

WUNGONG DAM, THINNING OF JARRAH FOREST IN CATCHMENT

1874. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development representing the Minister for the Environment
- (1) Is the Government planning to thin the jarrah forest in the Wungong catchment in the hope of increasing runoff into the Wungong Dam?
  - (2) Is the Minister aware that many people consider that this is a high risk strategy because it may increase the salinity of the water in the dam?
  - (3) Why then is the Government proceeding with this plan when other options such as water conservation have not been fully explored?
  - (4) Will the Minister table any assessments carried out by the DoE on this jarrah thinning proposal?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following response:

- (1) The Government agreed to investigate this management option in the State Water Strategy. No decision to undertake thinning has yet been made at this early stage. The Water Corporation is currently formulating the proposal in consultation with the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the Water and Rivers Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Forest Products Commission and Alcoa Australia and other stakeholders. The proposal is being designed as a 12-year management program to progressively thin dense regrowth stands in the catchment in ways consistent with the approved Forest Management Plan. The aim is to increase the runoff potential of treated areas and enable them to grow on to a mature forest, similar in form to forests at the time of European settlement, with consequent benefits to the environment and the water resource. The Government would not proceed with the trial if it involved treatments that were not currently approved silvicultural practices, without environmental impact assessment.
- (2) The thinning proposal is not considered high risk for salinity as the catchment is in the high rainfall zone where salt storage is low.
- (3) Other options including water conservation and efficiency measures, water re-use, the provision of additional dams and ground water schemes, and desalination are being explored.
- (4) Any assessment of a project proposal that may arise from the current Water Corporation investigation under my responsibility as Minister for the Environment would follow the assessment procedures of the Environmental Protection Act (1986). These include provision for extensive public input and consideration by the Environmental Protection Authority.