

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS, COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

**464. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for State Development:**

I refer the minister to comments made by the federal forestry minister, Senator Ian Macdonald, and reported by the ABC on its Internet news site for the south west on 22 January 2003, that -

“I’ve made it clear to the Western Australian ministers . . . that unless there is an allocation of 200,000 cubic metres of jarrah [timber] then the Commonwealth will not be in a position to honour the commitment it made for funding,”

- (1) Is the minister aware of those comments?
- (2) Is that position consistent with commitments that the Commonwealth made before the last federal election?
- (3) Is the Commonwealth’s position consistent with the State Government’s policy to protect Western Australia’s old-growth forests?
- (4) Is the Commonwealth’s position consistent with the position of the Leader of the Opposition?

**Mr C.M. BROWN replied:**

- (1)-(4) I am pleased to be able to answer that question from the member for Collie. I am aware of those comments. The position that is now being taken by the senator is not consistent with the commitments that were made by the Commonwealth prior to the last federal election. It is interesting that on 15 September 2001, just months before the federal election, an advertisement appeared in *The West Australian* seeking expressions of interest under the heading “Forest Industry Development Assistance for South-West Western Australia”. That advertisement advised the community that the Commonwealth had allocated some \$15 million to assist with the restructuring of both the hardwood and softwood timber industries. Interestingly, the guidelines for the scheme referred to in the advertisement at that time stated -

Expressions of Interest are expected to be assessed during November 2001. Project proponents meeting the program’s objectives and criteria may be subsequently invited to lodge a detailed “Part B” application.

It is now one and a half years since that advertisement appeared in *The West Australian*. It is one and a half years since the Commonwealth Government called for submissions to allocate funding to the timber industry for restructuring. Do members know how many applications have been assessed? Not one application has been assessed. In fact, the officer working on this matter for the Commonwealth has been transferred. This is scurrilous.

*Point of Order*

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The minister is misleading the Parliament because he knows that that advertisement was reliant on the allocation of timber, which was in the hands of the State Government. It has still not allocated that timber. How will the Commonwealth allocate the money?

The SPEAKER: The member for Warren-Blackwood knows that that is not a point of order; it is his opinion.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr C.M. BROWN: If there were time, I would read out the advertisement. What the member for Warren-Blackwood has told the Parliament is totally untrue. At some point I will ask him for an apology.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren-Blackwood!

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr C.M. BROWN: It never said anything about it in relation to that.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren-Blackwood!

Mr C.M. BROWN: Worse still, at the time this advertisement appeared, the Government had made it clearly known that its indicative allocation was 140 000 cubic metres. The Commonwealth knew that that was the indicative allocation.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Warren-Blackwood to order for the second time.

Mr C.M. BROWN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know that the truth hurts opposition members, but they are going to hear it. They hate it. The federal Government has misled the people of the south west and the Opposition is too weak and insipid to stand up for them. It is too weak to tell its federal minister that it is about time he honoured the application. We have had an attempt by the federal Government to blackmail the State Government into logging old-growth forests, but we will not do it. The federal Government and the federal minister need to understand. Worse still, the Leader of the Opposition is supporting the logging of old-growth forests. One would think that over the past couple of years he might have changed his mind. The Leader of the Opposition said in an interview on 19 February -

Now, I agree the vast majority of our old-growth forest should be preserved.

In other words, not all old-growth forest should be preserved. The federal Government has turned its back on the people of the south west. It has not gone ahead with the commitments it made in the advertisement. It has used taxpayers' money to mislead this House. The Leader of the Opposition wishes to go back to the future and continue to log old-growth forests.