

COMMUNITY SMALL GRANTS FUND

Statement by Minister for Forestry

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Forestry) [1.07 pm]: Last month, as part of the Cook government's native forest transition plan, I announced that 11 south west businesses will share in almost \$10 million in funding to continue to drive economic diversification and jobs in the regions. The new industry development grants aim to attract new industries and support the expansion of businesses in timber communities. Successful businesses include the Manjimup-based Bendotti Exporters, which will upgrade its potato processing line, increase production, offer new full-time employment opportunities and boost its supply of premium French fries to cafes, restaurants and pubs across Western Australia by processing up to 20 000 tonnes of locally grown potatoes every year.

It is with great pleasure that I stand here today to announce that round 2 of the native forest transition plan's community small grants fund has opened. These grants are part of the Cook government's commitment to support businesses and communities that have transitioned away from commercial native forest logging. The historic decision to end commercial native logging will protect our iconic jarrah and karri trees, which are found only in WA. However, this decision was not made without first understanding the valuable contribution that the forestry industry and regional communities have delivered for our state. The \$80 million native forest transition plan, which is being delivered through three funding pillars, will provide support to affected businesses, workers and communities to help them transition away from a reliance on commercial native logging. Small businesses and community groups are the backbone of our regional communities, and this funding will enable proposals that drive local economic growth and social connection. The impact of the funding is already being witnessed through the creation of local jobs, growth, and the expansion of local businesses, as well an increase in local community capacity and connection. The huge amount of interest in the program's last round was demonstrated by the large volume of applications received, which were all committed to making positive impacts on the affected region. In total, 27 applicants received funding under round 1 for projects across the local government areas of Bridgetown–Greenbushes, Manjimup and Nannup.

The funding will support the delivery of a range of tourism opportunities, including a new high ropes course in Gloucester National Park, new mountain bike trails in Pemberton and establishing a UNESCO designated geopark around Nannup. A range of expanding businesses will share in the funding, including snail farming, hop production and investments to attract much needed specialist medical services. Funding will also go towards a range of non-profit initiatives that will have positive impacts on social connection, inclusion and vibrancy. I look forward to seeing the impact that funding these projects will have in the communities.

Round 2 is now open and will close on 24 April. I encourage businesses and community organisations within the forestry regions to attend one of the community workshops to be held in Manjimup, Bridgetown and Nannup on 12 and 13 March and apply for funding.