

Additional Comments - Senator Nick Xenophon

1.1 While I am broadly supportive of the provisions in this bill, it is important to note the serious environmental harm caused by illegal logging.

1.2 In Malaysia and Indonesia, every hour an area the size of 300 soccer fields – equal to 1,645,920 square metres – is deforested. As a result, an estimated 50 Orang-utans die each week as a result of loss of habitat. At this rate, the International Fund for Animal Welfare believes Orang-utans could be extinct in the wild within the next ten years¹.

1.3 While this amount of deforestation cannot necessarily be totally attributed to illegal logging, it would naïve to believe that illegal logging is not a significant contributor.

1.4 I acknowledge the concerns about monitoring of illegal logging, where much illegal deforestation may occur outside the government of the country's knowledge. I acknowledge that for any monitoring to be effective, it must be subject to robust auditing and enforcement measures, otherwise it could easily be dismissed as window dressing.

1.5 In light of this, it would be useful for the Government to support a robust auditing program, which in conjunction with overseas governments, could monitor and report on the impact of the bill.

1.6 I also encourage the Government to consider the issue of palm oil, which is closely linked to deforestation and illegal logging overseas. The Australian public has previously supported calls for specific labelling of palm oil in products sold in Australia, and for specific labelling of this product when it has been sustainably sourced. I would support Government initiatives in this area, to be reflected in the practical implementation of this bill.

Senator Nick Xenophon
Independent Senator for South Australia

1 Geoffrey Lean, '10 years to live: Orang-utan face extinction in the wild', The Independent, 17 December 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/10-years-to-live-orangutan-faces-extinction-in-the-wild-428850.html>

