

**PROTECTION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH WEST FORESTS —
SCIENTISTS' STATEMENT**

Motion

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [10.33 am] — without notice: I move —

That this Council calls on the state government to —

- (a) note the “Scientists’ Statement on Protection of Western Australia’s South-West Forests” of June 2013;
- (b) acknowledge the endorsement of the statement by 36 eminent scientists; and
- (c) recognise the south west forests as a carbon store and prioritise this above conflicting uses.

The document that I will be referring to was created in June this year. It was produced by a number of scientists and relates to the values of the south west forests. Interestingly, one of the main components of this document is the fact that it deals with the forests as a carbon sink. As members would know, the area that I am involved in is the study of climate change, its impacts and the production of CO₂ and the methods of geosequestering CO₂. I want to read from the scientists’ statement and then focus on one particular part of it. It states —

We, the undersigned scientists with knowledge and understanding of the forest ecosystems of the south-west of Western Australia, have concerns about the future of these ecosystems.

Securing improved protection and management is essential for this internationally recognised, biologically rich and highly valued landscape.

The south-west of Western Australia is listed as one of the world’s 34 Global Biodiversity Hotspots because of its large numbers of endemic species and the serious threats to its biodiversity.

Western Australia’s karri, jarrah, marri, tuart and tingle forests grow within this Biodiversity Hotspot and nowhere else in the world. These forests have become important refuges for forest-dependent flora and fauna species. They are critical habitat for endangered species such as the Numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*), Mainland Quokka ... and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo ...

We have all heard of the cockatoos’ significant plight. It continues —

About half Western Australia’s native forests have been permanently cleared for farms, towns, roads, powerlines and dams and of the remaining half, about 40 per cent continues to be subjected to clearing or logging.

In combination, climate change, forest diseases, destructive fires, logging and mining are placing enormous stress on the south-west forest ecosystems. The region is drying more rapidly than other parts of Australia and drought is having significant impacts.

In this context, continued industrial-scale logging of the remaining forests is undermining their capacity to cope with the pressures they are under. This disturbance is:

Continuing to reduce critical habitat for threatened species such as nesting hollows in mature trees.

Spreading dieback (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) and other diseases

Fragmenting ecosystems and facilitating access for introduced predators (foxes and cats)

Compacting soil with long-term implications for ecosystem health

Causing erosion and reducing water quality

Releasing very large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere

While much remains unknown and more research is needed, we recognise that Western Australia’s south-west forests are under stress and state that, based on the precautionary principle, the following measures should be incorporated in the next Forest Management Plan:

- Critical habitat for threatened species including forest that retains the structure of the original forests should be urgently protected from degradation and loss;
- Additional corridors for fauna movement should be urgently incorporated into the conservation reserve system to link refuge areas;
- Forests currently free of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* should be protected from activities that could introduce dieback;

- Jarrah forests receiving less than 600 mm of rain per annum, and jarrah forests projected to receive less than 600 mm of rain per annum by 2030 should be protected;
- Karri forests receiving less than 1000 mm of rain per annum, and karri forests projected to receive less than 1000 mm of rain per annum by 2030 should be protected;
- Water in rivers, streams, wetlands and aquifers should be protected from the impacts of logging and clearing;
- The value of Western Australia's south-west forests as a carbon store should be recognised, accounted for and prioritised above conflicting uses.

We believe that these measures, while not exhaustive, will significantly improve the ability of the forests to cope with the stresses they are under while reducing the pressures on threatened species endemic to the south-west.

This statement, endorsed by the following experts (listed in alphabetical order), was launched on World Environment Day, 5th June 2013:

Dr Mark Andrich, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Western Australia (Centre for Water Research).

Associate Professor John Bailey, School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University.

Dr Paul Barber, Forest pathologist, Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Murdoch University.

Dr P.F Berry, Former Director of Natural Science, Western Australian Museum.

Dr David Bradley, PhD NSERC IRDF Postdoctoral fellow Bird Studies Canada, University of Guelph.

Emeritus Professor Don Bradshaw, University of Western Australia

Felicity Bradshaw, Honorary Research Associate, School of Animal Biology, University of Western Australia

Associate Professor Mike Calver, School of Biological Sciences and Biotechnology, Murdoch University.

Dr Christopher Dean, carbon and spatial scientist, University of Tasmania.

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Professor Neal Enright, Plant ecologist, Murdoch University.

Professor Giles Hardy, Professor Forest Pathology, Director State Centre of Excellence on Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health, Murdoch University.

Professor Richard J Hobbs, Australian Laureate Fellow School of Plant Biology, University of Western Australia.

Professor Pierre Horwitz, School of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University.

Professor Jörg Imberger, Director Centre for Water Research, University of Western Australia.

Winthrop Professor Hans Lambers, FAA, FRNAAS Immediate Past Head of School of Plant Biology (2002-2012) School of Plant Biology, University of Western Australia.

Professor Brendan Mackey, Griffith University.

Adjunct Professor Jonathan Majer, Curtin University of Technology.

Dr Jean-Paul Orsini, Conservation biologist.

Dr Trudy Paap, PhD, Centre of Excellence on Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health, Murdoch University.

Associate Professor Pieter Poot, School of Plant Biology, University of Western Australia.

James Radford, PhD. Honorary Research Associate, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University.

Emeritus Professor Harry F. Recher, FRZS, AM Edith Cowan University.

Philip W. Rundel, Distinguished Professor of Biology and Director of the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of California (UCLA) Los Angeles CA.

Dr Denis Saunders AM, Chair Sara Halvedene Foundation.

Professor Michael Soule, PhD Professor Emeritus, UC Santa Cruz, Founder and past president, Society for Conservation Biology Founder and past president, Wildlands Network Member, Science Counsel, The Wilderness Society (Australia).

Katrina Syme, Field mycologist.

Malcolm Trudgen BSc, Consulting botanist, plant taxonomist.

Associate Professor Grant Wardell-Johnson, Department of Environment and Agriculture, School of Science, Curtin University of Technology.

Dr Alexander Watson, PhD in Environmental Management (Forest Ecology).

Associate Professor James Watson, University of Queensland, Director of the Climate Change Program at the Wildlife Conservation Society, Chair of the IUCN Climate Change Specialist Group.

Dr Mary E White AM.

Adjunct Professor Ray Wills, School of Earth and Environment, University of Western Australia.

Kerrie Wilson, ARC Future Fellow, The University of Queensland.

Barbara York Main, Adjunct Professor Researcher on spider ecology, evolution and systematics.

Sandra V. Valderrama, PhD The University of Waikato, New Zealand Researcher, Conservation Leadership Programme, Fundación Conserva, Colombia.

After having read that statement, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted. [See paper 356.]

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: As members know, I am extremely concerned about not only the impacts of climate change in Western Australia, but also the emissions from WA as a state, as part of the nation and as part of the globe. Forests perform an incredibly important role in our ability to sequester carbon. We are going through many engineering proposals to try to deal with the excessive carbon. Here is one of the most naturally available carbon sinks anywhere in the world. It is acknowledged by the Met Office Hadley Centre in London and indeed our own scientists. Forests are an equivocal part of dealing with climate change. I am reminded that the London Met Office identified that if we were not careful and we removed too much forest in the Amazon Basin and around the world, we will reach a tipping point; carbon is a fertiliser for forests, but we can reach a stage at which we over-fertilise forests. There is some evidence already in Brazil that the uptake of carbon by forests in that area is diminishing because they are becoming overloaded with carbon.

Forests store huge amounts of carbon and while they grow and regrow, they continue to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It must be recognised that protecting native forest is the most simple, immediately available and cost-effective way to mitigate dangerous climate change. The climate change department under DEC no longer has the job of seeking to mitigate the impacts of climate change; it is mainly focused on adaptation. Science around the world is saying wholeheartedly that we have to mitigate climate change. The logging lobby presents a poorly researched case that logging is carbon neutral. It is not. The claim is that when forests are logged, the carbon stored in the trees goes on to be stored in timber products. That is assuming that all the logging goes into timber products. Regrowing the forest sequesters and stores more carbon. Firstly, the vast majority, up to 90 per cent, of the products generated from the logging of forests in WA are for paper, firewood, charcoal and sawdust. Unfortunately, all those release carbon immediately. There is no long-term storage. It is just another carbon emitter. Only a small percentage of logs sold by the Forest Products Commission each year end up in timber products with medium to long-term carbon lifespans, such as furniture or flooring. Secondly, old-growth forests store more carbon than regrowth forests. It takes 150 years or more for a forest to sequester and store 90 per cent of the carbon that was stored prior to it being logged. Therefore, we have to realise that logging actually releases carbon dioxide and that it then takes 150 years for that regrowth to start picking up. What is not often mentioned is that, in fact, whilst there is an old-growth forest, there is an immense amount of litter that eventually, after many thousands, if not millions, of years, becomes stored in the ground as solid carbon—that is, coal, gas or whatever. There is an ongoing process of re-storage of carbon through forests.

A recent study published by The Australia Institute shows the high carbon value of WA forests. Depending on the carbon price, the state stands to earn between \$16 million and \$438 million in revenue every year from the sale of carbon credits. This significant sum of money far exceeds any return that the state or industry will get from logging. We need to ensure that we are part of the process of developing a sustainable future not only for our state, our forests and Australia generally, but also as a participating partner in the world's desire to have a future.

Obviously, there are a number of people who are sceptical at different times about climate change. One of the comments that comes to mind is a comment made by our good friend Dr Karl Kruszelnicki.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon Ken Travers: Triple J's scientist extraordinaire.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: He is a gentleman who has studied just about everything; he has spent his whole life studying. Dr Karl recently said to a journalist —

“What they're trying to do is sell newspapers or get people to watch TV, and they try to create controversy where there is none. With regards to climate change, the only people whose opinion is worth anything are the climate scientists themselves,” ...

He went on to say —

“The newspapers have been getting responses from anybody and the only requirement is that they have a pulse ...

We must stop listening to the tittle-tattle and start listening to those people we train through our universities in this country and other countries who are scientists and who have the expertise. I was trained as an engineer, so people come to me for advice on mechanical engineering. If people need advice on climate science, they should go to climate scientists and listen to what they have to say and not listen to some shock jock who is trying to make mileage from the whole debate. In times of war, we listen long and hard to our scientists about how to develop new horrific weapons and we take their advice. Now is the time for us to take advice from our scientists, especially the scientists who released the paper that I have tabled.

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [10.53 am]: On behalf of the government, I will make a very short comment on this motion. In this contribution, I would like to put Hon Robin Chapple's mind at ease that opportunities exist for the involvement of scientists in this process and also that that process is quite robust and is in train at this stage.

The Conservation Commission of Western Australia is preparing, through the agency of the Department of Environment and Conservation, the forest management plan for the next 10 years. The “Draft forest management plan 2014–2023” builds on the framework of the “Forest management plan 2004–2013” and puts forward for comment a range of proposed changes and management options. The forest management plan is the key policy document for managing and protecting the south west forests in an ecologically sustainable manner. The plan puts forwards a suite of management options to help conserve biological diversity, to provide for recreation and to protect water catchment areas and it administers a sustainable native forest products industry. The non-statutory consultation period on the “Draft forest management plan 2014–2023” included meeting with representatives from a number of stakeholders, including the scientific community. I guess that was the first opportunity for the scientific community to have input into that process. However, additionally, there was a 12-week statutory public review period from August to November 2012. Approximately 5 100 submissions on the plan were received during that public review period. This process is very rigorous and provides extensive opportunity for community input, including the scientific community. Mr President, I would expect that the matters raised by the scientists in the papers that you are noting have been incorporated and will be considered and dealt with in the plan.

The proposed forest management plan and the analysis and response to the public submissions on the draft FMP were transmitted to the Environmental Protection Authority for assessment on 15 April this year. I am advised that the EPA anticipates that it will release its assessment report in July this year. Once the EPA has reported, there will be a two-week public appeal period by the Appeals Convenor. Following that two-week appeal period, the Appeals Convenor will consider any appeal grounds and report to the Minister for Environment. The Minister for Environment will then consider any appeals and the recommendation of the Appeals Convenor prior to making a decision on the final plan. The Minister for Environment will also consult across government and with the Conservation Commission to approve the final “Forest management plan 2014–2023”.

With those short comments, I indicate that I believe this to be quite a rigorous and robust process that provides multiple opportunities for the scientific community to give input to that plan. I anticipate that that is happening.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.58 am]: I am disappointed that that was an extremely short response by the government to a motion from Hon Robin Chapple that I think has a great deal of substance. So I will take the opportunity to —

Hon Ken Travers: Wait until you hear their speeches on the motions they moved earlier; they'll be even shorter!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is going to be terrific; yes, I am very excited about that prospect, which will happen probably about a year before the next election. Mr President, I am sorry; I am distracting myself. I want to make some comments about Hon Robin Chapple's motion, of which we in the Labor opposition are broadly supportive.

Labor has a proud record in the area of protecting native forests in Western Australia. Honourable members need no reminding that in 2001 it was the Gallop-led Labor government that took the unprecedented step of legislating to end the logging of old-growth native forests in Western Australia. What we did was no small task. Followers of the political process will remember that it took several years for Labor to arrive at a position at which we felt that we had all the arguments marshalled and all the support in the community lined up to take the unprecedented step of legislating for the end of old-growth logging. What we did in the years following our election to government in 2001 was to effectively place 100 per cent of old-growth forests into categories that were unavailable for logging, which can be compared with the old regional forest agreement that locked up only 60 per cent of old-growth areas. By 2001 we knew that we had to act because the past 200 years or so of logging practices had had such a severe impact that what we were left with in 2001 was, in fact, only 10 per cent of the original old-growth forest. The position in 2013—that is, 12 years after Labor legislated to protect old growth—is that about 2.6 million hectares of native forests are locked up in areas that effectively can never be logged. There are different classifications, including formal reserves, informal reserves, national parks, conservation zones, nature reserves, forest conservation areas and fauna habitat zones. Those areas can never be logged because of Labor's legislation. We continued the management of native forests under the old system, which was established by Liberal governments in this state, of forest management plans. However, the 10-year forest management plan that came into existence in 2004 was the first to separate the management of forests from commercial timber operations. That should have provided the state with a golden opportunity. The Premier is technically correct when he continually refers to native forests as a renewable resource. Of course, even Hon Robin Chapple has talked about the fact that forests regenerate and that timber regrows. However, under the Liberal-National government the time line has been condensed to such an extent that forests are systematically being destroyed and are not being given the chance to regenerate. Honourable members will be familiar with all the figures. Mine are slightly different from those of Hon Robin Chapple in that my research suggests that a jarrah tree takes 250 years to reach maturity. That means that jarrah that is being clear-felled now will not regenerate until the middle of the twenty-third century. When we label a resource like that as a renewable resource, we are really stretching the bounds of credible definitions of "renewability".

I often say to colleagues on both sides of the house that one of the ways to get to the heart of a conservative government is to talk about economic realities, which is why I was particularly surprised when an Australian National University report came out last year showing that literally billions of dollars can be made in income from our forests—cold, hard cash that we can milk from our forests—if the government stopped cutting them down and used them for carbon resources. Yet all through last year when questions were put repeatedly to the minister, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Conservation Commission during the estimates hearings, all we got constantly was a blocking of the very principle that we could make money out of the carbon stocks in native forests. It defies belief that the government would turn its back on all that revenue! When we started peeling away the onion skin to get to some kind of explanation as to why that was the case, all we learnt through the estimates process was that the government had adopted a policy setting and that it did not want to quantify the cash value of carbon resources. The reason the government gave at the time was that there was no international market into which data from WA could be inputted. That is wrong—it is just rubbish. If we look at the sequence of annual conferences since Kyoto, there has always been provision for a state like Western Australia to prepare to play its part in the international carbon economy. Yet this government, which is supposed to be in favour of free enterprise and economic adventurism, refused to enter into that new area of economic development. It simply defies any logical explanation, except that the ranks opposite are infiltrated by true climate change deniers—people who simply do not buy the climate change arguments, people who get their information from shock jocks and from fake research institutes that have been set up by people all over the world because they have an economic interest in denying climate change. It is a sad state of affairs when debate of such immense national significance is essentially ruled by crackpots and, sadly, those crackpots have infiltrated their way into the government party rooms. I suspect that that is at the heart of the government's refusal to take part in this very interesting, exciting and potentially very, very lucrative market for Western Australia.

During the election campaign Labor made it clear what it would have done. I mentioned in my Address-in-Reply speech that a great sadness that we on this side of the house will have to live with for the rest of our political lives is that we did not get a chance to put in place a decent forest management plan for the next 10 years. I, for one, hold out little hope that we will see any substantive change. All the signs are ominous. Please, if anybody in the Liberal and National Parties is seeing signs that I am missing, let me know! I am not seeing any signs that the government has learned from the two Environmental Protection Authority reports that it has in its possession and that it has had in its possession for many years. A midterm assessment of the forest management plan was

considered by the Environmental Protection Authority and a report went to government. That report was extremely critical of the management of the existing forest management plan. All those concerns were then summarised in the Environmental Protection Authority's response to the final report of the forest management plan and any number of threats were named including climate change as the main threat, but also diseases and pests—predominantly jarrah dieback—mining, wood removal, recreational use, fire and other land management practices. Further—I suspect, Hon Robin Chapple, that this goes to the heart of our problem with the Liberal-National government—the Environmental Protection Authority has twice pointed to the severe deficits in the governance mechanisms that surround the management of our native forests. The governance system is essentially broken. We cannot have the management of such an essential resource fractured across so many different agencies, all of which hate each other! It is not as though they are prepared to work together. Indeed, they talk about their contempt for each other in public! I refer to the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Forest Products Commission and the Conservation Commission.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.08 am]: I will make a short contribution to the debate, given that the area we are talking about is the south west. I am a little surprised that Hon Robin Chapple used 12 of his allocated 20 minutes to read a statement. I understand that he wanted to get it on the record, but I thought he would have had a greater contribution to make and that he would have used his time in a better way. He should have tabled the document, which is what he did anyway. What he had to say in the document is important, but I am sure he has much more to add than what was outlined in that document.

My reading of the statement made by the eminent scientists is pretty accurate in terms of what we are trying to protect in the south west. I will comment on Hon Sally Talbot's comments about the protection of old-growth forest when that debate occurred in 2001. A great deal of progress was made in how the forests in the south west would be protected into the future. When I read the statement, I decided to check out the forest management plan. I want to share with the house the goals that came out of that forest management plan. The "Draft forest management plan 2014–2023" states —

The Conservation Commission's main goals in formulating this Draft plan are for:

- biodiversity to be conserved
- Aboriginal and other Australian cultural heritage to be recognised and protected
- the health, vitality and productive capacity of ecosystems to be sustained
- soil and water resources to be protected
- the contribution to global carbon cycles to be sustained
- the wide range of social, cultural and economic benefits valued by the community to be produced in line with the principles of ESFM.

When I read that and I read the aims and concerns of those scientists I thought that they lined up well. I think the forest management plan is trying to meet the concerns of those eminent scientists and a fair bit of what they say is also true. I hope that this is not the only influence those scientists have had in trying to inform the "Draft forest management plan 2014–2023".

As Hon Helen Morton said, public submissions were taken over a 12-week period, and I hope that these scientists, either one by one or collectively, put in submissions that said exactly the same thing, based on the same objectives of the forest management plan—and I am sure they did. In my view that is a great way of using this robust process and it gives everyone an opportunity to have an input.

I then questioned something else. That is great, and I assume they have done it through the correct processes. I think this was published in the paper as well.

Hon Robin Chapple: I am not sure.

Hon COL HOLT: I have seen it published somewhere.

Hon Robin Chapple: It has been around, but as far as I am aware, it has not been published. It is available on the net.

Hon COL HOLT: I then wonder why it has come into the public domain if they have already commented. Obviously, it is just to influence public perception and government policy making, and to raise the profile of the issue. That is a good thing.

I refer again to the "Draft forest management plan 2014–2023" —

A key principle from the 1996 strategy is that:

Central to the conservation of Australia's biological diversity is the establishment of a comprehensive, representative and adequate (CAR) system of ecologically viable protected

areas integrated with the sympathetic management of all other areas, including agricultural and other resource production systems.

That really is about having a reserve system that protects our various ecological systems throughout Western Australia, including in the south west. Again, the Conservation Commission in the draft forest management plan is trying to achieve that.

I also recognise that about 60-odd per cent of the south west forests are already protected from any harvesting, which leaves about 40 per cent which the Conservation Council comments on in its paper. Members should realise that while 40 per cent could be harvested, it is not like the bulldozers go in with the chains to take out of the bush 40 per cent of our remnant vegetation in one fell swoop. About one per cent of the forest is harvested for mining activities. Members know about the great employment and economic opportunities that mining brings to the south west. I am sure they do not want to throw that baby out with the bathwater by protecting every last bit of remnant bush for the sake of no mining and then all those jobs and communities that hang off mining.

Harvesting itself is restricted to around one per cent, and the new forest management plan suggests that it be about one per cent of potential harvest. Again, this is not a clear-fell situation. It is about companies, the Forest Products Commission and Department of Environment and Conservation going in with practices that have changed in the last few years to ensure that the forest is disturbed as little as possible. Selected trees are taken out, habitat trees are left for future generations, and the impact on the areas are minimised. The whole point of the forest management plan is to set the rules and to make sure that harvest operators and any other recreational user of south west forests play by the rules. This is an opportunity for everyone in the community, including scientists and other lobby groups, to have an input into how the rules are set, so that when the new forest management plan is introduced, if anyone plays outside the rules, they are charged or punished according to the rules.

In the time that remains I will address briefly carbon sinks. I acknowledge that the south west forests are a great carbon store. Hon Robin Chapple said that old-growth forests are protected in the south west so they cannot be knocked down. They take a few hundred years to grow and we are not going to knock that stuff down. But some of the reading I have done states that carbon is stored faster in regrowth forests and plantations, and are a potential future source of carbon storage. The oil mallee industry has been looking at that for some time now, especially in those regions of Western Australia where cropping and annual pastures are harder to make a profit from. Oil mallee is a unique beast in Australia, because a lot of carbon is stored below ground in the mallee root. Mallee root was the scourge of early farming families, but is greatly valued now in terms of carbon storage. Undoubtedly, when talking about carbon storage, there is a great opportunity for Western Australia to promote those other industries that actively capture carbon and store it on less productive lands than in the agricultural region.

I understand that the statement signed by all those scientists and brought to the house by Hon Robin Chapple offers one view on this debate. There is an opportunity now for other viewpoints in this debate. The government has a responsibility to the entire community of Western Australia and there should be two or three sides to any debate.

It was timely that there is an article in today's *The West Australian* on Whittakers Timber Products mill in Greenbushes having problems and facing uncertainty. This uncertainty is not based only on the current economic climate but also on the draft forest management plan, and even uncertainty created by eminent scientists who decide that they should put out statements to raise concern and issues in the public. Companies such as Whittakers are so concerned about the future of the industry that it has decided to lay off 44 people and it will deal with the consequences after the forest management plan comes out. It would have been interesting to see some names added to this list—Lynne Brough and Jonah Wikaira, timber workers from Greenbushes who probably have a different view on this matter.

HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [11.19 am]: I rise to support and comment on the statement. Hon Robin Chapple discussed at length the potential value of the forest as a carbon bank. I now focus on the first points in the scientists' statement that relate to the protection of threatened species and the value of our forest to protect biodiversity. The south west forests' biodiversity values are internationally significant. While it is interesting to hear Hon Col Holt put across the view that everything is all right and it is managed well —

Hon Col Holt: I didn't say that. I said there was a process of inputting.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: We actually know for sure that the reserve system is not functioning well. One particular example of that —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina): Order, members! Hon Lynn MacLaren has the call.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I know that this issue raises emotions amongst us. That is because we all have had some experience of being in the forest and feeling the overwhelming tranquillity and peace that one feels when surrounded by nature and silence. The sounds of the forest are different from the sounds of the bush —

Hon Robin Chapple: Or this chamber!

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Or this chamber, when things get a bit emotional!

It can actually remind us of the values that forests give to the people of Western Australia. Recently, I had the tremendous opportunity to visit Pemberton. I took a little walk around the area where the Gloucester tree is. It is kind of hard to find intact jarrah and karri forest in the south west. Driving down there, one thinks they are surrounded by pretty ancient forest but when one really looks into it, it has been logged at some point. What is really being experienced is regrowth. Unfortunately, although regrowth might meet some people's aesthetic needs for looking at bark and green, it does not meet the biodiversity requirements that those ancient trees provide in nesting hollows and habitat for the vast number of species that exist in Western Australia. I want to list a few of the species that are threatened because of the reduction in our forests because our intact jarrah and karri forest ecosystems have shrunk over the years. They are now reduced to a very small percentage of their original extent. That affects animals such as cockatoos, numbats, brush-tailed phascogales, woylies, quokkas and other fauna species. I could name other threatened species, but I want to quote the Environmental Protection Authority. Its "Forest Management Plan 2004-2013: Mid-term audit of performance report" states quite clearly —

1. The South West of Western Australia is an acknowledged biodiversity hotspot of international significance. This significance relates to the flora and fauna in the region, much of which is endemic.
2. These biodiversity values continue to be under substantial threat from a range of influences.

Today we are talking about forestry. In its "Forest Management Plan 2004–2013 — end-of-term audit of performance report", the EPA said —

The EPA is of the preliminary view that additional actions may be required to ensure that the current ecological values of the ... land covered by the forest management plan are maintained into the future, even in the face of new and continuing threats, such as: extended periods of below average rainfall ... disease and pest impacts ... clearing ... as well as the impacts of timber harvesting operations. In taking this view, the EPA acknowledges that even the best management practices may not be able to prevent some loss of environmental values in the forests when dealing with these threats. Therefore it may be necessary to reduce those threatening processes over which we have some control ...

That is what we are talking about; that is, the choices we make about how we make use of the forest. We can make a choice not to log the forests. We can instead use it as a carbon bank or to improve the ability of the forest to provide habitat for its wealth of biodiversity.

Hon Col Holt interjected.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: The member mentioned that certain people currently make a living out of logging forests. No-one is questioning that. If we do not put into that economic equation the value of retaining the forest, if we do not economically calculate the value of a forest remaining as it is against that economic value of a timber forester's income, one cannot realistically come to a wise decision about how to go forward into the future. As Hon Colin Holt said —

Hon Jim Chown: Is that not the overview in Tasmania?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I am sure it is an argument used where forests exist around the world, Hon Jim Chown. That is the argument. We are saying we should have that debate here. That is what Hon Colin Holt said—it is one point of view. It is a point of view that deserves respect. Scientists are putting this point of view to us. There could be another way to keep our forests and for people to survive in what are timber towns in the south west. I am a case in point, having visited the south west on the weekend. The tourist industry is a successful industry in the south west. I think there are half a dozen vineyards producing top-quality wines and exporting them around the world. There are pasture industries. Dairies remain, if we can hold off Coles a little longer. There is bed and breakfast accommodation for people in the city who like to get out of the big smoke and really get back to nature and to the values that exist on the planet.

Hon Col Holt interjected.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: There is a reason we have jobs. We have jobs in order to sustain our lives. We do not need to log forests. If the member wants to calculate carbon storage in plantation timber, I will support him in

that, definitely, but what we are arguing now is to maintain our forests. We have not done a good enough job in doing that. Now we have an opportunity, over the next 10-year forest management plan, to do it better.

The Department of Environment and Conservation produced a species vulnerability report in 2010. It lists several species that are vulnerable to increased temperature and declining rainfall. These are things we cannot control, but if we know they are coming, we can manage our environment to retain existing life. That means we might have to set aside forest to allow corridors and to allow species to move into areas they do not currently exist in, if the area they are living in is affected by climate change. We know we have a drying climate, we know that some places will get wetter and we know that we need to protect enough old-growth forest so that those existing species have a place to move to if their homes are affected by climate change. We are saying: think ahead. We have the science in front of us. It is fair enough for us to make these decisions based on wisdom we now have to protect old-growth forest. We cannot just snap our fingers and create it; it takes hundreds of years to develop. That is the wealth we need to preserve at this time. Let us use the forest management plan to protect that wealth.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [11:28 am] — in reply: It is my first time with you as Chair, Madam Deputy President (Hon Adele Farina); congratulations.

A few comments have been made. I really want to come back to one fundamental. In my experience, and from what I have read not only in international literature but also in literature from this state and this nation, we have a serious climate change problem. Shortly, we will deal with some legislation in this place about carbon sequestration from coal-fired power stations at Collie. It is an immensely expensive engineering attempt, although not guaranteed, to fix a problem we have created. The cheapest way to do it, and the most economical way to do it, as Hon Colin Holt said, is to put some plantations in.

Hon Col Holt interjected.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: It helps, but let us start replanting some of the areas that we have already degraded. We can put in a number of different species. But we have to value the sinks that we have. In this state, in this nation and globally, we cannot continue chopping down or logging forests. What we have to do, as my colleague Hon Chrissy Sharp used to say, is diversify—develop a forestry industry. She is doing that at the moment. She has a small tree farm in Balingup where they are growing trees for the purpose of turning them into high-value wood for the timber industry.

If we want to go back and talk about woodchips, the debate is incredible. We used to have bloody good paper—I am sorry—we used to have very good paper from hemp. Because we decided to get out of that in America many years ago, we started using our forests for paper products. But the issue is that a significant problem is facing us here and now, and into the future. It is not our future, it is not necessarily our children's future, but it is our children's children's future. As a society, we have to take responsibility for not thinking about just the here and now—our friends' personal interests and our electorates' interests at this time—but the interests of our planet into the future.

In this day and age, we go back into history. We go back a thousand years and we look at Aristotle and various things that happened historically. In more recent times —

Hon Jim Chown: Aristotle wasn't around a thousand years ago.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: All right. In more recent times, we look back to the world wars as significant issues. Hitler will most probably remain in our thinking hundreds of years into the future. Our children's children and our great-grandchildren need to be able to look back at us as a society and say, "What did they do when the next world war was put before them?" That is the world war that we will ourselves face—I am not talking about a physical world war, another military world war—in trying to deal with climate change. We are creating a legacy for future generations that they will hold us, as their forebears, responsible for.

I want to touch quickly on carbon rights, and I want to comment favourably on the Labor government's move in 2002 and 2003 to introduce a carbon rights bill into this Parliament and have it passed. We actually have a carbon trading mechanism in Western Australia, which to a large degree has never been utilised. The framework is there. We can start making money out of carbon. That was done by the Labor Party, and I congratulate it for that. At the time I did not think the bill went far enough, but it is there. It sits on our statutes book.

In dealing with carbon issues, in the last couple of days we have seen that China has now come on board in an agreement with the United States. It is going to start carbon trading. Our forests are going to be of immense value in the carbon trading debate. We must understand the economic values. Our forests are worth far more by being traded for their carbon value than they are by being logged. I have no problem with standing in front of a wooden desk and buying wooden furniture, but, unfortunately, we do not do that with our forests in Western

Australia; we just turn them into other products that go offshore to make paper and all sorts of different things. We do not really value-add. Only about 10 per cent of the material that we log goes into high-value products.

Hon Col Holt interjected.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Absolutely. I do not have a problem with that. But we need to stop 90 per cent of our forests going offshore to make carbon. Do we not have enough carbon in the world already? We can get that out of our plants, so we are just burning wood to make carbon. We are turning that wood into woodchips to make paper in Japan. It is a ridiculous situation.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.