



Hon. Brian Ellis

Chairman

Environment and Public Affairs Committee

Re: Inquiry into the Sandalwood Industry in Western Australia

Dear Sir, I would like to submit the following points for your committee's consideration:

It is my contention that the current practices employed in the harvesting of wild Sandalwood are not sustainable.

For over two decades now I have been publicly stating this belief based primarily on my observations of the absence of juvenile Sandalwood plants in the wild.

As a horticulturist I am well aware of the difficulty involved in:

- Germinating the seeds of this species even under nursery conditions;
- Getting the germinated seedlings to successfully attach to a host plant
- Protecting the seedlings from herbivores after transplanting.

My experience in mine waste dump revegetation projects has confirmed the lengths that herbivores, particularly rabbits and goats, will go to, to reach palatable seedlings and the lengths that goats will go to, to reach the upper branches of mature Sandalwood trees.

For the past seven years I have conducted numerous flora and vegetation surveys throughout W.A. predominantly the Eastern and North Eastern Goldfields and can confidently attest to the fact that I have not seen one single Sandalwood seedling despite intensive and detailed study of the flora throughout the range of their natural habitat.

From my own observations and studies of Holistic Land Management, free ranging animals, when feeding, concentrate their activities on what they perceive to be the most palatable species in their range, only moving on to the less palatable once they have removed the former. Native plants are at their most palatable when they are at the seedling stage. This is also when they are at their most vulnerable and even a testing tug or nibble from an animal will invariably result in the plants death.

In revegetation trials that I have conducted, I have observed that rabbits have concentrated their feeding activities on all the Acacia species planted by either burrowing under the wire mesh guards or by the young, squeezing through the five centimetre diameter holes of the guards. Even though some of the Eucalypt plants were bitten off, the foliage remained on the ground uneaten. The Acacias and Eucalypts used in these trials were chosen from larger

PUBLIC

species lists used in previous trials after culling those deemed too attractive to herbivores to warrant replanting. Sandalwood was included among those culled.

I believe that commercial plantation grown Sandalwood harvesting is the only way that this industry can survive and be sustainable. To that end I would like to see:

- A cessation of licenses issued for Sandalwood pulling from the wild once the current licences have expired.
- A comprehensive survey conducted by qualified, independent persons with no vested interest in this industry, to determine the rate of germination and survival of Sandalwood seedlings on Crown Land and Reserves.
- Taxation offsets and/or Carbon Credits made available to private landowners to encourage the establishment of Sandalwood plantations.

Yours faithfully

Phil Stanley

PUBLIC