

NATIVE VEGETATION — CLEARING PERMIT ISSUE

5127. Mr C.J. Tallentire to the Minister for Environment

I refer to the granting of a permit to destroy native vegetation, permit number 4196/1 issued to Mr Ron McLean on 17 March 2011, and ask:

- (a) is part of the vegetation to be destroyed Beard's Vegetation Unit 1049, medium woodland, wandoo, York gum, salmon gum, morrel and gimlet;
- (b) what is the percentage remaining of the original extent of this vegetation unit;
- (c) what is the percentage remaining of the original extent of this vegetation unit held in the conservation estate;
- (d) is the issue of this permit consistent with Clearing Principle (e) which states that native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared;
- (e) did officers from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Native Vegetation Conservation Branch inspect this land during the assessment of the permit application; and
 - (i) if not, why not; and
 - (ii) if not, was the advice of the applicant used when considering the decision to grant the permit; and
- (f) since September 2008, on how many other occasions has a clearing permit been issued without a site inspection from DEC officers, but with advice from the applicant?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b) The estimated percentage remaining of Beard Vegetation Association 1049 is 6.84 per cent, or 56,987 hectares.
- (c) The estimated percentage of the remaining area that is within the formal conservation reserve system is 5.71 per cent, or 3,255 hectares.
- (d) Section 51(O) of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 requires the Chief Executive Officer to have regard to the clearing principles so far as they are relevant to the matter under consideration. Mr McLean's application to clear was to remove dead vegetation within an eight hectare area to enable rehabilitation. The assessment of the area found that the vegetation was in a parkland state, that is mainly pasture with scattered trees and shrubs, and did not comprise intact remnant native vegetation because it had been previously extensively cleared.
- (e) No.
 - (i) The analysis of aerial photography clearly showed that the area was severely degraded, and was not significant as remnant vegetation.
 - (ii) Yes, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) considers all supporting information when making a decision on an application to clear.
- (f) DEC does not keep a separate record of clearing permits granted without site inspection and with supporting information from the applicant.

For each application received, DEC conducts a desktop review of the information provided by the applicant. The assessment approach is based on consideration of the nature of the clearing and the environmental risks associated with the clearing. In some cases, it may be determined that a site inspection is not warranted.

DEC publishes details of each of its decisions and the decision reports on its external website.