

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIVE TIMBER INDUSTRY CLOSURE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Establishment — Motion

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [1.04 pm]: I move —

- (1) A select committee to be known as the Native Timber Industry Closure Impact Assessment Committee is established.
- (2) The select committee is to inquire into and report on —
 - (a) the direct economic and social impact of the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry;
 - (b) the indirect economic and social impact of the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry;
 - (c) the Forest Products Commission's ability to meet remaining contractual obligations for the delivery of native timber sawlog supplies;
 - (d) the Western Australian government's softwood plantation investment plan and its ability to fill short-term demand following the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry; and
 - (e) the effectiveness of the state government's native forest transition plan, including but not limited to business, workforce, industry and community.
- (3) The select committee is to report no later than 12 months after the motion is agreed to.
- (4) The select committee shall consist of no fewer than four members.

Firstly, I would just like to thank everyone who has helped me put together the information that I am about to present today. I am going to give members a time line of what has happened since before the decision. In March 2019, WA Premier Mark McGowan signed the WA regional forest agreement with Prime Minister Scott Morrison. This committed the state to a sustainable pathway for ongoing timber production from native forest.

In 2020, the then Minister for Forestry, Minister Dave Kelly, inspected the state's largest sawmiller, Parkside Timber, reviewing the massive investment it was making to improve the utilisation and value of logs delivered from the state's native forests. He provided encouragement for the investment and the future of the industry. At the state election in March 2021, the Labor Party made no announcement nor gave any indication of any change in policy in respect of the harvesting of timber from state forest. Prior to the announcement to cease logging the state's forests, the government did not undertake any form of consultation with the affected communities or industry or conduct a socio-economic analysis to examine the extent of the impact. However, Minister Sanderson sent out a questionnaire to all the groups affiliated with the WA Forest Alliance to ascertain their opinion on logging practices.

When the announcement was made by Premier McGowan on 8 September 2021 that WA would cease logging state forest, the WA Furniture Manufacturer's Association organised a meeting with Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, the Minister for Environment. At the meeting, it was told by her chief of staff that this issue was going to be based on science and not industry requirements. Subsequently, FOIs were placed on the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Forestry to request the information based on science that was handed down to them by their respective departments and on which the decision to cease logging was made. No information supporting these claims was able to be provided.

During the same meeting, it was explained to the chief of staff that the logging of our state forest is widely acclaimed as world's best practice. WA forest management procedures and processes were independently certified to both Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification and Forest Stewardship Council standards. WA is the only Australian jurisdiction to achieve the FSC standard for its operations. Alternatively, this timber is to be substituted by imported rainforest timbers from sources that are often unknown, and with dubious logging practices. The reply from the chief of staff was that what happens outside WA is not our concern.

In response to a parliamentary question, the Minister for Environment admitted he could not table any information supporting the claims upon which the decision was based. When Minister Jarvis took over the forestry portfolio in December 2022, the WA Furniture Manufacturer's Association attended a meeting with her, requesting a review of the government's decision to cease logging. She replied that the decision had already been made. In August, the remaining four local millers were told they would not be receiving any more logs despite them having outstanding quantities on their contracts.

Evidence has been found that the Forest Products Commission has been selling sawlogs produced from the forest as firewood. Recently, the furniture makers wrote to Minister Jarvis and explained the situation in which quality

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sawlogs were being allocated by the FPC as firewood. They were told that the recent decision by the FPC to focus the remaining contractor harvest on capacity to fulfil contractual obligations for non-sawlog products is simply the next step in the transition to end commercial logging. When the furniture makers questioned the FPC about these operations, they were told not to call the staff directly to ask for comment on government policy as it is not appropriate. Recently, Minister Jarvis corresponded with the furniture makers and said that the exploitation of our native forests by focusing on sawlog production is not socially viable. The round table that was formed then engaged Utting Research—the same company that Labor used to gauge public opinion—to undertake a quantitative research survey into public opinion on sustainable harvesting of native forests, with 72 per cent of voters approving the use of regrowth timber for local industry.

I was driving home from Perth on 8 September 2021 after I had been to a meeting. I heard the announcement and I pulled over. I was just gutted, as members can tell. I rang industry insiders and said, “I have just heard this. What the hell is going on?”, and they had absolutely no idea. They were absolutely blindsided, as the Forest Industries Federation (WA) Inc has said many times since. It was based on a survey that was put out—a survey that could be completed numerous times and no postcode was needed. It took 17 000 submissions on that survey, and government told us that 17 per cent of the 17 000 respondents would be directly impacted by the closure of this industry. Government has since told us that 500 people will be directly affected, but if we do the maths, it comes out at 2 890 people who will be affected. That gives us an idea of how broad the effect of this closure will be. We have seen what is happening with the supply of firewood. That is just the start of it. It is going to cascade down through the different types of industries that rely on the native forest sector.

On 22 November 2022, Hon Dr Steve Thomas put a question to the Minister for Forestry. A number of reports were used to substantiate the argument that the forest was not growing, including the reports of the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology titled *Technical report: Climate change in Australia: Projections for Australia's NRM regions*, which had no modelling in it, and the *Southern and south-western flatlands cluster report: Climate change in Australia: Projections for Australia's NRM regions*, which had no sizes in it, only climate modelling. There was also the 2015 FEM061 forest management series report by F.J. Bradshaw, titled *Reference material for jarrah forest silviculture* for the then Department of Parks and Wildlife in Perth. References went back to 2007, but there was nothing from there. It did not indicate that there would be that degree of slowing down in growth. At no stage was there a prediction of 50 per cent, as claimed by the FPC's Andy Lyon, and the worst impact would not be felt until after 2050. Further, there is the sustainable forest management series technical report 5 by D. Maher, L. McCaw and C. Yates published in 2010, titled *Vulnerability of forests in south-west Western Australia to timber harvesting under the influence of climate change: Expert panel report* for the then Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation. There is no reference in that report to the growth rates of timber. The report by N. Burrows, P. Baker, R. Harper and R. Silberstein in 2022 titled *A report on silvicultural guidelines for the 2024–2033 forest management plan to the Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions* has 44 pages, and there is no reference to the impact on the growth rates of timber and no productivity data is included.

The CSIRO's website also has a section on forests in the landscape, and it says —

We're developing strategies for keeping Australia's forests productive and healthy into the future, so that they continue to provide us with a range of products and services like timber, habitat and clean water. This research contributes to carbon sequestration and forest sustainability.

The challenge

We need sustainable forests for the future

Forest play a dominant role in delivering many products and services upon which society depends, including clean water, biodiversity, carbon storage, social and amenity values and wood products. Our natural and planted forests are at risk from events like drought, heatwaves and fire.

There is growing pressure from consumers for wood products that can demonstrate their environmental sustainability. As well, there is growing recognition of the non-timber values of forests and their importance to society.

Our scientists are developing tools and models of how trees grow, forests function, and the risks imposed especially by climate change and fire, so that our forests can be managed sustainably into the future.

It goes on. It is basically saying that we are not going to make our net target for 2050 without the utilisation of timber products from sustainably managed sources, one of which is our Western Australian forests.

The policy is clearly based on ideology not science, just like the federal government's attack on live export. The timber industry is sustainable. The FPC website refers to sustainable forest management. It says —

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Western Australia is home to many beautiful forests and timber species that provide economic, social and environmental benefits.

Sustainable forest management takes into account all of the different ways people use forests and ensures they are managed for the long term.

Our State forests provide many benefits, including:

- animal and habitat protection
- recreation
- protection of streams and water supply
- cultural and historical values
- jobs and forest products.

Effective, sustainable forest management finds the balance between managing the health and productivity of our forests while still enjoying the benefits they provide, such as the timber and timber products we use every day.

Forest Products Commission (FPC) forest managers are well-trained to understand how to maximise the timber we can get from harvesting operations and use science to ensure forest features are maintained and future regeneration is possible, ensuring the forest remains healthy and productive for years to come.

There is a ripper little video on the Forest Products Commission's website to watch, and it is absolutely amazing.

There are 2.25 million hectares of public native forest in the south west of Western Australia. Approximately 62 per cent is set aside for conservation, with the remaining 38 per cent sustainably managed as multiple-use forest. Less than one per cent of the total forest area is harvested annually on a rotational basis throughout the south west. All old-growth forests are protected. No old-growth harvesting has happened since 2001, when it was outlawed. With regeneration, there is no loss of native forest area through forestry practices in Western Australia. It is worth \$200 million to the WA economy and employs more than 500 people directly, and then we can add in those secondary and associated businesses.

I attended a Leschenault Timber Industry Club dinner last week, along with two other representatives in this house, at which one of our former FPC managers spoke of the need for this industry to continue and its value to the community. Unfortunately, there were no Labor members there, so I extend an invitation to come along to the next one to listen to what industry has to say.

Replacing native sawlogs with softwood plantations leaves behind a gap in supply. As the minister says, softwood timber and hardwood timber are used for different purposes, so how can one be substituted for the other? It cannot, and it will rely on imported timbers from unsustainable sources.

A recent survey conducted by Utting Research revealed that 72 per cent of Western Australians want the sustainable harvesting of native forests to continue. It is a \$200 million industry with 500 direct jobs. It affects almost 50 businesses directly, but that does not include secondary businesses and smaller operators in all the different sectors, including transport, manufacturing and repair businesses, machinery suppliers and firewood suppliers. Based on the government's flawed survey, 17 per cent of respondents will be affected by the closure—that is 2 890, not 500. Where was the consultation for those people? The social impacts in my community have been horrendous in terms of people's mental health and employment. A flyer was produced. I was involved in the closure of the timber industry in 2001. A crisis counsellor was provided and worked out of an office down there for five years, looking after those people.

I raised the issue again this time by asking about a crisis counsellor, but there will be no crisis counsellor. I was handed a brochure, which I will table. On the front of it is a picture of a regrowth forest. I tell members right now that the brochure is pretty unappealing for anybody who is struggling mentally. Inside the brochure, it has a list of all the different places that people can ring. People who are experiencing a mental health crisis do not generally sit down to read a brochure. They were all ending up in my office, and that was all I had to give them. There is nothing in it about local services; it is all just phone numbers for different hotlines that people can ring. It was a very poor effort. I seek leave to table that document.

[Leave granted. See paper [2781](#).]

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: We often talk about post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health issues. This government has caused widespread distress through its lack of consideration and has offered no crisis counselling, just that poorly designed flyer. A wider effect in the community is that there is less support for community groups, sporting groups and sponsorship—all the different activities that make up a whole community. When invested and

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connected people are taken out of a community—the government gave them money and told them to go and find something else to do—the resounding effect is horrendous. It takes such a long time to recover. We were just recovering from 2001. There was so much investment in different projects and programs down there that the community was feeling empowered, but then smack! To use an analogy, it was hit by a bit of four-by-two around the back of the head.

I go to climate action hypocrisy. Simcoa in the south west uses hardwood timber as a carbon reductant in silicon production. Simcoa is one of the world's most efficient silicon producers. Its low emissions are partly achieved through the use of hardwood and biomass. The gap in the supply of hardwood has forced Simcoa to import coal from Colombia. What is more laughable is that silicon wafers are a key component of solar panels. This government would rather make silicon wafers for solar panels with imported coal than support a sustainable native timber industry. Even Curtin University sustainability professor Peter Newman said the preferred source of carbon in silicon manufacturing is timber. None of this makes any sense.

There is more hypocrisy. In 2022, the federal Labor government committed to a goal to plant one billion trees in an effort to tackle climate change. The timber industry welcomed this initiative as giving it surety going forward. Clearly, state Labor does not talk to its federal counterpart, just like on the live sheep export industry. Federal Labor knows that a sustainable timber industry can be part of climate action through biological carbon sequestration and sustainable forest management, while providing valuable products.

The Australian Forest Products Association website has an article headed “Sustainable forest management and products key tools to fight climate change: IPCC” that states —

In its most recent report released overnight, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has cited sustainable forest management along with sustainably produced forest products, as key solutions to fighting climate change ...

“Australia is a world leader in both sustainable native and plantation forest management and can help lead the world on improving forest practices. We are also a world leader in manufacturing forest products. With global demand for timber and wood-fibre increasing, we have a once in a generation opportunity to not only help Australia reduce its emissions and meet targets through forestry and forest products, but also lead the world ...

I could go on and on with this stuff that says that we can do this sustainably and provide jobs locally. It just does not make any sense.

I have asked three questions in this house and have not got a straight answer. We know that the sawmillers were told that they would not have their contracts met, but the minister refused to admit it. We will keep going on and on with this. We have to because so many questions have been left unanswered. It is clear that the government has no idea of the impact this senseless ban will have on everyone in Western Australia. The quantitative research study by Utting Research showed that Western Australians overwhelmingly support a sustainable forest industry. Given the government's own survey was fundamentally flawed, it is now obvious that the decision by the government to cease harvesting was based on nothing more than political pointscoring. This government has no choice than to establish a select committee.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.25 pm]: I rise to support the excellent motion moved by Hon Louise Kingston. In doing so, I acknowledge that this is the first motion on which she has led debate in this place. I congratulate her on bringing such an important issue before the chamber for debate. The crux of the motion is obviously the establishment of a select committee to be known as the native timber industry closure impact assessment committee. This is a very good idea, given some of the problems that Hon Louise Kingston identified in her contribution. Some of the evidence suggests that the science really is not there, so there is a need to look at this decision and understand the impacts it will have on affected communities more broadly.

The approach by this government and the former McGowan government is not new. We have spent many, many hours in this place debating the impacts on various industries of government decisions that have been based largely on ideology rather than any science. For example, we spent much time debating the attempt to nationalise the lobster industry by the same minister who decided to shut down forestry.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: How is his career going?

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: That is a good question, member. I have certainly been asking questions about the marine park process and the effect on the commercial fishing industry, as well as questions on the live export industry, which was a federal government decision. All these things are based on ideology rather than community sentiment or any good reason to close down industries. I find it quite astounding that we are again having to debate a motion about the impact of this government choosing to follow ideology rather than science.

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Hon Louise Kingston talked about the effects of this closure on communities and businesses. There are also longer term effects. The idea that we have to import coal, for example, is something that I did not know. It is quite ridiculous that those sorts of outcomes were not foreseen.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: There are a few companies importing coal, including the state government.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: That is right. I am sure Hon Dr Steve Thomas will have another question about coal imports.

I want to go back a little to some of the media around this issue over the course of the last year or so, particularly around the so-called science behind the decision. I will start with an article from ABC online news by Georgia Hargreaves, posted on 13 November 2022. It states —

A fresh row has erupted over the prohibition of native logging in Western Australia, with members of the forestry industry arguing state government documents prove there is no “smoking gun” justifying the ban.

The West Australian government last year cited “scientific evidence” to explain the decision to ban native logging throughout the state by 2024.

It goes on to say —

Gavin Butcher, who previously worked for the Forest Products Commission ... for 20 years, recently obtained documents after a Freedom of Information ... request to ... (DBCA).

... he was hoping the FOI documents would ... reveal scientific data which shows the effect climate change and logging was having on the forests of Western Australia.

“There was no smoking gun to explain the government’s decision—in fact it really showed nothing,” he said.

Some members of the forestry industry believe the decision to ban native logging, announced in September 2021, was politically motivated to win green votes.

“We all support action on climate change and using regrowing wood in preference to other non-sustainable materials is recognised as a positive action ...

“This is about accountability in policy making.

We have had numerous debates in this place about accountability, or the lack thereof, under the Cook administration and the previous McGowan administration. Following on from that theme, a very good article by Paul Murray was published in *The West Australian* on 9 September this year and I will quote extensively from it. It states —

Former premier Mark McGowan built his success in office on a certain homespun economic pragmatism that won over many people who had never voted Labor before.

But every now and then he had to throw a bone to the green Left.

...

It was only a matter of time before policies contrived to meet the demands of these pressures—rather than based on sound principles—began to unwind.

Now that McGowan’s new corporate life is rolling out before him, two of his signature environmental policies with baked-in timelines are running into headwinds, creating real problems for his successor.

The new Premier ... will wear the pain coming from McGowan’s decision to end commercial logging in native forests by the end of this year and the phasing out of state-owned coal-fired power generation by 2030.

We all know how that is going. It continues —

And so will you.

As I pointed out in a series of columns last year, the unintended consequences of the logging ban were likely to impact badly on a wide variety of consumers of forest products which were not canvassed when McGowan made his surprise announcement in 2021 without any industry consultation.

...

“To meet the Minister’s target, the Forest Products Commission is now cranking up firewood production, building stockpiles at Deanmill, Diamond Mill, Harvey and Myalup,” according to Gavin Butcher, a former FPC director.

“Harvesting will need to double. Last year only 59,000 tonnes were delivered to firewood merchants.

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“To achieve this, sawlog deliveries are being abandoned, with saw millers being told to not expect any more logs, despite promises from the Premier to honour contracts. The denial of saw miller rights has seen good quality logs being sold as firewood.”

What a brilliantly green outcome. Furniture-grade jarrah burned to grill sausages.

I could not have said it better. That clearly highlights where this motivation is coming from and it is simply to appease the left of the Labor Party—to throw it a bone, as Paul Murray said.

This decision-making in a vacuum without science is not a new theme. I have spoken in many debates in this place about marine parks. I have no problem with marine parks, but let us use science to decide where we need them and how they should be set up in terms of management zones and so on; that is not happening. We see impacts on entire communities because the industries they rely on in those communities are basically staring down the barrel of being shut down. This is occurring right across the state. We are not talking about only forestry, but the fishing and lobster industries were affected and there are all sorts of cumulative flow-on effects to communities across the state from all those decisions. As I have travelled around the state I have had conversations with people who are in completely unrelated industries—nothing to do with forestry, fishing or agriculture—and who are extremely concerned that they might be shut down next because the government decides that it does not like them and that their industry might be under pressure from the government simply because a decision is made one day that the government no longer likes an industry; it has done a survey and a few people have said they do not like it so, that is it, it is shutting it down. These concerns are flowing on far more broadly than in just the forestry industry.

We talk about the science behind this and other decisions. An interesting article appeared in the *Countryman* on 11 May 2023, again referencing Gavin Butcher, who used to work at the Forest Products Commission. I suggest he has done a power of work. The article states —

Analysis of publicly available data by respected scientist Lachie McCaw has shown that claims by WA Premier Mark McGowan, WA Forestry Minister Jackie Jarvis and her predecessor Dave Kelly, to be without substance.

The WA Government had stated that one of the reasons the timber industry had been axed was because the trees are no longer growing.

Dr McCaw has used published data on the long-term forest monitoring plots called ForestCheck to demonstrate that the harvested forest is growing and the uncut forest is in decline.

His paper, which appeared in the March edition of the forestry profession journal, *The Forester*, summarises data published last year and is the result of 20 years of monitoring forest growth.

That is science—20 years of work done on monitoring those forests. It shows that the harvested and managed forests are not in decline and, in fact, the opposite is true. If we lock it up and leave it and throw away the key, which seems to be the modus operandi of this government in its approach to anything to do with forestry and fisheries, that does not work. The government needs to be managing these things. If there are to be marine parks, for example, there needs to be resources within departments that are out there monitoring them. The government needs to do the science before it gets there; it needs to be on the ground. In the case of the fishing industry and marine parks, fishermen are the people best placed to do that. The idea that our industries in Western Australia that are best practice—the forestry and fishing industries and certified stewardship programs for some of our fisheries—are closed down and then product is imported from other places that do not have the same standards is one that frustrates me greatly. I find it astounding that we would go down that path simply to appease a few people on the left. It is no surprise that this government continues on this theme—a theme that we talked about in here, in fact in the last sitting week before we adjourned for the most recent recess. That theme is consultation. We talked extensively about the lack of consultation by this government on its plans for various communities, the quick and dirty surveys that are done, the results that really do not paint the true picture, and the fact that weight is not given to those directly affected. As Hon Louise Kingston pointed out in her contribution, a great number of people who responded to those surveys were not involved in the industry, had nothing to do with it and probably did not even live in Western Australia. That is the same for whatever consultation process this government chooses to use. It is very selective and is designed just to support the government’s intent to shut down industries across Western Australia, no matter what the industry is.

It all comes back to the continual theme that has existed throughout the period of the Labor government from 2017. Despite all the promises early on of accountability and transparency and all the great pledges that were made in order to get elected, we are yet to see that. We continue to see issues of accountability and transparency highlighted by the Auditor General, for example, or by industries that are affected by some of the decisions made by this government.

Hon Louise Kingston moved this motion to establish a select committee, with five key terms of reference, if you like, examining the economic and social impact of the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry.

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That in itself is telling because I know from some of the work I have been doing with the fishing industry on marine parks—again, to go back to fishing—that economic and social impact assessments are just not done and, if they are, they are a quick and dirty desktop study that does not take any time to understand and appreciate local economies and unforeseen impacts from flow-on effects. Hon Louise Kingston spoke significantly about those.

It is not just about direct jobs. It is not just about people directly employed in the industry. It is obviously about the effect that it will have on entire communities and the flow-on effect on those regions. One of the great failings of this government is its inability to do a proper socio-economic impact assessment on the decisions it has made. This select committee would have the ability to properly assess the socio-economic impact to understand exactly what those impacts will be. It could also have a good look at the indirect social impact of the commercial logging industry and then the Forest Products Commission's contractual obligations, which we spent considerable time talking about as well. Hon Louise Kingston spoke quite eloquently about the issues that the FPC will face with its ability to contract.

I know from this article and from the information that Hon Louise Kingston put forward that it will be a big challenge. It will be very interesting to see whether that timber will be substituted and used for firewood, which is unbelievable if it is the case. I am certainly hearing those stories around the traps, and the weight of evidence would suggest that it is happening. It is important that Parliament seeks to better understand what is happening and the full effects of the decision by government to close down this industry, and that is why I will support this motion to establish a select committee. I encourage all members to do so. It would be a very valuable exercise in understanding how these policies might better be delivered in order to have fewer unforeseen impacts on those communities and to ensure that we do not just shut down the state and end up with nothing left for the people of Western Australia down the track. I commend the motion to the house and encourage others to support it.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Forestry) [1.42 pm]: I am a little perplexed by the contributions to date because I am not sure that either of them addressed the motion before us. By my calculations, Hon Louise Kingston spent about 18 of her 20 minutes talking about the science. Hon Colin de Grussa spent more than half of his contribution talking about the science, yet there is no motion for a select committee to explore the science behind the decisions to close the native timber industry. There has been a lot of rhetoric about the science, but they have not addressed the motion put forward from the opposition benches about why it wants a select committee. If the opposition's focus is on science, why not call for a select committee on science? I suspect it is because members opposite are concerned that the science will not fall on their side. In preparation for this week I brought in a number of scientific reports that I was going to speak to, but given that no-one spoke to the motion, I might focus on the motion instead.

A few things were said. I will say up-front that we oppose the motion and will not be supporting the establishment of a select committee.

Hon Martin Aldridge interjected.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I know Hon Martin Aldridge is surprised.

Hon Martin Aldridge: More secrecy continues.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Perhaps if we had a select committee on science. As I said, I have plenty of science here and I am surprised that the shadow spokesperson for Climate Action is questioning the science on declining rainfall and the issues in our forests. There is going to be an impact. There is absolutely no doubt that there will be an impact from this historic decision. We know that, which is why we have committed \$80 million to the native forestry transition plan. I take no joy in the fact that, to date, 218 workers have been retrenched from timber mills. I take absolutely no joy in that. I do, however, take some comfort from the fact that the government has provided significant support services. As I have said in this place many times, in addition to the normal redundancies from their companies, they received between \$30 000 and \$45 000 from the state government. I note that those companies also received reimbursement for the statutory redundancy payments that they made. To date, over \$7 million has been provided to workers who have been made redundant. There are also several years of support services on offer to those workers.

I want to compare that with what happened in 2013 when Whittakers Timber Products closed. The then Minister for Forestry Terry Redman was quoted in the *Bunbury Mail*. There were concerns about the Whittaker timber mill closing with the new forest management plan coming out. I quote Terry Redman in 2013 —

“The Environmental Minister is the one who makes the decisions about the next cycle which defines what we are allowed to harvest, so right now the FPC which comes under me uses the Forest Management Plan ... for removing timber from forest coup to harvest to meet industries needs.

“One of the realities of the FMP which is in place now is that as time goes on they are moving in to regrowth forest.

The article continues —

“This is where the forest had been harvested up to 100 years ago and is not of the same log diameter or quality which some of the earlier harvesting produced,” Mr Redman said.

Every time the cycle comes around there are a whole lot of sciences done to check the sustainability of it, but the FPC cannot offer a contract to mills like Whittaker’s until the FMP is in place.

A following media release on 24 June 2013 from Hon Terry Redman said that any workers who lost their jobs at Whittaker timber mill should take advantage of support services. There was no financial funding. They were just encouraged to go to the Warren–Blackwood workforce development centre, which would provide career development services. The media release says —

Jobs South West Workforce Development Centre will also offer support to redundant workers including individual career guidance, referrals to ... training providers ...

There was no money for training, just referrals. As I said, there will be an impact. In addition to the funding workers have received, there are ongoing support services. Yes, there are referrals, but also additional funding on top of the money they have been paid. On top of the statutory redundancies, on top of the money the government provided—that \$30 000 to \$45 000—there is ongoing funding for any training they may wish to take. That funding carries on well past the 2024 FMP, because we know some of these workers took time out of the workforce to reassess what they would like to do, and are now coming back to seek training.

There is \$19.3 million in total allocated for workforce transition programs and \$26 million allocated to business transition programs. There is \$30 million allocated to industry and community development programs to support people feeling the economic and social impact and to create those new jobs, and some new targeted funding to help businesses expand or diversify, or start a new business. By the end of the year, we will have announced the new industry development grants, with up to \$10 million for brand new businesses worth up to \$2 million. I have made several announcements. I have already announced round 1 of the small business development diversification grants of up to \$400 000. Round 2 will open next year. I have already announced \$2 million in community small grants and round 2 of that will start next year. We are addressing the economic and social impact.

As I said, most of the contributions from the other side were based on the science. Interestingly, no-one is asking for an inquiry into the science. I will, however, point out that apparently the science was just to appease a few people on the left. I assume that when we get Hon Louise Kingston’s five-minute response she will outline what forestry policy the opposition will take to the election, because if it is indeed just to appease a few people on the left, I am sure that she will have a policy on forestry that she can take to the next election and we can see if it is just a few people on the left.

I was a little disturbed by the contribution from Hon Louise Kingston, who basically verbalised me and purported to know what I said in meetings, which was incredibly interesting. She then selected quotes from letters. Hon Louise Kingston said that I said in one letter that it was not socially sustainable. The letter stated something along the lines of, “Logging is no longer environmentally, economically or socially sustainable”. It is nice to quote little bits of science or letters when we want it to suit our purposes.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Table the letter and we can all see it.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I am happy to. I will have to check *Hansard* for which letter it is. It was a letter to a private citizen, so I assume I will have to get their permission. I have a standard letter that has gone to many people in the industry that uses pretty much the same language. I am happy to table a template in due course; I do not have it with me now. The idea that furniture-grade sawlogs are being used for firewood is absolutely incorrect. Apparently there is evidence; I have not seen any evidence. I have seen one photo of a sawlog, taken from one angle.

I want to make it clear that the Forest Products Commission does not undertake harvesting. It engages professional harvesting contractors that are small businesses with local employees, employed in the south west. They are directed to fill sawlog or firewood deliveries. Sawlogs actually are still being delivered to a number of timber mills but, as I have said in this place before, 23 businesses, including all the timber mills, shared in \$24 million to be paid out of their contracts. The motion calls for an inquiry into the Forest Products Commission’s ability to meet the remaining contractual obligations for the delivery of native timber sawlog supplies. All contracts ended on 31 December, at the end of the forest management plan, and all businesses that were receiving furniture-grade sawlogs have received a payout of their contracts. Despite that, we are continuing to supply sawlogs.

Firewood is a different product. Firewood contracts still exist, as do auction house contracts. We are delivering firewood because those contracts are still in place for smaller businesses, which will also receive a payout of their contracts, or an offer of a payout of their contracts if they wish, in the coming weeks. I have made that abundantly clear in this place. Professional foresters are not FPC staff; they are private contractors who live and work in the south west, and I have said before that it is insulting to suggest that they do not know the difference between

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a furniture-grade sawlog and firewood-grade log. I have heard this on the ground from people who have said that they are quite upset about this idea that gets bandied about—that they are taking premium logs and turning them into firewood. It is quite simply not the case.

The Silicon Metal Company of Australia was mentioned. SIMCOA continues to receive timber deliveries; that is a fact. SIMCOA has, in the past—a long time ago—used charcoal that came from somewhere overseas. I have met with SIMCOA several times, and it has also met with the Minister for Environment. It is continuing to receive firewood-grade timber to make its silica, so again, the idea that we are not supplying it is incorrect.

The motion also refers to the Western Australian government's softwood plantation investment plan and its ability to fill short-term demand following the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry. Again, I do not think the mover of this motion or Hon Colin de Grussa actually spoke to this part of the motion, even though they are trying to mount a case for initiating a select committee inquiry. The softwood plantation investment plan is, indeed, a story of a big gap in planting. I have the figures here. When we cut down trees that go into laminex, roof trusses, building materials or laminated veneer products, we have to re-plant them, because they do not just magically come back.

I have here a table—I am happy to table it—that shows how many hectares were planted under different governments from 2001 to 2023; I should say that the 2023 numbers are approximate. I have helpfully coloured the Liberal–National government's plantings in green so we can see the plantings that occurred under Hon Mia Davies, Hon Terry Redman and, I believe, at one stage a parliamentary secretary, the former member for North West Central in the other place. We see that yes, indeed, there is a decline in pine plantations. Obviously these trees are harvested; I think the first rotation is around 12 years and they do some thinning. The second rotation is about 20 years. However, we are working carefully.

The PRESIDENT: Are you tabling that document?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Yes, sorry, I am tabling that document.

[See paper [2782](#).]

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: We are working with those customers. We have state agreements to receive supply of pine to ensure that they can support those jobs, both in Neerabup and in Dardanup, where we have the timber hub. I am incredibly proud that this government has committed \$350 million across the next 10 years to ramp up those pine plantations. Literally millions of seedlings are going into the ground and I am incredibly thankful to have inherited a portfolio in which the decision had been made to support the softwood industry.

The motion also refers to the effectiveness of the native forest transition plan. As I said, it is disappointing that the mover of the motion did not actually talk about the effectiveness of that plan. Even though she wants to initiate a select committee inquiry into this, she is focused on what the science might be. As I said, we have a number of programs for small business development and diversification. The government has allocated \$15 million specifically for businesses that have a demonstrated reliance on native forestry. I am not talking about the timber mills or the big businesses that shared in that \$24 million; I am talking about the smaller businesses, including furniture manufacturers, heritage joinery businesses and firewood businesses. That money is to help them diversify their businesses. A lot of them are still using timber supplies from local farms and there will still be timber supply.

Of course, the science shows that ecological thinning is effective for managing our native forests, so I am incredibly supportive of the idea that the limited timber that is available will be made available to our local furniture manufacturers and heritage joiners who make beautiful furniture. I remind people that in the past the vast majority of jarrah and karri that was harvested from Western Australian native forests was exported. It was made into woodchips and sent off to Japan to make paper. It was slabbed up, put into sea containers and sent to China to make furniture. That is not the best way to deal with our native forests.

With regard to the business development diversification program, as I said, I was in Manjimup back in, I think, April, to announce the first \$7 million of funding for those businesses. Those businesses are predominantly in the south west and some in the Perth hills. Round two is now open; businesses are being assessed and we will be making an announcement in due course for the second \$7.5 million.

I turn now to the community small grants fund. These are for small businesses and not-for-profit groups. It is funding to support sustainable projects that stimulate the local economy, support tourism and events, and build livable communities in native forest regions. I spoke recently about the fantastic event we held at Manjimup Speedway that was attended by 22 of the 27 organisations that received funding. These are smaller grants of up to \$100 000 to support those projects. A number of small businesses benefited from those.

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The big ones, of course, are the new industry development grants. There is \$10 million in one funding round and applications for those have been received. I understand that there is a number of excellent applications. That is up to \$2 million for new industries that will support job creation in the area.

Finally, when the new forest management plan comes out in the new year, there will be more funding available for closures of impacted businesses. That will apply to any business that either has decided not to apply for a grant or has not previously received money. They will be able to apply for funding to support moving on with their business.

The government is incredibly proud of the way in which we supported the industry and the community. It was an incredibly difficult decision. There were some questions about the timing of it and the fact that a survey was conducted. I should say that the survey was open to everyone; it was not sent only to green and environmental groups. It was sent out to everyone. As a local member, I certainly sent it far and wide. It was sent to everyone and it was open to the public. However, there was discussion about the timing. Why did we suddenly make this decision in 2021? Let me be clear: we have 10-year forest management plans. As soon as the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions became aware that there would be issues around whether we could continue the same level of native forest logging in the 2024 management plan, the decision was made. We could have carried on logging right up until 31 December 2023, released the new forest management plan and said, “Oh, sorry. Too bad. We’re only going to have timber from ecological thinning.”

We did not do that. We actually made the decision early, in September 2021, to say that it was no longer viable. We have the science and we know that the climate is changing. We know that rainfall in the region has dropped by 15 to 20 per cent. We know that the trees are smaller. Hon Terry Redman actually said back in 2013 that the trees had smaller diameters and that we could not continue harvesting on the scale that we had been.

It is my understanding that the initial package was \$50 million, but after we sat down with the Native Forest Transition Group and asked its opinion, the amount was increased to \$80 million. Yes, the decision was made but the plan that originally involved \$50 million was increased to \$80 million based on advice from the Native Forest Transition Group, which comprises the Forest Industries Federation WA; regional chambers of commerce and industry represented by the Manjimup Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Shires of Bridgetown–Greenbushes, Manjimup and Nannup; the Australian Workers’ Union; the Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA; the Western Australian Local Government Association; the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council; the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation; the Department of Training and Workforce Development; the Forest Products Commission; South Regional TAFE; and the South West Development Commission. That group met for the first time in October 2021 and I am pleased to announce that it continues to meet and review the program. We had our last meeting a few weeks ago and we will have another meeting in the new year. That is how we came up with the design of the \$80 million native forest transition program. That group, which includes the Forest Industries Federation and a lot of interested parties, is keen on a program that creates and supports sustainable jobs in the south west.

The decision to ban native forest logging was not easy; I know that because I have spoken with my predecessor. It was a tough decision; it was a hard decision. As I said, we know that workers have lost their jobs, but we have provided support. We know that businesses have been impacted and we are working hard—\$80 million. I am not sure that the Liberal–National opposition would have fronted up with that amount had it been in office. As I said, I am really looking forward to Hon Louise Kingston wrapping this up in her five-minute speaking time. I am really looking forward to hearing what forestry policies the opposition will take to the next election. As I said, we oppose the motion.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [2.01 pm]: I rise today to indicate that I do not support this motion. I question whether motions to establish select committees are about prosecuting a personal or political agenda. I feel that they should be targeted towards examining important matters. We have had some very good select committees in the short time that I have been a member of Parliament. This is a disappointing first-off-the-rank motion from the new member. It seems that there may well be a career in cherry-picking for Hon Louise Kingston because she talked about some interesting science.

I will begin by exploring some comments made by Rod Campbell, an economist and research director at the Australia Institute. He said —

“The end of native forest logging represents not just good environmental policy, but good economic policy,” ...

“Australia Institute research has highlighted the financial and economic losses of the WA Forest Products Commission, in particular on native forestry.

“The FPC lost \$1.7 million on native forestry in 2020, just the latest of many poor financial results.

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“WA Governments have pumped far more money into native forestry than they were ever likely to get out of it.

The same pattern is seen across Australia—state governments spending millions to subsidise native forestry while better options are available in plantation forestry and conservation.

“Importantly, the WA Government has also put money into community development and plantation forestry to assist with the phase out of the industry.

He did not have much more to say, but that essentially and effectively rebuts one of the statements in the motion about direct economic impact. It is a redundant proposal and completely unnecessary.

We can talk about not only cherry-picking, because the motion is an extension of the national dogmatic denial of climate change science. Other research states that native forests are carbon “banks” and burning or woodchipping them quickly releases carbon into the atmosphere. Studies by the Australian National University have also shown that logging native forests increases the hazard of bushfires.

I will talk briefly about recent groundbreaking research by the Australian National University, which found that the logging of native forests increases the risk of catastrophic bushfires. The study’s authors warn that logging is not just increasing the risk of severe fires, but also the risk to human lives and safety. Consideration of social and economic concerns have to come second to human life and safety; those things are far more important. One of the lead authors of that paper, Professor David Lindenmayer, said —

“Logging increases the probability of canopy damage by five to 20 per cent and leads to long-term elevated risk of higher severity fire,” ...

“On the other hand, if disturbance due to logging is minimised, canopy damage can be reduced, in turn reducing the risk of uncontrollable fires.”

The arguments to stop native logging for fundamental community safety continue to mount. We know that local economies and wildlife will benefit from ending the logging of native forests—research confirms this. The more research that scientists do across the nation, the clearer the message becomes.

Stopping the logging of native forests is crucial to reaching net zero emissions. Leading researchers are again calling for the cessation of native forest logging to help us reach our net zero target. Researchers at both the Australian National University and Griffith University say that native forests remove carbon from the atmosphere at the rapid rate that we require. Professor Brendan Mackey from Griffith University said that carbon emissions need to reduce by about 15.3 megatons each year over the next nine years if the federal government’s target is to be met. This is about the same amount as the annual net carbon emissions generated by logging our native forests. Protecting our native forests is critical mitigation action if Australia is to meet its net zero emissions target. Scientific evidence states that we must work on reducing the logging of native forests. The Western Australian government has made decisions and taken action to mitigate the impacts of climate change. It has made investment to mitigate the social impact and it has stepped in early, as was mentioned by the Minister for Forestry, Hon Jackie Jarvis. It has taken the steps to do what needs to be done to improve community safety and mitigate the impact on the community. Not only that, it will help to keep the community safe. There is inarguable economic benefit in doing that.

I will talk briefly about where our forest timber ends up. Minister Jarvis touched on this briefly, but I would like to talk about information that came to my attention during my research on the topic of this motion. In terms of what happens to biomass during native logging, most of it ends up as waste. People think that when a native forest is logged, the trees are turned into wood that lasts forever and can be turned into beautiful furniture, such as the beautiful wood furniture and features we see in this chamber. However, only about six per cent is stored in wood products. When a forest is logged, about 60 per cent of the biomass is left behind. Of the biomass that is removed, the majority goes to woodchips, which is turned into paper and pulp and has a life span of about two years. Most of the biomass removed around the country goes to woodchips and ends up in short-term products. This is not an effective use of our native forests.

I want to talk about some of the 10 shocking facts that people may not know about deforestation in Australia broadly. Australia is facing a deforestation crisis, with an area equivalent to the MCG being destroyed every 86 seconds.

In the 17 years following the introduction of Australia’s national nature laws, an area of forest and bushland the size of Ireland was ripped down. Only 50 per cent of Australia’s forests and bushlands remain intact compared to pre-European arrival. Australia is the only developed country on the global list of deforestation hotspots. Australia has lost 27 per cent of its rainforest, 19 per cent of its open forests, 11 per cent of its woodland forests and 28 per cent of its mallee forests since 1750. Australia holds the record for the highest number of mammal extinctions globally. To date, 67 wildlife species and 37 plant species are extinct in Australia. Habitat loss is the biggest threat to koalas across the country. Two-thirds of deforestation and land clearing in states such as Queensland is being used to create

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pastures to graze cattle. Carbon emissions released by deforestation in Australia are equivalent to at least half the carbon pollution of all Australian coal-fired power stations.

If we want to maintain logging of native forests and if we want to restart whaling, what is next? Shall we return to using plastic shopping bags and re-introduce other plastic products? It is a ludicrous motion. There is no need for a committee like this. The whole fundamental premise of the motion is cherry-picking science and climate science denial. It is ridiculous!

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [2.11 pm]: I was not necessarily going to speak on this motion but I could not take the wet lettuce leaf from the government any longer. Seriously, that has to be one of the weakest defences from the government to a motion that I have ever heard. Effectively, the argument from the Minister for Forestry in defence of the government's position of opposing the establishment of a select committee is that an additional term of reference should be added, which looks at the scientific evidence around the sustainability of the native timber industry.

Hon Darren West: Just win an election.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I say to Hon Darren West that his government's regime has the numbers. We know that it likes amending motions. If that is the primary basis for opposing the sound establishment of a select committee, it is no defence.

If there was ever a time to establish a select committee to consider this issue, it is when government is effectively closing an industry. I say to Hon Darren West that it is not a trivial matter. It is not a small matter. It is not a matter that has been long canvassed or understood. It is a decision that came from literally nowhere six months after a state election.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The member will get his turn in 18 minutes. Six months after a general election, we got nothing from the Labor government, apart from it saying that it will keep WA "safe and strong". It was certainly not talking to the timber industry when it stuck up its placards on election day.

This 12-month inquiry would be worthwhile. If the government is opposed to establishing a select committee to inquire into this issue, well, the Standing Committee on Legislation is doing nothing. We could redirect the inquiry to that committee. I understand that a number of members from the South West Region serve on that committee. They have done nothing for two and a half years. As far as I am aware, they have not even met. We could always task an existing committee that is doing nothing to do the job but no, the minister says that it cannot possibly look into this issue unless an additional term of reference around the science is agreed to. That is easily fixed. The government could do that today. If that is the only thing stopping the government from supporting this motion, we could do that today.

The real reason the government does not want to shine a light on the decision is that it will demonstrate the failures that have led to this decision and the failures of this government relating to the future of this industry.

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The mover of this motion, Hon Louise Kingston, alluded to the fact that this decision is interestingly similar to the Labor Party's decision on live export. I say to Hon Dan Caddy that that was another arbitrary political decision by a Labor government, except at least the federal Labor government took that to the election and then said, "By the way, we won't do it until the next election. We'll have two mandates around our decision to shut down another industry", such is Labor's approach to primary industries in Australia.

This decision has been made without due regard for local communities, local jobs, timber security or even the environmental impact of imported products that will likely replace native timber sourced from Western Australia. It is interesting that government members got up today and talked about the environmental challenges, climate change and rainforests. It is a bit like the live export argument. Have they turned their minds to the international ramifications of this decision or is it more about the online surveys that the government effectively constructed in which every green activist—it does not matter where they live—can basically repeatedly register a point of view, according to Hon Louise Kingston?

Today Hon Louise Kingston brought to the attention of the house a poll of 1 000 people aged 18 years and over in Western Australia that was conducted on 30 and 31 August this year. This was not just the government sharing an online survey to the people it wanted to respond; it was an unsolicited poll of 1 000 people aged over 18 in Western Australia. It showed that 72 per cent of people approved the use of native timber from sustainably harvested native forests for furniture, decking, flooring and firewood versus 12 per cent of people who disapproved. A majority of people—52 per cent to 21 per cent—want the government to scrap its own policy. The most interesting thing about the key finding section of the survey is when the pollster said —

The Minister for Forestry, Jackie Jarvis is following the path of her failed predecessor Dave Kelly in pretending that the mess they created doesn't exist.

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The Labor Party is continuing to do that today in denying a select committee to consider the issues that Hon Louise Kingston has brought to the Legislative Council. The pollster went on to say —

It's time that she made the effort to engage with the industry that she is meant to be representing and develop a plan for its future. The poll results show that Western Australians want it to continue.

It is interesting that a challenge was put to Hon Louise Kingston in her five-minute reply to outline the opposition's policy at the next election. Members should rest assured that we will have one. But will the Labor Party have the same policy going to the next election? Based on those opinion poll results, not some flimsy online survey constructed by the Labor government, I wish it the best of luck. Good luck selling that message to the community in about 18 months because they are pretty compelling results.

I want to touch on one of the things that I think was completely missed from the debate, which was largely focused on the environmental and economic impacts of native forest logging. The prelude to what I am going to say was mentioned by Hon Sandra Carr in her submission to the Council earlier. The argument that she put forward is that we are making communities safer by stopping the native timber industry. We are avoiding catastrophic bushfires by stopping the native timber industry. That was the submission she made.

Her argument was based on some research that was not cited by the member but was available to her. This is interesting, because when I heard the announcement on 8 September 2021, six months after the election to which the Labor Party did not take this pressing policy —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It wasn't on its agenda.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It was not on its agenda. In that statement, the then forestry minister said that the government was going to invest \$350 million—a figure the current minister quoted today—to plant softwood timber. That equates to 50 million pine trees across 33 000 hectares of Western Australia—50 million pine trees! If the member is concerned about community safety and catastrophic bushfire risk, I suggest she turn her government's attention to what this will likely become in five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 years' time. Mark my words: it will be a community safety issue. If anyone has ever been involved in fighting a plantation fire, there is a very simple response: once it starts, you go to the other side and wait for it to come out. That is all you can do. It is very different from fighting a fire in native vegetation.

Where are those trees going to be planted? I asked this question and the then minister replied that the government was looking for land—33 000 hectares—with rainfall of more than 600 millimetres. There is not much of that in Western Australia! It is all in the south west land division, which probably contains our most prime agricultural land close to communities. Do not be mistaken, members: these trees will not be planted in pastoral country out in the desert and away from towns and people; they will be planted in and around communities and will displace prime agricultural land. It is not just the investment in these 50 million pine trees. At the same time, we are seeing a significant increase in the conservation estate through either government initiatives to increase national parks or developers having to offset the removal of native vegetation by locking up land in the conservation estate. We are also seeing significant investments in the carbon estate, where previously cleared land is being returned to not necessarily native vegetation but vegetation of some form as part of carbon-farming practices. We then also have the 50 million pine trees. This issue alone is probably worthy of a select committee inquiry. I would rather look at the issue now than after the sort of catastrophic disaster that keeps Hon Sandra Carr awake at night. In my question on 14 September 2021, I asked —

What assessment and analysis has been undertaken to substantiate the \$350 million investment in new softwood plantations over 10 years?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who was a minister at the time, replied on behalf of the Minister for Forestry, saying —

To substantiate the \$350 million investment in new softwood plantations, the Forest Products Commission has undertaken an analysis of: the future demand for softwood timber products in Western Australia; the projected supply of softwood timber from plantations within the state; the processing scale required for the state's softwood industry to be economically viable; impediments to private sector investment in softwood plantations; opportunities to either purchase land or work collaboratively with landowners through sharefarming agreements or support for farm forestry projects; and opportunities for complementary benefits, such as roosting habitat for Carnaby's black-cockatoo or improvements in water quality.

I also asked —

What is the minimum rainfall requirement required to support viable and sustainable softwood plantations?

The minister replied —

It is approximately 600 millimetres, but is dependent on the species of pine used and site-specific conditions.

I asked —

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Will prime agricultural land be displaced to make way for this new 33 000-hectare plantation?

Of course, these 50 million pine trees will need 600 millimetres of rainfall in an environment with declining rainfall. The minister's response was —

The plantings will take place throughout the south west on suitable available government land and private property. Plantations do not require prime agricultural land and can often be used on areas that are less productive.

It will be interesting. Maybe the select committee could look at which 33 000 hectares the government has identified within a 600 millimetre-plus rainfall area that is not prime agricultural land. That is what the minister said the government would do. Probably the most important question was —

What advice has the minister sought from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Parks and Wildlife service or other relevant bodies about the potential fire impact of ending logging, as well as the planting of 50 million pine trees in the south west?

The minister's response was —

The Forest Products Commission produces fire management plans for every plantation that address the risks and establish appropriate controls and mitigation, such as firebreaks, access tracks and water points. These plans are produced in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

I submit to members that it is worth us establishing a select committee to examine the government's approach on this issue alone. Do not wait until after the fact, when we will have 10 000, 20 000 or 30 000 hectares of plantings; it would be better for us to be prepared for what I assure members will be a significant increase in bushfire risk in Western Australia from this government decision. I challenge any government member to stand after me and tell me that I am wrong and the reason why I am wrong. I challenge them to do that.

The last thing I want to mention is the issue of sovereign risk. I talked a little about this in my contribution to the debate on the electoral bill yesterday, in terms of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy's campaign against Hon Brendon Grylls in the lead-up to the 2017 election. "Sovereign risk" were two words that the Labor Party used a lot in the campaign that brought it to the government bench. It talked about it day in, day out. It argued that the reason the government could not and should not make unilateral and arbitrary decisions was that it impacted on confidence, investment and our economy. The Labor Party said that day in and day out. We can look at Labor's track record on coming to government. Interestingly, it was the same minister. Perhaps that is why he is no longer in cabinet. The government realised it had a problem in its ranks, but it was too late. One would think that after the government's approach to the rock lobster industry, amongst other primary industries—I will use the rock lobster example for the moment—it might have put then Minister Kelly on notice that the government was acting in a way that was contrary to the way it said it would act before the election in relation to sovereign risk.

It is no different from the approach the government has taken on the native timber industry. This government had not just come to power in 2021 and realised that it had to make a decision six months later; it was in government for four and a half years before it made that decision. I do not accept the minister's suggestion that the first time the government turned its mind to this was when it had to make a decision at the end of 2021 on the soon-to-expire forest management plan. It is rubbish and the select committee would identify it as rubbish. That is exactly why the government is once again using its numbers to avoid transparency and accountability and to try to support its weak and ever weakening arguments around its job-killing decision to end the native timber industry in Western Australia.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [2.29 pm]: I was excited when I heard that the member's first motion in this place was to be on forestry because I thought—silly me!—that something was coming and that there was going to be an announcement of some sort of policy. Hon Martin Aldridge talked about a lot of things. He talked extensively about policy, but within everything he said there was no policy and there has not been a policy. In fact, the only policy any of us on this side have seen from the other side in the nearly three years of this term was a policy to bring back whaling, but we will get to that one later.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Why didn't you take the policy to the election?

Hon DAN CADDY: I will get to the stuff that the member said later. His contribution was very wideranging and there is lots to talk about. I will go very—no, let us stay on policy then. When members opposite want to talk about policies and elections, the problem we have on this side is that they have no policies. The member's side is a policy void. To find out what policies they may have had with regard to forestry or trees, I had to go back and look at their commitments leading into the last election, and there is an interesting one here. This was a commitment from the Nationals WA on 29 January 2021. There is some good stuff in this, I will give the member that. It reads —

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NATIONALS PLEDGE \$100 MILLION FOR NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE REGIONS

It is a one-page document. It does not mention forestry, trees or this area at all. I am happy to provide a copy of the document for *Hansard* because I know that the Nationals have a habit, as we found out a few days ago, Hon Martin Aldridge, of putting things online and then pulling them back down when they realise the mistakes in them. That was an interesting commitment.

The Liberal Party had a policy around trees. This is fascinating. The policy was to provide half a million dollars to grow and support tree canopies in the seat of Mount Lawley. That was the only Liberal Party policy I could find from the last election that involved trees in any way whatsoever. It was interesting, too, because as my good friend the member for Mount Lawley, Simon Millman, pointed out to me, part of this policy was justified by a response to the government's higher urban infill targets that this particular candidate did not like. It was pretty much a housing policy as well and about the only one on housing that the Liberal Party had for the election.

It is interesting to talk about policies and it is very easy for members from the other side to do this. Hon Martin Aldridge is very good at this. He is very good at having a go at a government that has been an extremely effective government for some time now and has policies across the whole area of government. It is easy to be critical of others when a party does not have any policies of its own—not a single policy on that side. Members, I am not the only one who is disturbed by the lack of policy from the other side. This also goes to climate change and forestry. I had a fascinating read last month of an article by Trevor Whittington, who many people may know. Hon Darren West, for example, knows him quite well.

Hon Darren West: I have borne his wrath many times.

Hon DAN CADDY: Yes, he is known to all. He wrote an op-ed in the *Australian Rural and Regional News* on 1 September 2023. It states —

The recent talk in the media of the plan by the WA National Party to trade the leadership of the Opposition for a guaranteed third winnable seat in the upper house was a sign of a political party that was in deep trouble.

He then writes about the lack of policy as being a critical thing. He said at some point that these changes could see the party shrink from six members to a new low of just five members. How prophetic of him. He writes about some of the members of the party. I am not going to go into that, but it is an interesting article because he basically says that the lack of policy and being able to articulate what the modern National Party stands for is one of its biggest problems. He writes about previous policies and about not having policies, but he does mention royalties for regions and states in the article —

Outside of Royalties for Regions, which was no more than a billion-dollar political slush fund linked to photo opportunities, the State Nats have struggled to make the case that they are the key to better government services in the bush.

I could not have put it better myself. He is very helpful and he makes the point that if they were doing their job, he would not need to write this article, but at the end of the article he lists a whole lot of policy ideas. I will not go through them but high on his list is selling Western Power and the Water Corporation to pay for the next generation of infrastructure, as he puts it. He also writes about doubling down on gas and ignoring renewables to keep energy as cheap as possible. That is a policy members opposite might want to pick up. He also calls out the climate change catastrophes bluff. I found that really interesting and fascinating. Although that is not said directly in this place, it is absolutely echoed in a lot of what we have heard today.

Hon Martin Aldridge issued one challenge. I hope I get this right and apologies if I do not. He challenged any government member who got up after him to explain or show that bushfires are not made worse or more intense through plantations or the taking of timber from forests. I want to refer to an article that was written in the wake of bushfires. It states —

Taking timber from forests dramatically changes their structure, making them more vulnerable to bushfires. And, crucially for the Black Summer bushfires, logged forests are more likely to burn out of control.

Naturally, the drivers of the fires were widely debated during and after the disaster. Research published ... claimed native forest logging did not make the fires worse.

This is an article the member may want to read because it continues to talk about the research and it absolutely discusses the fact that what we are doing and what we are looking at in no way worsens the risk of bushfires.

I now want to look at the topic of this motion and specifically forestry. The Cook government, as we know, is absolutely committed to preserving the south west. We need to commit to that because we need to preserve it for future generations. One of the key ways of doing this is by ending large-scale commercial logging. Despite what members opposite have tried to say, this absolutely is a decision based on science. We simply cannot continue to

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harvest timber from our forest at the same scale allowed under the *Forest management plan 2014–2023*. It is not environmentally viable, socially viable or economically viable.

Two Nationals WA members insinuated—in fact, I think Hon Colin de Grussa did as well. All three Nationals members insinuated, without saying it directly, that there was no consultation on this. The Native Forestry Transition Group was consulted during the preparation of this transition plan. The plan was developed by the Native Forestry Transition Group. It is made up of representatives—I think the minister spoke about it—from industry, workforce, government and community. In fact, it consists of 12, possibly a few more, entities. The minister named some of them so I am not going to go through them, but to say there was no consultation is fundamentally not true.

The group met in 2021, as we know. This led to the Cook Labor government supporting regional communities through, as mentioned by other speakers and the minister, the \$18 million native forestry transition program in creating and supporting sustainable jobs in the south west. As the minister also outlined, this was in stark contrast to how it happened in 2009 under the Barnett–Redman regime. This \$18 million Native Forestry Transition Plan includes a number of things. The business transition program provides funding support to eligible businesses operating in Western Australia, and it will transition their operations following the end of native logging. There are some fantastic examples of that. Once again, the minister has gone through them, so I will not take up our time going through them again. In fact, the minister’s response was extremely comprehensive.

In April 2022, the WA government reached an agreement with the Forest Industries Federation WA on a program that provides support for sawmills, harvest and haulage businesses and peripheral businesses for transitioning out of native forestry. In 2022, an agreement was reached on a range of financial support programs to assist workers through the transition before native forest logging ends in WA in 2024—two years out. In August 2022, it was expanded with an additional \$30 million grants program—the industry and community development program. Once again, the minister went through this and outlined what was done.

Members opposite, these are not decisions made in a consultative vacuum. These are all decisions coming from the high-level consultation that this government has had with all stakeholders and people across this industry. This is why this is such a comprehensive package, and why we have put a significant amount of funding into making sure that not just individual workers, but businesses, small and medium, in the industry will be looked after as well. They know well in advance what is being done for them to transition out of the closure of the industry.

The cost of continuing the unsustainable commercial logging of our iconic WA native forests is just too great for future generations. The impact of climate change has been mentioned by speakers as well. It simply cannot be ignored and absolutely cannot be denied. The Liberal Party of Western Australia and the National Party of Western Australia had no plan to protect native forests or invest in job-creating softwood plantations. Continued logging of our native forests, just like whaling in the past, is not environmentally, socially or economically sustainable.

Those opposite also need to get their heads around this and understand that softwood and hardwood timbers are used for very different purposes. Softwood timbers are delivered to local manufacturers like Wespine, which produces structural timber for the housing industry, and other products that go towards the production of kitchen benchtops, cupboards and the like. Following years of inaction and a lack of investment under the previous Liberal–National government, the Cook Labor government is taking action by investing in the future of the state and softwood estate. This is a record \$350 million investment over 10 years in new softwood plantations across the south west that will create and support WA forestry industries. This investment will ensure that the construction and housing industry in WA also has the resources it requires.

I know the document I have with me has already been tabled, but it is an exceptional graphic because it very clearly shows events under the former Labor government, the former Liberal–National government and the current Labor government, and how much we are putting in. It is a quick visual that immediately displays how far ahead this government was, and now is, of the Liberal–National government that came in between us. That Liberal–National government established only 10 hectares of softwood plantations. Our softwood program has purchased almost 5 000 additional hectares for future plantations.

As I said, it is the \$80 million native forest transition packages, and the \$30 million industry and community development packages. The industry and community development programs are a firm and final pillar of the transition plan. I will sit down in a few seconds, but before I do, I really want to acknowledge my great friend and colleague Jane Kelsbie, MLA, the member for Warren–Blackwood. She fought hard to increase the transition package from \$50 million up to \$80 million, securing even more funding for small business development and diversification, new industry development grants, and all those other grants in her region. That is an absolute credit to her.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [2.45 pm]: It is good fun to stand and effectively debate yet another motion on the accountability and transparency of the Cook Labor government. I know this motion looks towards creating a select committee. It is a very good motion. We have to ask ourselves this question: why is this government afraid of a committee looking into one of its policies? Of course, the answer

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is that this government is terrified of accountability and transparency. The government would be again embarrassed by its performance, so it will not support somebody having a look at its performance, because its performance, as usual, is relatively indefensible.

The motion before the house, which I will try to address in a better way than some of the members opposite have done, calls for a select committee to examine the direct and indirect economic and social impact of the closure of the native timber commercial logging industry; the Forest Products Commission's ability to meet remaining contractual obligations; and how the government's softwood plantation investment plan is going. But I think what scares the government the most and the reason this government is afraid of having a select committee is part (2)(e) of the motion, which states —

the effectiveness of the state government's native forest transition plan, including but not limited to business, workforce, industry, and community.

I think that is what got members opposite terrified. It is frightened of somebody looking at its performance and running a ruler over it. We are back to a debate —

Hon Darren West: Nobody is terrified.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is what terrifies the government. It is concerned that —

Hon Darren West: Nobody is terrified.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The government is, Hon Darren West. The government is concerned that somebody might put a ruler up against its performance and discover that it cannot meet the performance requirements. I think that is what we are dealing with here. Ultimately, this is once again a motion about accountability and transparency, and of a government failing to perform.

I want to address some of the comments made by various members in the first instance. I will start with the most recent one about what policies honourable members could find from the opposition in relation to forestry in the lead-up to the 2021 election. I am interested to see what forestry policies the Labor Party, in the first term of the McGowan government, took to the 2021 election, because they did not take the closure of the timber industry to the 2021 election. That was not on its agenda. It probably did not get asked seven times whether it was on the agenda and had to deny it seven times, but, once again, there was not a policy. There was a forestry policy vacuum in the Labor government. Before the Labor government starts throwing a few slings and arrows over this side, it did not, with all of the resources in government, have a forestry policy. It certainly did not tell the people of Western Australia, particularly those forestry communities around Manjimup and Nannup. When the government got to the other side of the election and realised that the COVID election was going to give it ultimate power, it did not tell people in advance that it was going to destroy their industry by shutting it down. The government did not take that to an election. Therefore, the high moral ground is unbelievable! The government comes along and says where is our policy. I tell members what: it did not forecast what it was going to do.

It is interesting that there have been a few comments about the then minister, Hon Dave Kelly. Members might remember a debate not that long ago when I managed to put forward my top three dud ministers in the then McGowan Labor government. I had to drop Hon Dave Kelly down one. I originally thought he might be number one, the minister who was going to nationalise the crayfish industry and ultimately shut down the timber industry. He probably should have been at the top. I jumped Alannah MacTiernan over to number two in the dud minister rankings on the basis of performance that week, and they did not even get close to the unreliable Attorney General. I tell members what, if they want to look at the unreliable Attorney General's performance, they should look at Channel Seven news last night with the discussions around Craig Peacock. I thought that was interesting: "I can't remember a thing. I don't remember that." No wonder a judge considered him unreliable. There are three dud ministers. Two are no longer ministers and one is no longer in Parliament. I think we have done pretty well with motions from the opposition.

I want to address what the former Minister for Forestry said about the timber industry, because it is hard to find the policy. Hon Dave Kelly, then Minister for Forestry, released a media statement on 3 December 2019, 15 months from the next state election, titled "Local timber industry gets a boost as leading miller joins WA". This is when Parkside Timber purchased a couple of south west mills in Manjimup and Nannup, the centre of the timber industry. The fourth dot point states —

McGowan Government committed to maintaining a sustainable forestry industry

That is the policy the Labor Party took to the last election. Mark McGowan committed to maintaining a sustainable forestry industry.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Listen to that—nothing.

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Crickets! It is a forestry area with no animals or no noises or nothing. It is amazing. That was the Labor Party's policy: maintaining a sustainable forestry industry. I love this comment from the media release —

This investment is another step towards native forestry's transformation into a resilient, future industry that can deal with the challenges of utilising smaller logs from regrowth forests.

It is going to have a sustainable industry and accepts that it will have to have some smaller logs, despite the protestations from the Minister for Forestry a bit earlier that the previous government was dreadful and it said we have to have smaller logs. Guess what? So will the current government. That is really interesting.

I want to take the Minister for Forestry to task for her contribution about ecological thinnings. They will effectively be outside the harvested timber to allow for the mining of alumina, and ecological thinnings are the only other part of the harvest. The minister says ecological thinnings will be good. For two years I have been asking what ecological thinnings mean. How are they defined? What do they look like? Can we make a log or a plank out of them? The answer is, "We can't tell you; we don't know what ecological thinnings are." Ecological thinnings will be the bit left over if there is anything done to the forests. This is the best part of this ridiculous policy that the Labor Party has implemented simply to appease the green movement in the inner suburbs of Perth. Ecological thinnings currently exist as a by-product of the timber industry. When timber is harvested, the other bits pulled out are called ecological thinnings. That is the bit that cannot be used for saw logs and other bits and pieces. Most of it is a bit green, so it is hardly used for firewood. That is ecological thinnings. When we do not have a timber industry, we will not have any ecological thinnings, unless it sends people in to start thinning and do a bit of silviculture, which I do not think the government likes anyway. Unless it actively manages the forest, we will not have any ecological thinnings. That is the reason the government cannot answer the question, "What do ecological thinnings look like?" I imagine it is getting advice that says, "We don't know, because there probably aren't going to be any." Even today, the minister talked about ecological thinnings. Even if the government sends somebody into the forest to get timber out for ecological thinnings, they are not going to be saw log-type trees. Ecological thinnings are traditionally 10 to 15 centimetre poles. It might get a pole vault out of them. If we have corflutes at the next election, the Labor Party might be able to use ecological thinnings to put its corflute posters on. Well done—ecological thinnings. I could not believe it. There will effectively be no ecological thinnings.

What has this policy done? It slashed production levels, which was the intent all this time. It has destroyed an industry that will no longer exist. The only timber harvested will be harvested for mining. The rest of it will be a massive fire hazard that will be relatively unmanaged. That is the result of the Labor Party's policy. This is why the Labor Party is so frightened of the motion before the house today, because it was not necessary. It did not have to do this. It had to reduce the size of the timber industry. If I were the Minister for Forestry going into this process, I have no doubt that I would have reduced the size of the timber industry. The government could have reduced it to a long-term sustainable industry. It could have done what it said it would do on 3 December 2019, when the McGowan government committed to maintaining a sustainable forest industry. It could have kept its word and kept its promise to the people of Western Australia. It could have downsized the industry and kept it alive out there on a sustainable long-term footing, producing a harvest, taking those hardwood products and putting them into long-term structural or furniture-type products that tied that carbon up for decades, if not centuries. It could have done that and delivered a sustainable industry.

If members want to know another thing that is interesting to me, I think the Minister for Forestry was quite right. The forest management plan is announced by the Minister for Environment, but the 2021 announcement to kill the timber industry was announced by the Premier. It was not the Minister for Environment going through the normal forest management plan process. It was not the production of the regular plan or the scientific assessment of that plan, because the work was still being done. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation was still working on it. That was not the outcome. It was not the fact that the department of environment said to the Minister for Environment, "This is the outcome we have to get to." It was a politically based decision. The government might have been a bit nervous of the Greens input into those inner metropolitan seats. It might have been a bit frightened of the teals coming along. Whatever it was, it was absolutely the case that the government took this decision on a purely political basis. In 2021, it said, "We're going to play to our heartland in Perth. There are not enough votes for us in the south west timber industry, so we will toss that to the wolves." That is precisely what it did. It was unnecessary.

I have great sympathy for this Minister for Forestry because it was not this Minister for Forestry who destroyed the timber industry. Unfortunately, they gave her the dirty job of cleaning up the pieces. They gave her a mop to mop up the blood on the floor. That was the problem. I think she probably understands the horrible job. Although she was promoted, I am beginning to think that the Premier who put her in there might not like her very much, because it was a dirty job going in there to fix the mess of Hon Dave Kelly.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Maybe she backed the wrong minister.

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: She might have backed the wrong one. Good point! Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, mate? Who knows. However, they gave her the dirty job to try to justify a political decision with smoke and mirrors, and to fix the mess of her predecessors.

Out in our territory, both the minister's and mine, it is an impossible job. Out in metropolitan regions, I am sure it is very popular for those people who do not have to worry about whether they will have a job or whether their family, their children or grandchildren will have a job in a regional town. Sure, it is probably pretty popular, but the end result is this, and it did not have to do this. It was a political choice, and that is why the Labor Party is so frightened of this motion. That is why the Labor Party cannot bear the idea of a committee looking into what it has done, because deep down the Labor Party knows it has destroyed an industry that it did not have to destroy, for political gain. Any committee that looked at these actions and assessed them fairly would have no choice but to come to that conclusion. Obviously, the government could not afford to have it investigated and it is frightened of having a real assessment of what it has done and why it did it.

The Labor government will vote this motion down; it would not matter which committee it was, or whether it was an independent inquiry or part of Parliament. The government cannot afford to have anyone looking too deeply at its motives and performance, because any committee would see it for what it is: an absolute disgrace.

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [3.00 pm] — in reply: Well, that was indeed an interesting exchange. I think everything has been covered by this side in terms of the reasons why this motion will not get up. I knew it would not get up from the start because, given the sheer numbers, we just do not stand a chance of getting anything reasonable through. I am fighting for the people of the south west, who have been so severely affected by this, and I will continue to fight for this industry because I know how good it is. I also know that the decision made in 2021 was not based on science; nor was it based on good outcomes for those regional areas. Good outcomes would include keeping people in jobs and giving them a fair transition out of that industry. It would not include announcing a decision in the media for people to find out via the grapevine that they no longer had jobs. It would not involve the government then providing the level of funding that has been provided to get people to exit the industry again; it is the same as what happened in 2001. It is exactly the same approach. It took us years to get over that part closure in 2001.

The government talks about policy. The Nationals WA had the best policy that was ever delivered to regional Western Australia: royalties for regions. I challenge every member opposite to come up with a better policy for regional Western Australia, because what they are doing at the moment does not cut it.

Hon Peter Foster: More plastic cows and singing toilets?

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: I have raised that before, and I thank the member for raising it. That policy was a bottom-up policy. The member might not have liked those plastic cows, but that has been so beneficial to those communities. The member laughs at them and mocks those people.

Several members interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Members opposite mock the people who came up with those community-building exercises. It empowered them. Members opposite might want to include that word in their repertoire, because it never seems to come up in their policies. Community empowerment is what it is all about—a bottom-up approach, not someone coming on the radio and saying, “Oh well, your industry's closing.” That is the most appalling thing a government can do to hardworking, decent people living in regional areas—the people who hold this country up. I implore the government to consider this committee so that we can really have a good look at what went wrong, how we can rebuild the industry into something valuable, and how we can give those people a voice.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Sandra Carr) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (10)

Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Peter Collier
Hon Ben Dawkins

Hon Nick Goiran
Hon Louise Kingston
Hon Tjorn Sibma

Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Neil Thomson
Hon Wilson Tucker

Hon Colin de Grussa (*Teller*)

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 8 November 2023]
p5939f-5957a

Hon Louise Kingston; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon
Dan Caddy; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

Noes (18)

Hon Klara Andric
Hon Dan Caddy
Hon Sandra Carr
Hon Stephen Dawson
Hon Kate Doust

Hon Sue Ellery
Hon Lorna Harper
Hon Jackie Jarvis
Hon Ayor Makur Chuot
Hon Shelley Payne

Hon Stephen Pratt
Hon Martin Pritchard
Hon Samantha Rowe
Hon Rosie Sahanna
Hon Dr Sally Talbot

Hon Darren West
Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Peter Foster (*Teller*)

Pairs

Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Steve Martin

Hon Kyle McGinn
Hon Matthew Swinbourn

Question thus negatived.