

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Mr Wood

to Minister for Environment and Heritage

Silvertech and the Tiwi Land Council

1. What, if any, is DIPE's role in the Tiwi Islands plantation that involves Silvertech and the Tiwi Land Council.
2. Has DIPE conducted any kind of monitoring of the impacts of this clearing, planting and logging operation.

ANSWER

1. Forestry operations by Sylvatech on Melville Island were the subject of two environmental assessments under the previous Territory Government. At the time that these assessments were undertaken, there were no legislative requirements for approval of the forestry operations. Nevertheless, in accordance with section 4 of the *Environmental Assessment Act*, the then Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment required formal environmental assessment of the proposed forestry operations. The assessment was undertaken by the former Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE) Environment and Heritage Division. The assessments, prepared with the advice of the Natural Resources Division and Parks and Wildlife Commission concluded that there was adequate information for an initial 2,700 hectares and subsequent 2,500 hectares of forestry operations to proceed. However, the assessment noted that expansion to the envisaged 30,000 hectares would require the preparation of a strategic plan and other documents supplying additional data. The then DLPE (excluding the Environment and Heritage Division) assisted in the preparation of these documents.

Sylvatech subsequently made an application to the Australian Government for approval of up to 30,000 hectares of forestry plantation. In 2001 approval was given by the Australian Government for up to 26,000 hectares of forestry plantation, pursuant to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (the EPBC Act).

Since the Strategic Plan was implemented, the DLPE and now the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment (DIPE) were significantly involved in the development of a monitoring program for the project. Additionally, the DLPE provided an officer to the Tiwi Land Council on secondment at the proponent's request to provide a link between Sylvatech and the Northern Territory Government and to help facilitate the environmental assessment and project development processes.

2. The Sylvatech Forestry proposal received approval from the Australian Government under the *EPBC Act*. This approval was conditioned to require the preparation of a monitoring program in respect to impacts to threatened species. The approval also requires an independent auditor to audit compliance with the approval on a triennial basis. The Australian Government expects to receive the first of these reports next year. It is the responsibility of the Australian Government's Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) to ensure that the proponent complies with parameters formally agreed to under the *EPBC Act*.

Monitoring of the potential impacts of the project is therefore the responsibility of the proponent as agreed by all parties. DIPE does not undertake monitoring on behalf of the proponent however, it has access to the data generated by the proponent's monitoring program.