

GNANGARA PINE PLANTATION — BLACK COCKATOOS

1138. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

Only 4,000 hectares of the Gngangara Pine Plantation remain to be harvested. Successive State Governments have failed in past years to require revegetation of the large area of the Gngangara pine plantation that have been harvested, and the area has been left fallow. This remaining pine plantation site is a mega roost site and provides foraging habitat of pine cones for thousands of Carnaby's Cockatoos. They have shifted there as their natural habitat has been extensively cleared. If the last 4,000 hectares of pines are harvested and lost to the Carnaby's Cockatoos, experts have advised that at least half of the Carnaby's population there will be starved to death and lost as there is no substitute habitat available. It is now a matter of urgency to stop and defer the harvest of this last 4,000 hectares of pines until replacement habitat is planted and grown. Many peak and expert community groups such as Birdlife WA are calling for the pine harvest to be halted immediately in order to prevent the collapse of the already endangered Carnaby's population, and I ask:

- (a) what will you as Minister responsible for protection of the endangered Carnaby's Cockatoo do, to immediately defer and/or stop the harvest of the last portion of the remaining Gngangara Pine Plantation;
- (b) a few years ago, former Environment Minister Dawson deferred the harvest for some time, what provisions were used to do so;
- (c) under section 69 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, there is a 'stop orders, issue and effect of' provision. Will you investigate this option and/or any other to defer and/or stop the harvesting of the remaining Gngangara Pine Plantation; and
- (d) have alternative plantations of eucalypts (north of Albany) that are available for local timber supply been considered as an alternative?

**Hon Stephen Dawson replied:**

- (a) Dense pine plantations intercept and transpire much more water than grassland and open native banksia woodland. Numerous studies have found that recharge to groundwater under dense pine plantations is negligible. When pine plantations are thinned or cleared and replaced with open banksia woodland, then recharge to groundwater increases.

The Gngangara Groundwater Allocation Plan 2022 uses groundwater modelling scenarios that include predicted changes in recharge to groundwater that will result from expected changes to land use in the Gngangara, Pinjar and Yanchep pine plantations. The increased recharge from the expected changes in land use as pines are harvested will contribute to meeting the objectives set in the new plan for high value wetlands and areas of groundwater-dependent banksia woodland supported by the Gngangara groundwater system.

If pine clearing was halted, then this would reduce future groundwater recharge to the Gngangara system and increase the risk of the Gngangara plan's objectives not being met.

- (b) Harvesting at Gngangara, Pinjar and Yanchep has never been deferred. In 2018 and 2019, the Forest Products Commission reduced the amount of clear fell operations and increased the amount of thinning operations in the area. Any uncommitted resource from areas outside of Gngangara, Pinjar and Yanchep was also used at that time to supplement the required contracted deliveries.

- (c) Section 69 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act) applies to non-compliance with a requirement made in an Environmental Protection Notice (EPN) given under section 65 of the EP Act.

An EPN is a statutory notice given where it is suspected that there is, or is likely to be, an emission that has caused, or is likely to cause, pollution or material or serious environmental harm (ongoing). The EPN may require the persons served (being the owner or occupier or both) to take necessary measures within a specified time to investigate, prevent and control the emissions from the premises.

No EPN has been considered or given for the Gngangara pine plantation and no offences under the EP Act have been alleged or identified.

- (d) This question should be directed to the Minister for Forestry.