

SOUTH WEST FORESTS, FIRE CONTROL

634. Mr OMODEI to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

- (1) Is the minister aware that the litter levels in our south west forests are higher now than they were at the time of the 1961 Dwellingup fire?
- (2) Where will the Department of Conservation and Land Management find the plant and equipment to fight any fire that gets out of control?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

- (1)-(2) It is interesting that the member for Warren-Blackwood is putting all the responsibility on the Department of Conservation and Land Management. Discussions I have been having with CALM officers are aimed at making sure that the department is working with all the other groups that fight fires. The department has good relationships with the voluntary fire brigades, and the people the department calls in to fight fires.

Mr Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Warren-Blackwood!

Dr EDWARDS: Some of the displaced timber workers are now employed to fight fires. Ten people in the Walpole area have been given jobs over the summer season. I have been raising this matter with the executive director of CALM, urging that regional officers work with all the contractors at work in the southern forest, to make sure the department has access to their equipment if required. The Government takes this issue seriously. It will make every endeavour to put in place preventive measures, but there will always be lightning strikes and, unfortunately, arson. The department will do everything possible to contain fires when they happen.