

ENVIRONMENT — VEGETATION CLEARING

4621. Mr C.J. Tallentire to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) How much vegetation clearing, in hectares, has been approved under Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act* for each of the last 5 financial years?
- (2) How many hectares were refused for clearing for each of the last 5 financial years?
- (3) Was vegetation clearing information for 2014-2015 published in the Department of Environment Regulation (DER) Annual Report? If not, why not?
- (4) Based on DER's annual reviews of satellite data that are used to identify vegetation change, how many cases were investigated for possible unlawful clearing for each of the last 5 financial years?
- (5) How does DER determine if clearing is unauthorised or cleared through an exemption from the requirement to hold a clearing permit?
- (6) Given that analysis is made of satellite data to determine if clearing is either authorised, done through an exemption or unauthorised, how many hectares were deemed to be cleared through an exemption in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015?
- (7) How many hectares of unauthorised native vegetation clearing has occurred in each of the last 5 financial years?

**Mr A.P. Jacob replied:**

- (1) 2010-2011 - 26,927 hectares  
2011-2012 - 18,413 hectares  
2012-2013 - 13,304 hectares  
2013-2014 - 16,443 hectares  
2014-2015 - 12,216 hectares
- (2) 2010-2011 - 2,618 hectares  
2011-2012 - 39 hectares  
2012-2013 - 160 hectares  
2013-2014 - 255 hectares  
2014-2015 - 545 hectares
- (3) No. The Department of Environment Regulation's (DER) 2014-2015 Annual Report was prepared to meet the requirements of the *Financial Management Act 2006* and the Treasurer's instructions.
- (4) 2010-2011 - 2  
2011-2012 - 7  
2012-2013 - 0  
2013-2014 - 11  
2014-2015 - 1
- (5) After determining whether clearing is sanctioned by a valid clearing permit granted under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, DER assesses the clearing against exemptions under Schedule 6 of the Act and Regulation 5 of the *Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004*.
- (6) Clearing carried out under an exemption is not required to be reported, therefore it is not possible to provide data on the amount of exempt clearing carried out, such as that completed in accordance with a subdivision approval under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

While satellite data can identify vegetation change, computer systems alone are unable to reliably distinguish between vegetation change that is the result of mechanical clearing, and natural events such as salinity, fire, cyclone and drought. For these reasons, satellite data alone is incapable of determining the extent of vegetation change that is the result of mechanical clearing carried out lawfully under exemption.

- (7) 2010-2011 - 440 hectares
- 2011-2012 - 85 hectares
- 2012-2013 - 1784 hectares
- 2013-2014 - 842 hectares
- 2014-2015 - 286 hectares