

FORESTS AND FORESTRY, STOCKPILES OF LOGS

265. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Forest Products:

I refer to the photographic evidence unveiled on the weekend depicting stockpiles of thousands of logs lying unused and rotting in our forests.

- (1) Will the minister agree to an independent audit of those stockpiles to determine how many logs are lying in our forests and how much of this resource can be utilised?
- (2) Will the minister also agree to an independent assessment of the Department of Conservation and Land Management's logging practices to determine whether those practices are contributing to unnecessary forest waste?
- (3) If not, why not?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (1)-(3) The Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Forest Products Commission know how many logs are in the forest and where they are stockpiled. The photographic evidence indicates that some of the logs have been there for a long time.

Dr Edwards: Six years.

Mr OMODEI: Some could have been there for longer than that. When I saw the television footage, it appeared that a number of logs had been sawn only recently.

Dr Edwards: They avoided those coupes.

Mr OMODEI: So those with very red ends were naturally red after having been there for a long time.

Dr Edwards: They said that they avoided anything sawn recently.

Mr OMODEI: I do not think that is true. However, I have said that I will look at the photographs, and I will certainly do so. I wonder whether the member has been into the forest to see how it is harvested.

Dr Edwards: Yes, I have, and I have written to the Minister for the Environment about the disgraceful amount of waste that is just left there.

Mr OMODEI: It must be borne in mind that the national parks and reserves are under secure management. All the ecosystems in the forest are protected. Part of the forest is used for multiple use purposes; that is, for wood production, honey production, water conservation and tourism. In the area that is used for logging, the coupes are identified after very stringent examination and, nowadays, after consultation with the community. All the logs are felled and pulled out to what is known as a landing, where they are segregated, graded and loaded. The first logs will go to contracts for premium, first grade and second grade. There is also a grade called buyer's choice, which is third-grade logs and salvage logs. Of course, there are chippable logs for karri and marri in both jarrah and karri forests.

All the millable logs are taken out. There are a number of contracts for third-grade logs - the buyer's choice logs. As a matter of fact, the issue of logs in landings is under review. It is thought that perhaps they should be centralised in stockpiles in each of the districts. However, again there will be large stacks of logs. I noticed that the television footage, which was filmed above Simcoa Operations Pty Ltd's site, identified a large stack of logs. There are large stacks of logs in every mill around the State. At certain times of the year, particularly just before winter, the stockpiles are very full in each of the mills. I am sure that the member for Maylands knows these things.

In trying to maximise the amount of resource that can be value added from the forest, a contract for third-grade logs has recently been awarded to a contractor who is seeking to build a mill to try to mill those logs. When the majority of those logs are logged, they go to a contractor. The logs that remain stay on the forest floor, because under the Simcoa agreement Act of Parliament, which Brian Burke signed when the Labor Party was in power, 130 000 cubic metres of logs, either green or dry, are provided to Simcoa. Many of those logs are dried on the forest floor within coupes. I acknowledge that if someone sees a series of stacks in coupes scattered around the State, it looks like those logs are wasted. As the Minister for Forest Products - the forest products legislation received the Governor's assent last week - I intend to address that issue and discuss that matter with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the forest products division.

That has been the practice with those logs. Before Simcoa and before WA Chip and Pulp Co Pty Ltd, members will recall that it was the Labor Party -

The SPEAKER: Perhaps the minister will begin to wind up his answer.

Mr OMODEI: Yes, Mr Speaker, I will try. Members will be aware that the woodchip agreement was also signed by the Labor Party. Until then, those logs were left to waste and burn in the bush. We are addressing those issues, and it is my intention to maximise the use of any waste products that are on the forest floor.