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MEDIA RELEASE

Pressure mounts on NSW Minister for Natural Resources over Brigalow Belt South Bioregion

21 October 2004

Pressure to announce a decision on the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion assessment is mounting with the issue placed firmly back on the agenda in the NSW Parliament today.

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper asked the House to note that the ongoing failure to announce a decision regarding the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion assessment was still causing great concern for the 36 employees at timber mill business Gunnedah Timbers.

Mr Draper pointed out the NSW Minister for Natural Resources Craig Knowles had visited Gunnedah Timbers workers during an inspection of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion and had indicated his support for the cypress pine industry.

Alongside Member for the Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay, Mr Draper called on the Minister to release the assessment as a matter of urgency.

Mr Draper has raised the issue in Parliament previously stressing the industry's preferred management option was one that ensured conservation values and timber production were integrated giving timber reliant businesses such as Gunnedah Timbers a viable future.

"The assessment was originally scheduled for release in late 2002 which gives some indication of how long how timber operators have had to worry about whether or not they would lose access to raw product," he said.

Mr Torbay has also been pressing the Minister on the issue on behalf of the Bingara Cypress Pine sawmill which has lost \$600,000 in income due to restrictions on its operations during the 27-month moratorium.

End Release

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