



Recd 27.8.08
JP

The Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

RECEIVED
25 AUG 2008
OFFICE OF
JULIA IRWIN MP

15 AUG 2008

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 27 May 2008 to the Hon. Simon Crean MP, Minister for Trade, requesting a response to a petition on the importation of illegally logged timber, which was submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions. Your letter was forwarded to me as I am the minister responsible for the matter raised. I regret the delay in responding.

The Australian Government is committed to restricting the importation of illegally logged timber into Australia and has allocated \$1 million to work with regional governments and industry to implement its five election commitments on illegal logging.

In relation to building the capacity of regional governments to tackle illegal logging, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) actively participates in a number of intergovernmental forums on this issue. This work is supported by AusAID overseas development programs such as the \$200 million International Forest Carbon Initiative, which includes the \$15.7 million Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program and the newly announced \$3 million Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership.

DAFF also supports the development of certification schemes for timber sold in Australia through bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries, participation in intergovernmental forums and work with Australian industry and certifying organisations, such as the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification and the Australian Forest Certification and Forest Stewardship Council schemes.

In relation to implementing the election commitments requiring product disclosure and import restrictions, the government is working with stakeholders to develop a new policy that is consistent with international trade, domestic and foreign policy obligations. In arguing for incentives within emerging global carbon markets for avoided deforestation and better management of tropical rainforests, the government advocated trialling market incentives at the climate change meeting in Bali in December 2007. Further work on this action will be led by the Department of Climate Change, supported by DAFF.

Thank you for bringing the concerns raised by the petition's signatories to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Tony Burke