

BLUE GUM PLANTATIONS – WOODCHIP CONTRACTS

27. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for Forest Products:

I refer to the recent research prepared by environmental economist Judy Clark and the work of the Department of Transport on Western Australia's plantation blue gum inventory and ask -

- (1) Is the minister aware that both of these reports suggest that Western Australia's woodchip contracts could easily be met from blue gum plantations?
- (2) Will the minister give a commitment to end the logging of old-growth forest?
- (3) If not, why not?

Mr OMODEI replied:

- (1)-(3) I understand that the member is referring to a report by Dr Judy Clark. Does the member have a copy of that report?

Dr Edwards: Yes.

Mr OMODEI: I understand that the media do not have it, and I have not seen it. I would love to get a copy from the member, because it would be very interesting indeed. As members know, the Government has presided over the phasing out of woodchipping. Currently, Western Australia exports about 850 000 cubic metres of woodchip a year. Announcements have been made in line with the Premier's announcements on the Regional Forest Agreements that woodchipping would be phased out by 200 000 cubic metres this year and 200 000 cubic metres next year to a maximum of 250 000 cubic metres of hardwood woodchip. I would like to know whether the Labor Party intends to have a timber industry based on native forests in the future.

Dr Edwards: Not from old growth

Mr OMODEI: How will the Opposition differentiate what is an old-growth tree?

Several members interjected.

Mr OMODEI: It goes to show how much the Opposition knows about the timber industry. When timber goes into the timber mill, some are large and some are small trees. About 44 per cent of those karri trees goes into sawn timber, between 11 and 15 per cent goes into sawdust and the rest is chipped. Can the Opposition tell me whether they will be able to tell the difference between the chips that come from karri two-tier forest and the chips from the old-growth forest? I do not believe the member for Maylands knows what she is talking about on this issue. The Opposition knows that as long as there is a hardwood industry based on native forest, there will be a woodchip component out of that native forest saw logging industry. For as long as we have a native forest timber industry based on native forests, some chips will come out of that. It is nonsense for the Opposition and Judy Clark to say that woodchipping will be phased out of the industry. Will we have separate stacks on the landing of little and big logs? What will we do with that? Will we burn the residue from old trees that are in karri two-tier forests? I suggest the Opposition and Judy Clark get a briefing from the Department of Conservation and Land Management about how the industry works.