

Hon Dr Chrissy Sharp; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ray Halligan; Hon Kim Chance; Chairman;
Hon Norman Moore; Hon Peter Foss

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS - CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Hon George Cash) in the Chair.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Petition of Barry Granville Waller - Seventh Report

Resumed from 27 June on the following motion moved by Hon Christine Sharp -

That the report be noted.

Hon CHRISTINE SHARP: On the last occasion this House met to discuss committee reports, I spoke at some length about this report, the arguments contained within it and the reasons for coming to the serious recommendations found on page 9 of the report. I do not intend to repeat the same arguments in the House today.

Question put and passed.

*Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No 1039/33, Victoria Quay, Port of Fremantle - Statement by
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure*

Resumed from 14 August 2002.

Motion

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: I move -

That the statement be noted.

The amendment provides for appropriate metropolitan region scheme reservations for special uses at the western end of Victoria Quay. The reservations are an acknowledgment that the Fremantle Port Authority plans to expand and diversify non-port use at the western end of Victoria Quay, such as retail, education and tourism use, while protecting the remaining port infrastructure and allowing for other additional infrastructure that may be required in the future.

It is absolutely essential that the port have room to move to carry out its functions. It is also absolutely essential that, with the growth of residential development in the area, the port not be impeded in any way in carrying out its functions by any detrimental guidelines or rules. I have some concerns about additional retail, education, tourism and other uses. I understand that the matter has been well researched and that the Fremantle Port Authority has allowed this amendment to go ahead. As everybody would know, the port's function is absolutely crucial to the wellbeing of Western Australian trade. Any impediment to it carrying out its functions would not therefore be in the interests of traders, importers, exporters and the like.

All around the State there are impositions on ports, particularly on the transport corridors leading to the ports. Residential development is getting far too close to various manufacturing and other activities and their requirements. Environmental issues do surround the ports. The buffer zone at the Fremantle port is important for noise, dust, spillage and other events. The port has a very good facility for combating any spillages that may occur. However, I am always aware that somebody might jump up and make the point that industry is a problem for residential zones. In this case residential and other special purpose zones would be a problem for the port. It is crucial that the port not be impeded in carrying out its functions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I formally acknowledge the member's comments and will make sure they are passed on. However, I do not think the member will find that there is any disagreement. In recent times the main working parts of the Fremantle port have been the North Quay and the eastern end of Victoria Quay. I fully concur with the member that Fremantle is a very important strategic port for Western Australia. People need to be very aware that it is a working port and that for our economic prosperity it will need to continue to be a working port long into the future. I will make sure those comments are passed on.

Question put and passed.

*Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission - Integrity Within the Public Sector - Review of
the Anti-Corruption Commission - Second Report*

Resumed from 9 May on the following motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery -

That the report be noted.

Question put and passed.

*Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation - Sessional Report - 28 June 2001 to 9 August 2002 - Sixth
Report*

Hon Dr Chrissy Sharp; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ray Halligan; Hon Kim Chance; Chairman;
Hon Norman Moore; Hon Peter Foss

Resumed from 9 May on the following motion moved by Hon Ray Halligan -

That the report be noted.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I apologise. I spoke on this report previously, and it was remiss of me to not have a number of things recorded in *Hansard*. Included in the sessional report for the period 28 June 2001 to 9 August 2002 are some statistics. Paragraph 2.27 states -

The statistics reflect raw numerical factors. They fail to demonstrate that local law making in particular has required a more intense level of Committee scrutiny compared with instruments from government departments and agencies. Although constituting 50% of the Committee's work, local laws have consumed approximately 90% of the Committee's scrutiny time.

I wanted that recorded because I think it is particularly important.

I also want to record the appreciation of the committee for those staff members who put in much time and effort over that considerable period: Nigel Pratt, Anne Turner and Jan Paniperis. They have done an absolutely wonderful job. They must scrutinise, well before the committee members, all the information that comes before the joint standing committee. I have no doubt that they and the new staff members of that committee will continue to provide the sterling service that has been provided in the past.

Question put and passed.

Meat Processing Industry - Statement by Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Resumed from 20 August 2002.

Motion

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: I move -

That the statement be noted.

Hon Kim Chance's statement dealt with the meat industry in Western Australia, and also considered Queensland and the substantial meat exports from all over Australia. The statement was originally to deal with only the cattle industry, but the minister expanded it to include the sheep meat industry. The ministerial statement highlighted costs borne by the processing industry in Western Australia through workers compensation and the like. These aspects are having quite a large impact on costs in this State and across the board.

A significant price is presently being paid for exports. At times at auction the live export producers are outbidding people who put their product through a local abattoir - that is a very interesting point. We repeatedly challenge our live export shippers to ensure they carry out their function in the best way possible. Apart from a couple of glitches that resulted from extraordinary circumstances at the time, exporters have improved their exporting capacity substantially, and they carry out the export industry in a much more professional manner these days. This industry is benefiting us all. I agree that if we could process all meat in Australia at a better price, and if our exports market would accept that product in a form other than live, it would be better to process that meat here. Everyone agrees that we would be better off to do so. The industry suffered badly from a recent television program about the way animals are handled in other countries, but I emphasise that we have no capacity to police the way animals are handled in other countries - that is an issue for those countries. For religious reasons, by and large, those markets like the animals delivered in a live form. Until we break that down, some premium will apply for stock - sheep or cattle - to be delivered live.

Western Australian sheep producers provide in the vicinity of 40 per cent of Australia's exports. Our north west cattle producers rely heavily on the export market, and the Broome and Port Hedland port facilities release substantial amounts of cattle very well. I was up there recently to see how they carry out their function, and they still are performing it very well.

I did not think we would get this far down the order of business paper on committee reports and ministerial statements today, and I would have raised this matter earlier if the item had been called on. How is this attempt to get more processing in Western Australia being addressed, and are some of the cost issues facing producers in Western Australia being considered? I have mentioned a couple of those costs. One abattoir at Geraldton is considering further expansion of its cattle chain, as the minister would know from conversations I have had with him. I would be very interested to know how the Government is progressing on further development of abattoir works. I know that the Katanning abattoir, operated by the Western Australian Meat Marketing Cooperative Ltd, is doing very well, as are others in the south of the State. I would like the minister to give his thoughts on WAMMCO, which seems to be operating strongly in the market, according to reports from around the State. That can only be very good for our producers, who can write long-term contracts with some confidence. In the

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agricultural industries, confidence is essential. We are having a good season at the moment and prices are high, particularly for mutton and lamb. Cattle prices are reasonable, and even the grain prices are looking good. With grain prices at reasonable levels, the meat processing industry has the opportunity to put better quality stock through the abattoirs from feedlots. Can the minister give some indication of the direction the Government has taken, and any development of new capacity for processing here in Western Australia, rather than exporting?

Hon KIM CHANCE: I appreciate Hon Murray Criddle picking up this point. He has asked for an update on the issues raised in the ministerial statement delivered on 20 August last year. He mentioned the history behind that statement, which goes back to a report issued by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. The Western Australian Government was impressed with the report and sought to derive from it a similar set of points of inquiry into the Western Australian industry. As Hon Murray Criddle pointed out, whereas the QDPI report was entirely about cattle, the Western Australian Government extended its inquiry into sheep meat. The QDPI report and the later Western Australian report set out to establish some degree of certainty about the relative benefits of the live export industry as against the meat processing industry. There are significant differences between Queensland and Western Australia. In Queensland the meat processing industry is far and away the dominant sector, while in Western Australia the live export industry and the meat processing sector have equal shares of the market.

Hon Murray Criddle referred to a recent *60 Minutes* television program dealing with animal welfare issues associated with the live animal trade. Probably the less said about that program, the better. It was heavily biased. I have heard some quite astounding rumours about how the film footage was obtained and where it was shot, which I do not intend to repeat here, but which cast large and very black clouds over the integrity of the program. The disappointing thing for me, without going into too much detail about what I think of the program - I am happy to do that in other circumstances - is that it used historical information. Most of the data it used was at least two years old, and some was quite a lot older. Fundamentally, the program was about animal welfare standards in the markets to which Australian animals are sent, rather than the shipping and trucking legs - those parts over which the Western Australian Government and the federal Government have some degree of control. Animal welfare standards in third party countries is a sensitive issue. Animal handling practices in the Middle East and North African countries have evolved over a long period and we do not regard them as acceptable. Indeed, most of us find those practices absolutely unacceptable. The point I tried to make to a group of enthusiastic and well-meaning people outside the House on Tuesday was that these practices have been going on for a long time. If we discount the hundreds of years of history and go back a decade or two, the live cattle market in that region was supplied almost entirely by Ireland and other European nations. The Europeans did not do one thing to improve the animal welfare standards in the target country. It was not until the Australians arrived, in the form of Meat and Livestock Australia, that any real attempt was made by a supplying nation to improve animal welfare standards in those countries. I have seen those facilities, and the transport and feedlot arrangements at least are equal to or better than Australian animal welfare standard levels. They are extremely good. I have to take my hat off to Meat and Livestock Australia for the great job it has done.

However, in the abattoir sector things are not as well developed. Abattoirs, particularly those in Egypt, were designed for the relatively small and tame local cattle, which follow their owners around like dogs. The slaughter halls - they are not called abattoirs - are designed for tame, not terribly large, animals. They are led to the end of the hall where they are dispatched and processed. They are then moved back down the hall. Australian cattle are not tame, nor are they small. If they get the idea that somebody is trying to kill them, they tend to want to have a say. They are difficult and dangerous animals to handle in circumstances like that. There is no reason that big Australian cattle cannot be handled entirely humanely and with simple technology. It is simply that that technology has not worked its way through to the abattoirs in the Middle East and North Africa. MLA is working hard with the veterinary profession in those countries to introduce higher standards of animal welfare. I feel confident that they will do that. What I can say with absolute certainty is that unless Australia is engaged in the live animal trade, much of the work that we have still to do in animal welfare in those third party countries will not be done. I know that because history is such that the alternative suppliers of live animals into those markets have no interest in improving animal welfare standards in those countries. Australia has a real and genuine interest, which has been demonstrated by its efforts in the past. People must clearly understand that Australia is not a dominant supplier in that market. People imagine that the live sheep trade is about the Australian merino. It is not about the Australian merino. Indeed, over the past 12 or 18 months, it has been difficult to find an Australian merino in those markets. In point of fact, the Australian merino has, by and large, been replaced by Somali sheep, which is the next most plentiful. Sheep in those markets come from Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and the like. Sheep go into the markets from wherever they are available. The Australian merino is in the minority in those markets. There would be no shortage of sheep or cattle in those markets if we were to exit them. We have no influence in those markets other than the influence we have now. The way in which Meat and Livestock Australia Ltd - MLA - has influenced those markets has been

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extremely beneficial. I did not mean to lecture members, but as the program was mentioned, I thought I should mention it.

Hon Murray Criddle raised issues about where the meat industry is going. Until recently the meat industry task force has been closely engaged in that matter. Members may be aware that I appointed a task force comprising only abattoir operators to examine the abattoir sector; it had no input from producers or transporters. The task force comprised Des Griffiths of the Western Australian Meat Marketing Corporation, Garry Minton of Harvey Beef, Peter Trefort of Hillside Meats, Narrogin and Roger Fletcher of Fletcher International Exports WA Pty Ltd, Narrikup.

Hon Murray Criddle: Fletcher is from Narrikup; you said he was from somewhere else.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes. Those people are all top-line operators in their own field and some are extremely innovative. I will not single out anyone. Hon Murray Criddle would be aware of the innovation that some of those people have brought into the industry.

Hon Paddy Embry: Especially the last two.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Indeed. We all have our favourites.

By getting that group of people together I hoped to crystallise some gems that would offset the relative disadvantages that exist for a local meat processor against his competitors in the live animal trade, because clearly there are disadvantages. A number of issues were identified. The task force has now ceased meeting. I encouraged the task force, rather than disbanding, simply not to set another meeting date and to report to me so that I can work through the issues identified. If the task force then considers it appropriate, it can restart the process.

Hon Murray Criddle: Will you release that report when it comes to hand?

Hon KIM CHANCE: Absolutely. My intention is to treat the report as a consultative document. Because the producers, transporters and others, including the live export sector, have not had an opportunity to make input, I will release the report to all those sectors and anybody else who has an interest in the matter so that we can begin a broader industry consultation. As I have not seen the report yet, I will have to wait to see whether we got what we were looking for in that matter. I suspect we have not got what we were looking for, because to some extent one meat processor's strength is his commercial advantage over another meat processor. I expected to find - I was not disappointed - that the major cost to a meat processor is workers compensation premiums. Hon Ray Halligan is well aware that they are very high, in the order of 12 to 14 per cent, yet the premiums of other meat processors in Western Australia are below four per cent. I wanted to know why that was so and I wanted to get that knowledge out to the industry, because that is a potential 10 per cent saving on labour costs. That was not as easy as it appeared to me initially; however, I will press ahead with that issue. Although the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union - AMIEU - was part of the task force, I will take up separately with the union that issue together with training. Indeed, it is expected that the producers and the transporters will provide some good input into that matter.

Hon Murray Criddle asked a question about the Western Australian Meat Marketing Corporation. WAMMCO has survived its darkest days and it now has a bright future. The meat processing sector has a better future. The livestock supply has hit the bottom of the market. Frankly, that has been the principal challenge of the industry. I believe the worst of the very low wool prices has passed. The very low wool prices depressed sheep numbers in Western Australia. The low prices were followed by the drought, which depressed sheep numbers further. Cattle numbers have held up reasonably strongly during that period because, geographically, they are spread broader than sheep, although there are still not enough cattle. It appears that the livestock markets will be extremely strong for the intermediate period. The drought that is currently affecting Europe is horrendous in its scale and scope but I expect that it will help maintain livestock prices for the foreseeable future. We can be optimistic about the numbers of livestock and the season.

Other questions that faced the task force included the costs in the industry. Australian abattoirs have a very high cost structure, principally because of the extremely high abattoir standards, which is not necessarily our choice. In many ways, the abattoir standards of the United States Department of Agriculture and the European Union have been forced on us. America and Europe have set the entry-level standards for Australia so high, and so much higher than their own standards, that it effectively constitutes a non-tariff barrier against Australian meat.

The task force reported on relatively high state and federal taxes, particularly the state payroll tax. The task force also identified the relatively inefficient use of capital as another issue of concern. The seasonal ebb and flow of our supply lines in Western Australia means that abattoirs must be bigger than they need to be. A much better use of human and mechanical capital would be achieved if the flow of livestock into abattoirs could be ironed out.

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All those factors make the meat processing sector less competitive with the live export industry and with New Zealand, which is Australia's key competitor. Producers in New Zealand do not face the same labour on-costs, as well as a range of other cost disadvantages, that Australian abattoir owners face. I do not have much further to report. The meat processing industry has a future, but it will require the attention and support of the Government to ensure that the industry becomes as competitive as it can be.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition has drawn my attention to an item on the Notice Paper that I called earlier.

Point of Order

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Item No 48 on the Notice Paper was not dealt with before the minister's statement, which was item No 49. An opposition member who wished to speak to item No 48 was unavoidably outside of the Chamber on parliamentary business at the time and wishes to deal with the matter. I seek leave of the committee to deal with that item.

Leave granted.

Debate Resumed

Draft Forest Management Plan - Statement by Leader of the House

Resumed from 15 August 2002.

Motion

Hon PETER FOSS: I move -

That the statement be noted.

I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to raise a few matters on the draft forest management plan. I wish I could say this is the last chapter in a rather sorry set of events, but I suspect it is not. For many years forestry was a matter that had the support of the Labor, Liberal and National Parties around Australia. That was a very important reason for the success of the former Forests Department. Many people do not like forestry, mainly due to a degree of ignorance. I remember during the last election seeing a sign sprayed on the footpath that logging kills forests. Many people do not know that if it were not for the 1918 Forests Act and the effort of Mr Lane-Poole and a large number of foresters, we would not have forests to talk about; they would have all gone to agriculture. The chief man of the Forests Department was for years called the Conservator of Forests. It was only when CALM was formed in 1985 that the name was changed to executive director, which I think was a great mistake. In fact, I suggested to Syd Shea that we should bring back the title. He said that was fine, as long as he got to use it. I said that he could be the conservator general, and the person in charge of the forests could be the conservator of forests. That never happened. However, I believe that it would have been one important way of indicating to people that foresters have an important role to play in the conservation of forests around the world.

There is no doubt that people can remove forests. I recently returned from Timor, where for 25 years the timber concession was held by the Indonesian army. People in the Indonesian army work on the basis that they do not get an adequate wage, but they get concessions that enable them to make up for it. The sandalwood concession was held by the Suharto family. I just give the House a couple of guesses as to how well those forests lived during the 25 years of Indonesian occupation. I have also been to Kalimantan, where I have seen the depredation of the tropical forests as well. Although controls are supposedly in place, the right amount of money at the right time allows total clear-felling without any chance of regrowth. That is repeated in any part of Asia in which bribery and corruption exist, and I am afraid to say that that picks up most of Asia.

Western Australia had a viable forest industry run by respectable foresters. My concern is that the population will still want to use hardwoods in particular, but it will not be able to get them in large quantities from Western Australia. Therefore, they will start to get them - I can see this happening already - from Asia. They will get them from places where there will be a depredation and where there is not a Forests Act 1918, a Mr Lane-Poole or foresters with the professional standing that our foresters had. It is a shame. I am not saying that improvements could not have been made in forestry. It would be a foolish person who did say that. These things often take time. I would be the first to admit that there was room for improvement. I am sure that some of the areas in which there was room for improvement have now been improved as a result of the action of the Government. However, I regret that the Government's policy was not a necessary corollary to making those improvements.

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The reason that the Government's policy attracted the public was that there are so many areas in which people are not aware of the full facts and the consequences. Many people believe that forestry involves clear-felling; and even where it does involve clear-felling, that that is the end of the forest. The reality of the matter is that the karri forest does well with clear-felling, as long as there is a reasonable patchwork and a mosaic. I can remember when I was Minister for the Environment being told that I ought to clear a mosaic. That showed the degree of ignorance of people. The people who argued against forestry always used the felling of a karri tree as an example, not a jarrah tree. If ever there was an area of forestry that we must look at more carefully, it is the jarrah tree, not the karri tree. Karri trees grow like grass. Research has also shown that mosaic clear-felling does not affect the biodiversity of the forest. The jarrah forest has not been clear-felled. However, what occurred in the early days caused a worse situation. Only the good jarrah trees were taken, and a lot of marri trees were left behind, which began to dominate the ecology. It created a totally different environment from that which existed before.

I am afraid that an awful lot of demagogic arguments turn out to be based on ignorance. The responsibility of government is not to take advantage of that ignorance and use it, but to recognise the responsibility to stand up for what is scientifically correct, and to recognise that the call to preserve old-growth forest and high conservation-value forest - I use both those terms without trying to define them, because I think they are incapable of definition - is a claim for heritage. Communities wish to preserve forests for two reasons: one is for conservation and the other is for heritage. It is interesting that one of the first moves taken in support of forests was to put them on the natural heritage register, and appropriately so. A big tree can be an object of heritage preservation as much as a big cathedral. I have no problem with forests being preserved for heritage reasons as part of national heritage not concerned with conservation, as long as people understand their decision and take into account the countervailing arguments about the impact on the people affected by its preservation. It is very difficult to mount a good argument against preserving things for specific environmental purposes. I have never tried to defend that position. I have always said that it is important we preserve our biodiversity. Generally speaking, forestry need not interfere with that biodiversity. The forest management plan that was developed under Labor during its previous term, and during the coalition's last term, accepted that. It was accepted under the draft forest management plan and the regional forest management plan that it was valid to try to retain a forest that met the general profile of a natural forest. I come back to, what is a natural forest?

We tried to maintain trees of all ages so that a forest was preserved that maintained the age profile of a forest that had not been logged. That was achieved by removing equal quantities of each type. That is fairly important because, as any farmer would be able to tell us, continually cutting regrowth and leaving old-growth forest is rather like culling all the lambs and keeping a flock of ewes - the old gummy teeth sheep. We would end up eventually with a whole lot of dead sheep and nothing to replace them. That would be poor husbandry. In the same way it is poor silviculture in a forest. Despite the emotional appeal of old-growth forests, people's responses are amazing when they are asked which trees they like. A classic example is the trees around Pemberton. When asked which of the magnificent trees are the best, people identify regrowth trees. The old-growth looks terrible; it is dreadful old stuff. I think we should keep both. In the sunklands, people refer to the trees as just scrubby old jarrah that is no good at all. That is a poor reason to get rid of those trees, because the sunklands happen to be poor land but highly diverse; therefore, it is important to conserve them for the sake of their proper biodiversity.

Those are the responsibilities that a Government has when making decisions. Previous Labor and Liberal Governments tried to keep a profile of forest with an appropriate reservation of trees. It was the right way to go. That is what the Regional Forest Agreement did. However, it got massively out of hand at the end because of the amount of scientific research that took place. The idea was to make sure there was an adequate reserve of every kind of ecological niche. I know there were all sorts of arguments and complaints but it is quite hard to have a conspiracy among hundreds of scientists. Those who believed there was a conspiracy that was dreamt up to try to preserve the forests had no idea of the sort of arguments that went on. I was the minister when we prepared the draft forest management agreement and were writing the specifications for the RFA. I know what went on. It was one of the most rigorous and argued processes I have ever come across. It involved people who were as deep green as they could get and people who were as brown as they could get. The process was hammered out quite fairly. I will be frank: the backdown of our Government on the RFA was disgraceful. It was a matter that Hon Paul Omodei and I argued strenuously against in Cabinet. I take no pleasure in the fact that our Government backed down. We lost our credibility at that stage. We either stood on the RFA - which was scientifically defensible - or we gave into emotional arguments and had no position to take. It then became a matter of the highest bidder. Quite plainly, the Government bid highest.

Old-growth forest is a term that has been well used and, in some cases, it can actually be defined. However, there is some trouble in defining it for Western Australian forests. Some of the definitions used elsewhere in the world do not apply to Western Australian forests. Indeed, many things do not. We are unique in having dry

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sclerophyll forests. Sclerophyll forests are reasonably rare but dry sclerophyll forests, as we have in Western Australia, are even rarer. Not an awful lot of things transfer immediately across to the managed timber industry. However, a lot of things do. Many good silvicultural principles carry across. I would have hoped for the opportunity to address some of the problems that arose from jarrah. Karri is not a problem; it is the species seen in all the pictures. People get emotional about it because they can put their arms around the trunks and the trees are so tall and beautiful. People can feel them breathing. My hair stays reasonably close to my head when I think about karri. At other times I get more concerned about jarrah. Interestingly enough, one of the things we had no argument about was that little thing called bauxite, which was underneath the jarrah trees. It is funny how no-one wants to mention bauxite.

Hon Kim Chance: The "B" word.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes, the "B" word. As soon as someone said it would stop the mining, everyone suddenly lost interest. However, that is another story and it is not for me to try to torpedo the bauxite industry. There is no doubt that attitudes changed suddenly when bauxite was mentioned. Squillions of dollars were involved with bauxite and it would have been a big battle to take on Alcoa and Worsley.

The whole question of management centres around jarrah. One of the things the previous Government did, for which it should be commended, was to get people to value add. Value adding is obvious and sensible; it is stupid to do anything else. I used to get upset with people who said that jarrah should not be woodchipped. The previous Government did not woodchip jarrah. People would be mad to do so because nothing can be done with it. It cannot be incorporated into pulp. However, that was the myth going around. No-one would do that to a timber log if he had half an option.

It is amazing what people did with jarrah, which I think was quite silly, and it could have been fixed. I ask the minister - it was an interesting exercise - to look at the quantity of value adding that we encouraged during the time that we were in government. We offered people long-term contracts, and we even offered them a higher rate of cut than we believed sensible if nothing else were considered. Hon Kevin Minson made that quite clear. He said that it was required purely to allow a return on the massive investment that was necessary to secure proper value adding. I think that was fair. He said that it could not continue and we would have to cut back, and that the more we took then, the less people would get in the future. That was a governmental, sensible, statesmanlike decision to make, as far as I was concerned.

Karri was more difficult, because value adding of karri has proved to be considerably more problematic. I do not know whether any member of this place has tried sitting on a wooden karri seat. If they ever do try, they should not move their bottom around too much or they will end up with a whole lot of splinters.

Hon Kim Chance: However, they are getting there.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know, but it is still not entirely comfortable. Karri has the slight problem of little bits lifting on the surface; it is difficult to keep smooth and shiny. As the minister says, they are getting there. I am sure, with investment of money, they will get there. The minister can probably see where I am heading. Investment of money is essential to proper environmental practices to exploit a forest. I have always said that a poor farmer is a poor farmer. That may sound pretty obvious, but I think the minister knows what I mean. If someone wants to see a very badly run farm, where the farmer is ripping the guts out of the environment of his farm and the value out of his land, he should look at a poor farmer. If someone wants to see a farm which is properly maintained and looked after and which is being husbanded, he should look at a rich farmer. The interesting thing about it is that the rich farmer will become richer, and the poor farmer will say, "Why is he making all that money and I can't?" It is the same with silviculture: we have to spend money to make money in silviculture. We have to run it environmentally well and properly to make good money out of it. We tried to encourage that throughout the jarrah industry, and I think we were reasonably successful. We may not have gone 100 per cent of the way, but we came from a fairly low base. Whatever one might criticise in the forestry industry, one must recognise where it has come from. That is important. To enable people to continue to have confidence to invest in forestry, to maintain the population to support it and to make sure that the forestry environmental practices were improved, it was essential to have some stability of investment so that people could invest with confidence. Confidence is very important to every single business. I know Westpac regularly publishes its consumer confidence index, because it sees that as its most important indicator - this has been proved time and time again. It is not a matter of whether people are spending money or whatever else they are doing, it is what they think of the future, what they believe. That is what caused the Wall Street crash.

Hon Barry House: I did an economics degree, and that was the only part of the economics degree that made any sense.

Hon Kim Chance: You must tell me about it one day.

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Hon PETER FOSS: Did the member hear about the bloke who did the Cambridge economics exam two years in a row? When he went in for the second time, he read the paper and he put his hand up and said, "Excuse me, these questions are exactly the same as last year." The examiner said, "Yes, but the answers are different."

The reality of the matter is that if people lose confidence, they will not spend money; if they do not spend money, we will end up with poor farmers. There is a myth in Western Australia that if something is left alone, it will not change; particularly, if something is left living alone, it will not change. One only has to think about one's own life. If a person is left alone, will he not change? He will get older, a bit more decrepit and die. There are even worse things. When Europeans came to Western Australia they brought with them animals, plants and fungi that were not here. They changed practices by doing nothing. That may sound quite strange.

That takes me to another issue, which is the one that the Leader of the Opposition was talking about; namely, Barrow Island. Barrow Island is a classic example of what Western Australia might have looked like prior to western settlement. It is due only to the massive endeavours of Western Australian Petroleum Pty Ltd that Barrow Island has stayed that way. WAPET has managed to keep out the cats, dogs, foxes and other nasties because it relentlessly kills them. Harry Butler tells a story about how he was there one day when a truck driver came along who had a cat in his cab, and the cat hopped out of the cab and bang, it was dead; they shot it on the spot. There were no questions; that cat was dead.

Hon Barry House: Did they shoot the driver too?

Hon PETER FOSS: They probably should have! The reality is that we have radically altered this place just by being here. A classic example is Kings Park. If people want to see the effect of doing nothing, they should look at the veldt grass, the watsonia and the weeds, which are everywhere. If we were to leave Kings Park to itself, it would look like the South African veldt in a very short time because the weeds would stamp out every single bit of native bush. The reality is that we have so impacted on our environment that we now have to put a lot of money into some areas just to keep them unchanged. That applies to both our national parks and our forests. They do not stay lovely just by ignoring them. A lot of work has to be put in just to eradicate vermin. One of the biggest programs that the Department of Conservation and Land Management runs is the poisoning of foxes. CALM uses the Southern Ocean on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other side as fences and then uses baits to kill off the foxes. That has had a massive effect on the environment by bringing back animals that people had thought were extinct. Gilbert's potoroo, for instance, was thought to be extinct. However, it is now back in such numbers that it may survive, simply because of the active interference of man.

Similarly, the forests have a major part to play. Heavy forest is actually reasonably low in environmental diversity compared with open woodland or sand plain -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Or a swamp.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. Despite that fact, the environment of heavy forest can still be threatened by all sorts of things. One example of how other countries manage the diversity of trees in a forest is America. America has many more varieties of trees than Australia. We have forests of jarrah with a bit of red gum and a few little wattles underneath. However, a forest in North America may have five different kinds of oaks and 10 different kinds of conifers -

Hon Paddy Embry: That is the case in Tasmania as well.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. It also has a lot of little plants. They all have different susceptibilities to fire and different responses to light. The Americans have a fantastic way of dictating what the trees in the forest will be. They do that not by planting trees but just by burning the forest at a certain time of the year and cutting down a few of the big trees. They only have to cut down a few of the big China berry trees, as they call them - we call them cape lilacs - and it makes a huge difference to the mix of the forest. One of the reasons there are so many oak trees in America at the moment is the chestnut blight. One of the most massive trees in the American forests used to be the chestnut. However, the chestnuts all died off, a huge area of forest was cleared, up came the oak trees, and now they have a lot of oak trees. Everyone thinks they have always had oak trees in the forest. However, they will not have oak trees in the forest if they leave it for much longer, because a lot of them will start to die because of the impact of the crowns of the larger trees. A similar situation exists in New South Wales. New South Wales has put a significant *Eucalyptus maculata* forest into one of its national parks. It has been there for about 10 years. However, it is now turning into a rainforest because the Government there has not been burning and clearing it. How did it get to be a *Eucalyptus maculata* forest? I will draw members' attention to a couple of very good articles that they should be aware of. David Ryan, a consulting forester wrote in an article entitled "Aborigines and Burning" -

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Contrary to what is often stated, dense forests did not cover a large part of Australia and the first settlers did not set to and ringbark huge areas. There was no need to. Most of the country was woodland, grassland, savannah or open forest. Grazing was plentiful and there for the taking.

Josephine Flood states in her (1985) book *Archaeology of the Dreamtime*:

“One of the Aborigines' most important artefacts was one that is largely invisible to the archaeologist: fire. Much of the vegetation encountered by early white settlers in Australia was not natural but artificial: an Aboriginal artefact created by thousands of years of burning the countryside..... Aborigines never put out their fire.”

Aborigines did not just burn now and again, or only in autumn, or when birds were not nesting. They burnt all the time. Thousands upon thousands of fires were lit on a daily basis and apparently none were put out.

David Ryan is an eastern states forester. We do not have to go very far to find another source. Sylvia Hallam presented a paper at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society. She examined the historical information in a way similar to the way that David Ryan had done for the eastern States. When white settlers came to Australia, they did two things. Not only did they stop Aborigines from burning everything, they also stopped natural fires. One of the major efforts of the forests department was to build fire control towers everywhere. Every time a natural fire occurred, the department would put it out. The environment in Western Australia at that time was not the original, natural environment of this State. The environment had been carefully changed by Aborigines through 40 000 years of burning. Forty thousand years of burning provides a very different environment from the way it was before. Much of WA now is different from the way it was when white settlers first arrived in Western Australia. We do not know what was here then; it has gone.

The reality is that controlled burning is a very important part of keeping our forest as it was when white settlers arrived here in 1829. If we do not burn, we will not necessarily go back to the way it was here before the Aborigines came but will go on to something totally different. Some species that survived for 40 000 years of burning would continue to survive. Generally speaking, most of the species that survived constant burning over 40 000 years were those that were fire tolerant or even liked fire. A number of Western Australian plants will grow only when they have had smoke passed over them. Researchers at Kings Park discovered that all that need be done is for smoke to be blown through water and for that smoked water to be used to water the seeds; then, hey presto, they will grow. They would not grow in any other way. That is a vital part of the process, yet the same people who say that we should not cut our old-growth trees, which I believe is scientifically bad news, also do not like those forest areas being burnt.

This year in three months 2.5 million hectares of native forest and 3.5 million hectares of forest altogether were burnt. That was the equivalent of 42 years of logging occurring within three months. The Government has said that it will preserve old-growth forest, but it will never preserve old-growth forest unless something is done about protecting it from wildfire. That is what the forests department did. It had the money to do that. It could control the fires because contractors who had heavy machinery were around and had the capacity to do it. I believe that Western Australia was lucky not to participate in this year's drastic bushfires. We are slightly luckier than the eastern States because, as Mr Ryan says, the strange thing is that people think that wet sclerophyll forest is more protected from burning than dry sclerophyll forest. It is actually the reverse; dry sclerophyll forest is less vulnerable to fire than wet sclerophyll forest, and Western Australia has dry sclerophyll forest. Nonetheless, sclerophyll forest is highly vulnerable to wildfire and those of us who were alive when the Dwellingup fires occurred have no illusions about that. If members consider the burning programs of the Department of Conservation and Land Management together with the terms of the various forestry ministers, they will find that the burning program increased radically when I was the minister and has never been that high since. It had never been that high, and it increased when I became minister. I was determined that we should burn and that we would not get behind in our burning program. The people who are concerned about getting smoke in their lungs might get an absolute lungful if all that forest were to catch fire.

Hon Kim Chance: I think CALM has burnt about 150 000 hectares this year. It has been a good result.

Hon PETER FOSS: Good. I do not know what percentage that is of the program, but we are still well behind.

I am a very keen conservationist. I firmly believe in the value of our environment, but I do not blindly believe that it is a matter of faith. I believe it is a scientific effort. We must find out what needs to be done to ensure we have a viable and sustainable industry and that we have the money to spend to protect our forests.

Hon Paddy Embry: CALM recently put out information saying that it could not keep up with the program it had set.

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Hon PETER FOSS: It has a problem in that a substantial amount of income and non-paid for or cheaply paid for assistance has been lost, and that will cost the State. One of the fascinating things about this issue is that people will say that they want to preserve our forests, but when they are asked whether they are prepared to pay the costs involved with a fire, they say, "Well, that's another thing; it's not as important as police and hospitals." I am sorry, but it is. People cannot maintain the two attitudes at the same time.

I am concerned that the current level of forestry and the moves that are being made to lock it all up pose a significant threat. I believe that we will see the same sort of moves that have been made in the United States. Having had the old-growth forest argument, it then moved on to the regrowth forest and is now working on the plantations. Whenever I go to America I always have this horrible feeling that I am getting a flash of the future. I do not know whether the minister has been to America to talk to its foresters, and I do not know whether it would make a jot of difference to his Government. However, it is an experience he should have if he wants a little peep into the future in the land of the free, which to some extent has a tendency to value people's property rights. Nearly all the forests in America, other than the federal forests, are owned by private individuals. The interference with people's right to log regrowth or plantation forests is extraordinary. The only thing that is saving the forests is the fact that it is the biggest industry in some States; for example, Georgia. If Georgia did not have its forestry industry, it would not have an awful lot left. However, that State is still under pressure, with people trying to stop the burning and cutting down of forests. It is extraordinary. Some people in Georgia have had plantations for 300 years. It is quite horrifying that a lot of other things were taken away from them during the Civil War. That is one of the things that rankles those people - they were not left with much else. Everything else went north. They had been living in the richest part of America; then came the Civil War and all the wealth was taken out and they were not allowed to do anything. Georgia has its forestry industry - that is all it is allowed - and now people are trying to take that away.

However, I digress. This Government might have started down a very unfortunate road. First, I will tell the Chamber what I think will happen. I think it will be very hard to get people to make substantial investment in forestry because of the possibility of a sudden change of climate and people pushing their demands further. A five-year contract is not enough for most capital investment. I do not go around saying this, but if anybody asked whether I would invest \$10 million on a five-year contract and whether I thought the climate was sufficiently certain for a renewal of a five-year contract, I would not be able to say yes. However, that does not have to be said to people. People thinking of investing \$10 million would know that for themselves. The message from Western Australians has been clear. If there had been a scientific basis for its actions, perhaps the Government would have been okay. I know the minister has always said that a scientific test was applied and, yes, it was, but only after the irrational test, which is the problem. The irrational test was to lock up all old-growth forest and what was called, euphemistically, high conservation value forest. High conservation value forest, as far as I can see, is forest that a person wants to keep: "It is my bit of forest." If people like to go there for a picnic or for a walk with their family, that is the definition of high conservation value forest. Do members know what the difference is between a developer and a conservationist? A conservationist lives in the forest and a developer wants to live in the forest. If a person already lives in the forest, he does not want anyone else to have it. It is essentially a selfish and self-centred attitude. Unfortunately, we have lost the opportunity to bring around the Western Australian public to some realisation of the place that forestry has in Western Australia and the positive environmental contribution it can provide. What better thing is there to do than to grow trees that seal up carbon? What impact is there on nature when a tree is grown and then cut down and used to build things? What a fantastic and positive thing to do! Environmental people should say that that is fantastic. It is a renewable resource that locks up carbon at the same time. What a wonderful thing to do! We have really made it a despicable and dirty thing to do, with no guarantee that people will be allowed to continue their work, and foresters, loggers and children of loggers have virtually been stigmatised. It is terrible! People down south - I will be frank - have not been looked after. The neglect of this Government in dealing with this matter has been morally disgraceful. It has been too little, too late. I understand that today the Government has said it will put \$1 million into the sky jetty project. I welcome that; if it has happened, it is fantastic. However, would it not have been nicer to do that when those people were down and had been kicked in the guts?

Hon Barry House: It was really needed two years ago.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. The situation has suited the Government. The doubt in the industry has caused people to bail out, which has solved the Government's problem of handing around the money. It still did not have enough money to hand around, but most of the people affected in the industry had given up and got out of it. Do members know who did the best financially out of this whole thing? It was Sotico Pty Ltd, Bunnings or Wesfarmers Ltd. I am not criticising them. They were very astute and had the Government by the reasonably abbreviated hirsute parts. They wanted to get out and it suited them.

Hon Kim Chance: To be fair to Sotico, the offer it made to the Government was very attractive.

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Hon PETER FOSS: I am not criticising anybody. What took the Government some time to work out was that it could not go past Sotico. It might not have been the minister, but some members of the Government were not too keen on having Sotico coming out smelling like roses over this matter.

Hon Barry House: Its motive was not to save the timber industry but to maintain its business that it intends to flog off as soon as it can.

Hon Kim Chance: And its integrity as a corporate citizen.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. I have no quarrel with or criticism of Sotico Pty Ltd. I do not criticise the Government for dealing with it, but I do criticise the Government for not having worked out on day one that it must deal with it. I realise that government members were learning and feeling their way and there were some feelings about big Western Australian business, but they could not go past Sotico. It sat there. It gave the Government a reasonable deal, and why should it not? It was a reasonable deal for Sotico. I do not think it was entirely coincidental that Wesfarmers recently announced a massive increase in profits. Good for Wesfarmers. I like the idea that the State has a good, strong, sensibly run, strategically managed Western Australian industry. My only criticism is the time it took this Government to work out that the key player was Sotico. Had the Government moved a little faster, there would have been a little less pain around and it might have achieved a more satisfactory outcome.

Hon Kim Chance: The other thing that influenced the Government very strongly with the Sotico offer - it certainly influenced me - was that the opposite had happened in Victoria and the consequences there were not good.

Hon PETER FOSS: As I have said, I am not criticising the decision the Government made. I believe it was a good deal all round for everybody. I merely criticise the time it took the Government to arrive at the fact that it could never go past Sotico. The Government will not find me criticising it for making the deal, because it had to be done. Sotico was one of the big moneyed players that could sit there forever and not be hurt. Which other company had the wherewithal and the market control of Sotico? Even the parts of the economics degree that did not make sense to Hon Barry House would have pointed that out to the Government.

I believe the whole process involved too little, too late. The Premier went to Manjimup. It might have been better for the media image not to have gone there to an angry mob that was ready to rip his guts out, and by the time he got there people were so dispirited that the upset was considerably less. However, was it statesmanlike? It might have been good press, but was it fair on the people of Manjimup that the Premier did not go there to tell them what it was all about? We made a bad decision, but at least Richard Court went there. We always worked on the basis that if we had bad news, we would deliver it ourselves. I can remember when I became Minister for the Arts that I was given all the acceptance letters for grants. I asked where the rejection letters were. I was told that the staff sent those out. I said that if I was to send out news, I would send out both kinds. Eventually I got to the stage that I would let them sign and send out both. I was not going to have it that I signed the acceptance letters and they signed the rejection letters. It comes with the job. I believe it is more important to sign the rejections than the acceptances. Occasionally one must be the bearer of bad news, because that is what it is all about.

The Government for all too long divided the decision making. We all know what happened. I admire the minister's capacity, because eventually he did pick up all the facts. He started out pretty green in the area but he worked hard to find out what it was all about. I believe that he quickly worked out some of the things the industry needed. It took the Minister for the Environment longer, but she eventually got there too. The regret I have is that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet never got there. I believe in the end the department was calling the shots. People said that they talked to the minister, who sympathised with them but could not deliver. They talked to Dr Judith Edwards who eventually sympathised with them but could not deliver. Only one person could deliver, and he was in the Premier's office. That is bad government, because it is so frustrating. Ministers were supposedly in charge of something but were not. Again, the Government should make the decisions up front, get the good news and the bad news, go to see the people and make the decisions. The Government should not simply talk to everybody it thinks might get upset about the issue. It should work out first of all what it thinks is right.

Hon Kim Chance: What about the question of process?

Hon PETER FOSS: I will follow through. The Government should first work out what would be right. Then it should tell people what it thinks is right and ask them why it is wrong. The first part of the process is to try to fathom, in principle, what needs to be done. The Government must decide what is correct and not simply what is popular. It is important that the Government finds out what people would and would not like. However, the first

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responsibility a Government has is to find out what is right in principle. If it thinks that what is right in principle will not be popular with certain people, it must try to sell it to them.

We might argue about that. However, I think the result of the forest management process was that the Government was never quite certain what the decision would be. It was always dependent on other things. It is similar to what happens in the Labor Party's factions; that is, it depends on who has the numbers to get something to happen. Maybe the Government found that it was a familiar process to work out whether it had the numbers and the right people. The first thing the Government should have done was follow the logic and arguments through and determine what it thought was scientifically acceptable, socially acceptable and best for the future. However, the Government should be willing to change its mind.

Hon Kim Chance: The question of process I am referring to is the one in which the law under which we are obliged to operate effectively devolves that decision-making process to the Conservation Commission of Western Australia. It is not until we get a number from it that we can articulate our position.

Hon PETER FOSS: I understand that. However, the Government must be the prime arguers in that area. The Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries should go in to bat for the forestry industry.

I give an example about consultation. As Minister for Health I visited Bunbury. It was quite obvious that Bunbury needed a collocated hospital. It was dying medically. The public hospital did not have the facilities. People were being shuffled between the private and public hospital. It was a disaster. There were hospitals in Bunbury, but people were going to Perth because the Bunbury public hospital did not have the facilities, and we could not afford two hospitals. I formed the view that we should collocate the hospitals. I went to Bunbury to announce the decision and said that we would work out the details in consultation with the community. I have never heard such an explosion in my life. People were indignant because I could not give them any answers. I had not worked out the answers; I was going to do that in consultation. People were furious with me because I had not worked out the answers before I told them what we intended to do. We set up a committee and worked out all the answers, and then told people what we would do.

Hon Kim Chance: You did not consult with us.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, we did not. The funny thing is that people said it was good.

Hon Kim Chance: I normally cop it the other way around.

Hon PETER FOSS: The minister will. The first time I went to Bunbury, people said that I had not consulted with them, but I had not made up my mind at that stage! I was asked what would happen with this and that. I said that I would consult them, and I was told not to try that one on them.

I explain the realities and the way proper consultation works. The Government must first work things through reasonably thoroughly. There is no point in the Government arriving at decisions if it has not considered most of the consequences and can answer questions about them. Once the Government has done that, it should go to people and listen to them. The interesting thing is that if people have a good argument to the contrary, the Government will not have any problem changing its decision. The process this Government follows is apparently one in which it consults everybody by asking what they like rather than for the logical arguments on a certain point. The problem is that never keeps anybody happy because the Government can never explain the logic behind a certain decision. The process reaches a point at which the Government must say that that is what it has agreed. There is no logic or argument; just a decision. This is a little lesson in government for the minister. Firstly, the Government should work it all out. It should work out all the questions that people might ask, and then work out the answers to those questions. Then it should consult people. They will be happy because when they ask what the Government will do about something, it will have an answer. If they do not like what the Government wants to do, they will tell it. If the argument is good, the Government can change its decision. However, the consultation must be conducted after the Government has come up with something to tell people.

The Minister for Forestry should have sat down with the many very good people in the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Forest Products Commission who know this area inside out. They are really brilliant, good-value people. Of all the departments that came before us during the Estimates Committee, the Department of Conservation and Land Management impressed me most. They were very professional, knew a great deal and were fazed by nothing. They were very good. That shows the professionalism within that department. They are very professional people.

Hon Kim Chance: I will send them a copy of your speech.

Hon PETER FOSS: They know my views. I told them as they were leaving the hearings that it was the most professional presentation we had during the estimates. My admiration has been made clear over the years. It is

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an excellent organisation. It is staffed by quality, highly professional people. The personal slurs they have had to endure hurt me. These attacks are because people do not agree with what is happening in the forest, but rather than just saying they do not agree, they take it out on those in CALM. It stinks, and I find that those people who attack CALM officers stink, too.

The reality is that the minister should have worked this out and been an advocate for forestry and had more success. I know we have the presidential process with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which is a total disaster.

Hon Kim Chance: I think you have that part wrong. When I get an opportunity, I will respond.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am happy for the minister to do so. The often repeated experience from people in the forestry industry is, "Kim Chance - he's a nice bloke, but he promises all sorts of things and never delivers." I remember hearing the minister speak at a breakfast predicting how promptly this issue would be dealt with. It was to be a month away at that stage, but it keeps being revised. Now we have the statement that it will be a little later.

Hon Kim Chance: My point is that it is not a function of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It is the process, and the process is unbelievably complicated.

Hon PETER FOSS: I do not think an awful lot of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Hon Kim Chance: I do.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know the minister does.

Hon Kim Chance: It was not her fault.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not saying that it was. Once the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has made up her mind, she is a very good advocate and gets proposals through - often, I think, to the amazement of her colleagues. We had a similar minister called Eric Charlton. He would come to Cabinet and walk away with \$40 million and we were never quite sure how he managed to con it out of us.

Hon Kim Chance: I recall Hon Alannah MacTiernan's frustration with the Planning Appeals Amendment Bill. It was a difficult process. We have the same problem of process when legislating on the forest management plan structure. It needs revision.

Hon PETER FOSS: I agree. I said from day one that the Opposition would be happy to cooperate with the Government. I would be happy to bring the plan forward and legislate with the Government, which does not need the Greens onside.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Some other matters need to be dealt with.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again.