

CLEARING OF NATIVE VEGETATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

4760. Hon Paul Llewellyn to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the clearing of land in Western Australia, and ask -

- (1) How many hectares of native vegetation were approved for clearing in Western Australia in the year 1995-1996, under the Government's land clearing permit system by -
 - (a) burning;
 - (b) cutting;
 - (c) flooding; and
 - (d) mechanical removal?
- (2) How many hectares of native vegetation were refused for clearing in Western Australia in the year 1995-1996, under the Government's land clearing permit system by -
 - (a) burning;
 - (b) cutting;
 - (c) flooding; and
 - (d) mechanical removal?
- (3) How many hectares of native vegetation were approved for clearing in Western Australia in the year 1995-1996 under the Government's land clearing permit system for -
 - (a) grazing and pasture;
 - (b) road construction or maintenance;
 - (c) mineral production;
 - (d) extractive industry;
 - (e) plantation;
 - (f) horticulture;
 - (g) dam construction or maintenance;
 - (h) building or structure;
 - (i) miscellaneous;
 - (j) fence line maintenance;
 - (k) drainage;
 - (l) state agreement;
 - (m) mineral exploration;
 - (n) recreation;
 - (o) restoration;
 - (p) petroleum exploration;
 - (q) cropping, grazing and pasture;
 - (r) timber harvesting;
 - (s) infrastructure maintenance;
 - (t) aquaculture;
 - (u) industrial;
 - (v) hazard reduction or fire control;
 - (w) cropping;
 - (x) horticulture and miscellaneous;
 - (y) extractive industry, road construction and maintenance; and
 - (z) other?

- (4) How many hectares of native vegetation were cleared in Western Australia in the year 1995-1996?
- (5) What data is used to identify the pre-European extent of native vegetation complexes in Western Australia, and in which year was this data produced and by whom?
- (6) What data is used to identify the remaining extent of native vegetation complexes in Western Australia, and in which year was this data produced and by whom?
- (7) How much in tonnes does the Minister estimate the clearing of native vegetation in Western Australia contributed to emissions of carbon dioxide in the year 1995-1996?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1)-(4) In 1995-1996 clearing was regulated under the Soil and Land Conservation Regulations 1992. There was no approvals process under this legislation. Clearing in excess of one hectare that resulted in a change of land use had to be notified to the Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation at least 90 days prior to the commencement of clearing. If the Commissioner considered that land degradation would result if clearing proceeded, the Commissioner could impose a Soil Conservation Notice under section 30B of the Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945. Questions relating to data for the area of clearing notified in 1995-1996 under this process should be referred to the Minister for Agriculture and Food.
- (5) "A database on the vegetation of Western Australia" (Hopkins, A.J.M, Beeston, G.R. and Harvey, J.M, 2001) is used to identify the pre-European extent of native vegetation in Western Australia. The major source of data in the database was the published and unpublished mapping of J.S. Beard at 1:250,000 scale. Mapping of the south-west corner was compiled by A.J.M. Hopkins from various sources. The Department of Agriculture and Food and the Department of Environment and Conservation are the data custodians.
- (6) For most of the South-West Agricultural Area, it is the Vegetation Extent dataset [ANZWA1050000124 as described in Shepherd, D.P., Beeston, G.R., and Hopkins, A.J.M. (2001), Native Vegetation in Western Australia. Technical Report 249. Department of Agriculture Western Australia, South Perth]. This is based on interpretation of airphotos and satellite imagery captured between 1996 and 2003. The Department of Agriculture and Food and the Department of Environment and Conservation are the data custodians.

For the Perth Metropolitan Area the dataset 'Native vegetation in the Perth Metropolitan Area' (2006) is used. This is based on interpretation of airphotos captured in December 2004. This dataset updates previous mapping for the Perth Metropolitan Area done in 1997 and 2001/02. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the Department of Agriculture and Food are custodians.

A new state-wide vegetation baseline dataset is in preparation by the Department of Agriculture and Food in collaboration with Land and Water Australia through the National Land and Water Resources Audit initiative. This will be a 2004 baseline, with changes to 2006 captured and attributed. The project is expected to be completed in August 2007.
- (7) Based on the figures compiled by the Australian Greenhouse Office for Western Australia using the Kyoto Protocol accounting standards, which are based on satellite data, land use change (deforestation) related emissions were approximately 2,761,000 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent in 1995.