be able to collect their own firewood?
 - (4) If so, where and under what controls?
 - (5) Will newly-designated State forest and conservation areas be closed to firewood gatherers?
 - (6) Are there any areas, particularly in the South West, where the State Government restrictions on the timber industry are affecting firewood supplies for individual West Australians this winter?
 - (7) What penalties do individual West Australians face if they continue to collect their own firewood?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

- (1-2) The proposed Forest Management Plan, covering the south west of the State, includes provision for commercial firewood supplies to be available under Forest Products Commission production contracts. Public firewood areas can be designated in State forest and timber reserves. The Government is committed to the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management, and the ongoing supply of firewood from native vegetation will be provided in line with these principles.
- (3) Yes, on private land, subject to the consent of the owner, and designated public firewood areas in State forest and timber reserves. Regulations to be made subsequent to passage and commencement of the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2002 are intended to provide an exemption from the requirement for a clearing permit for the provision of firewood for the personal use by the owner of the land on which the vegetation was growing. Conditions, such as the maximum quantity of firewood that may be stored, the size of the wood that may be cut, and the protection of living trees are under consideration for inclusion in those regulations. Landowners will continue to have access to firewood on their land.
- (4) See (1) and (3).
- (5) Firewood may be able to be collected from State forest and timber reserves where public firewood areas are established in those forests. Firewood will not be able to be collected from existing or proposed conservation reserves.
- (6) I am not aware of any significant problems with individuals accessing firewood from areas of State forest in the south west. However, it is believed that difficulties have been experienced in some rural areas. There is potential for firewood to be sourced from plantations to complement sustainable harvesting from Crown and private lands.
- (7) Where the collection contravenes the flora licensing provisions of the Wildlife Conservation Act, the maximum penalty is \$4000. The Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2002 contains substantial penalties for persons or corporations who undertake illegal clearing of vegetation, including for firewood supply.