

SANDALWOOD INDUSTRY — BOOSTING PRODUCTION USING INDIGENOUS BUSH SKILLS

451. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

Given that the Sandalwood Industry generates many millions of export dollars to the economy of Western Australia, I ask:

- (a) is the Minister for Agriculture considering a program to ensure a stable and sustainable Sandalwood Industry by requesting access to sandalwood trees currently locked away by the Department of Environment and Conservation;
- (b) is the Minister aware of proposals put to his department by indigenous business enterprises aimed at boosting sandalwood production using indigenous bush skills;
- (c) will the Minister undertake to see that the proposal is given serious appraisal and support;
- (d) if no to the above, will there be a report called to study the economic and environmental benefits of this proposed program as the Department of Environment and Conservation land represents a large part of the sandalwood harvest area; and
- (e) what programs are currently in place to ensure that the local industry is given the maximum opportunity to add value to the Sandalwood resource, rather than the raw material just being exported?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (a) Informal and local discussions have occurred between the Department of Conservation and the Environment (DEC) and the Forest Products Commission (FPC) regarding FPC access to sandalwood on DEC managed land. These have not been supported by DEC, which suggests a conflict of interest would exist between their conservation management responsibility and commercial harvesting activity.

However, there is one exception, resulting from a direction of the previous government for the two agencies to jointly manage the available sandalwood resource and regeneration activities on Credo pastoral lease in the Goldfields region, purchased by DEC. The sandalwood resource available on this lease is currently being assessed and will be included into the 'Rangelands Sandalwood Resource Plan' which incorporates programmes and measures to ensure a stable and sustainable native sandalwood industry. This Plan is in its final stages of completion.

The Forest Products Commission believes this is a viable model for use on other leases purchased by the Government in pastoral areas.
- (b) Whilst increased involvement of indigenous interests in the native sandalwood industry will always be considered favourably, I am not aware of any formal proposals that have been raised with the FPC by indigenous business enterprises recently.
- (c)-(d) Not applicable
- (e) Most of the native sandalwood resource is already processed locally. Around half (up to 54 per cent) of the total green sandalwood harvest, and between 78 per cent and 99 per cent (averaging around 85 per cent) of the highest quality green sandalwood (Roots, Butts and Unclean Logs), is provided to local businesses to add value through oil extraction and the manufacture of incense and mosquito repellent sticks. The remainder of the green sandalwood and all of the dead sandalwood harvested each year has value added through conversion into pre grind or powder form before it is sold into the Asian market.