

Today the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry the Hon Tony Burke MP made a Ministerial Statement on forestry.=20

The Greens response is outlined below.

Rudd ready to subsidise Gunns pulp mill

Greens Leader Bob Brown

Wednesday, 24 June 2009

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/video/2009/05/19/2575320.htm>

The blitz on Australia's native forests and woodlands is to be extended, according to the Rudd government's Minister for Forests Tony Burke in today's Ministerial statement.

"This is an effective go ahead for the pulp mill, with consequent taxpayer subsidies," Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown said today.

"In the statement the Minister promises millions more to the industry. He is diverting taxpayer dollars to pay forest-destroying corporations to lobby himself. Get ready for much more money to be siphoned across to Gunns Ltd and other woodchip corporations."

"This is a chainsaw-led statement promising logging supremos a new Ministerial Roundtable on top of the multi-million dollar Pulp and Paper Industry Strategy Group set up last week," Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown said today.

Senator Brown said the statement is a direct challenge to Australians who want the nation's native forests and wildlife protected to vote against Labor at the next election.

"The announcement comes on top of science-based evidence from Australian National University that forests marked for logging are the largest carbon stores in the Southern Hemisphere."

"This will also increase the campaign to save Australia's forests and to stop Gunns destructive pulp mill project in the Tamar Valley," Senator Brown said.

Ministerial Statement - Main Points

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Tony Burke MP

- * Regional Forest Agreements strike "the right balance between conservation and sustainable production in native forests".
- * Government "remains fully committed to RFAs as the primary mechanism to sustain jobs and support industry, to ensure high conservation values, and for the protection of biodiversity and threatened species.
- * 23 million hectares of Australia's native forests are protected in formal nature conservation reserves; there has been a 10% increase in the

area of protected forests since 1998 - 16% of Australia's total native forest estate is now formally protected in reserves; 4.6 million hectares of native forests are within World Heritage areas; more than 73% of "known old-growth forests" are protected within reserves.

- * The interim report from the Hawke review of the EPBC Act will be released next week and will discuss RFAs.
- * Australia's plantation estate now stands at around 2 million hectares; plantations account for around two-thirds of Australia's log production.
- * The economic benefits for Tasmania of Gunns' planned pulp mill should not be underestimated. The mill will add an estimated \$6.7 billion to Tasmania's economy.
- * Construction of Gunns' pulp mill will create 8000 direct and indirect jobs and 1500 jobs during operation of the mill.
- * The Gunns pulp mill will not result in increased logging.
- * "As the Minister for Forestry, let me state quite clearly that I want to see the Gunns Bell Bay Pulp Mill built - provided the requirements of federal environmental law are met."
- * Forestry sector directly employs 76,800 people.
- * The government will establish a Forest Industry Leaders Ministerial Roundtable which will focus on "government-industry collaboration to secure industry investment and jobs at a time of global recession."
- * The roundtable will include representative from the native forest and plantation sectors, the wood processing sector, the pulp and paper sector, the skills and training sectors and workforce.
- * The government has allocated \$8 million towards projects which address major knowledge gaps about the impacts of climate change on forestry and the vulnerability of forest systems.
- * "In 2007, forests provided a net sink of 21.1 million tonnes of CO2 and the increase in the carbon stock of harvested wood products was 4.4 million tonnes."
- * Australia wants the Copenhagen negotiations to recognise the mitigation potential of forests, including recognising stored carbon in harvested wood products.