

SALINITY, TIMBER HARVESTING

322. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Further to the Ministerial Statement of 24 December 1992 relating to Forest Management Plans and clause 16, which catchments have been nominated as having a high salt risk?
- (2) Has the Department of Conservation and Land Management reached agreement with the Water and Rivers Commission regarding the precautionary management and protection measures to be implemented?
- (3) If no, when will this be finalised?
- (4) If yes, will the minister table the details of this agreement?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

The effect of timber harvesting on salinity has been the subject of a large amount of research over more than three decades. This research has shown timber harvesting, with appropriate safeguards, can be undertaken without substantial or prolonged impacts on stream salinity. This is in contrast to the hydrologic impacts of agricultural practices, where research has shown that large increases in stream salinity follow the permanent clearing of native forest. The safeguards that are in place to protect streams from the possibility of increases in salinity include reserves around all streams, buffers around the edge of reservoirs, limits on the timing and intensity of harvesting and ensuring the effective regeneration of the forest. No forest stream has become saline as a result of timber harvesting in State forest, even though these forests have been used to provide timber for 150 years.

- (1) Condition 16 of the Environmental Conditions applicable to the Forest Management Plan 1994-2003 (of 24 December 1992) requires the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), on advice of the Water Authority of Western Australia, to identify second order catchments with a high salt risk. The second order catchments of streams that are environmentally sensitive to rises in saline ground water which have been nominated under Ministerial Condition 16 are shown in Map 2 of Appendix 18 of CALM's 1997 Progress and Compliance Report on the implementation of the conditions. This document was made available for public comment by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in January 1998.
- (2) Yes. Agreement was reached in December 1997.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) The Record of Agreement is reproduced in Appendix 18 of CALM's 1997 Progress and Compliance Report on the implementation of the conditions (made available for public comment by the EPA in January 1998). For a copy of the agreement and the accompanying maps refer to tabled paper No 522.