

HARDWOOD TIMBER INDUSTRY

Motion

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [10.05 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house notes —

- (a) the loss of jobs and closure of businesses in the Western Australian hardwood timber industry in recent weeks as a result of the Labor government's decision to shut down hardwood logging;
- (b) the government's inability to provide a "just transition" for the workers and businesses impacted by the decision to end timber harvesting;
- (c) the failure of the Minister for Forestry and the government to adequately consult with, and listen to, local communities that are being damaged during the transition process;
- (d) the multitude of failures and problems the new Minister for Agriculture and Food has inherited through a lack of support from the McGowan government for the agricultural sector; and

calls on the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry to acquaint the Legislative Council with the details of her plans to fix the many issues the McGowan government has inflicted on both industries.

I rise to bring to the house's attention this very timely motion on the first Thursday in the post-MacTiernan era. I look forward to a similar level of back and forth to that we have enjoyed during my 18 months in Parliament. This is a timely motion because of what has been happening very recently in the timber industry, particularly the hardwood timber industry since the start of 2023. The news from the south west of the state is not good. Unfortunately, businesses are closing and jobs are being lost on an almost weekly basis. Parkside Timber in Nannup was the first to go earlier this year. That timber mill had been there for at least 100 years. It suddenly closed down and local jobs were lost and businesses were shut. Hot on the heels of that decision was the closedown of Parkside Timber in Manjimup. Again, it was a longstanding business that had existed for decades in that community. Again, jobs were lost and a major business was gone. Most recently, Whiteland Milling in Busselton, a family business with dozens of staff, announced that it, too, is closing as a direct result of the decision to end hardwood logging at the end of 2023. Obviously, there will be flow-on effects from those immediate job losses. Truck drivers, mechanics and electricians will all be impacted as well as the local communities, schools, parents and citizens associations and sporting organisations in those small country towns. They will all be impacted by this decision, which was brought about by an overnight decision by the McGowan government to shut down hardwood logging at the end of 2023, with no consultation.

I thought I would start with some words from one of the locals impacted, and that is Neil Whiteland, the owner of the excellent business just out of Busselton that I, and I am sure other members, have visited. It is an excellent family business. It is a generational business. Neil was interviewed by 7NEWS Regional WA, and these are some of his words. Watching that interview, I saw a quite shell-shocked owner of that business. This is from Neil —

It's an end of an era. We were pretty shocked when we heard the news.

He is talking about the news that logging would end in 2023. Then he talks about his staff, saying —

"Some of them have been with us for 25 or 30 years. We thought there would be a cutback, not a cancellation. It didn't really give anybody a chance to plan anything. There is sawmilling equipment for sale. Everyone's closing, so there is a lot of machinery for sale. And the government won't let anyone know who's going to continue, so everyone's in a bit of limbo. They should have definitely run it for another five to 10 years, even if they cut the quotas back and phased it out slowly rather than just a sledgehammer effect ...

That is from a small business owner facing the end of his business. I will come back to some of those issues that Neil raised during the brief time I have to speak this morning.

I thought I would also quote from an employee of the Nannup mill, Neil Marlow, which also closed recently. Neil has worked in the timber industry for almost 50 years. He started at the mill in Nannup when he was 14 and was among the 45 people who lost their jobs when Parkside Timber closed its doors recently. A publication from the south west quotes Neil as saying —

"I don't think it has really sunk in yet," he said.

"That's all I know, so for me to try and get another job is pretty grim.

"I could probably do a bit of fruit picking or something like that."

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Neil went on to say, and he is probably correct —

He said some of his colleagues were **at** the end of their careers, but that was not the case for everyone.

“Some of them were at retiring age ... but the other younger guys, they’re the ones that are going to feel it,” he said.

“The younger ones, well, I don’t know what they’ll do.”

Apparently, neither does the government.

Let us recap how we got to this situation in the timber industry, with businesses closing on a weekly basis. As we heard, Neil had a sense that something was coming. There was a discussion in the industry about what had been happening but the sudden shutdown was a shock to his business. That has a big impact on a business. We heard from Hon Darren West yesterday, who is not in the chamber as he is attending to urgent parliamentary business, talking about how farmers do their budgeting. Neil and the Whiteland family would have sat down at the end of 2020, or certainly early 2021, and gone through that process with the best available knowledge they had. As Hon Darren West said, like farmers, they would have been cautious but optimistic about what lay ahead. They were aware of declining yields and aware that it was hard to get to coupes and the flow of timber had been restricted but they would have assumed that the industry had a future. President, I will just let you know why they may have been cautiously optimistic. The sadly departed former Minister for Forestry, Dave Kelly, gave me endless fun in this place with his quotes, but I will put them into *Hansard* one last time because they are so enjoyable. In 2019—a blink of an eye in business terms—the former forestry minister made a statement. This is why Neil Whiteland would have been optimistic about the future of his business. The forestry minister was certainly optimistic about the future of hardwood logging in Australia. On Tuesday, 3 December 2019 he spoke about the arrival of Parkside into Western Australia, stating —

The company has identified WA as a growth opportunity given the sustainability credentials of the WA native forestry industry.

...

The change of ownership provides investment and employment certainty, and the potential to create local jobs in the South-West region. The native forestry industry injects \$220 million into the Western Australian economy each year and supports more than 800 jobs in the forestry industry.

Well, not for long it turns out. He continued —

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.

Neil Whiteland and everyone else in the timber sector would have said, “Gee, that’s good news. Parkside is investing. The minister’s on board. That means the government’s on board. We can invest in our businesses.” Sadly, that did not last long. A couple of short years later, it was shut down overnight. There were a couple of other reasons. As we all know, politicians can get a little carried away with themselves; I have been guilty of it myself. The forestry minister might have been gilding the lily. People like Neil Whiteland and others might have relied on the science. We have heard a bit about the science lately. They may have relied on the experts to tell them what the industry had in store for them. This is also interesting. The experts in the industry were also telling them that they had a bright future. I believe that the new forestry minister, Hon Jackie Jarvis, has had some experience in the Forest Products Commission. The commission’s 2018–19 annual report states —

Sustainable forest management performance

Sustainable forest management strikes a balance between nurturing healthy forests for the future and enjoying the benefits of forests, like using forest products today.

Science is on board.

Another organisation that I am sure Hon Jackie Jarvis, the forestry minister, is well aware of, is Forestcheck. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions spent years running and monitoring a program called Forestcheck. I will explain what it is. In evidence given by a member of the DBCA team to an estimates hearing last year, an officer stated —

Forestcheck is a long-term monitoring program that has been conducted in the jarrah forests of the south west for around the last 20 years. Overall, the results show us that the timber harvesting activities that have been occurring in those forests are not having a significant impact on biodiversity values.

Science is on board. Neil and others would have thought, “Okay, yields are declining but we have a future.”

The previous forest management plan went into great detail about the sustainability of this industry. However, it did not work out too well for Neil and others. There is yet another reason Neil and others may have been cautiously

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optimistic. What else was happening in early 2021? We had an election. Normally, during elections candidates, ministers, political parties, potential ministers and oppositions run around the state telling everyone what they intend to do for the next four years. That is a rough estimate of what happens in a campaign. Surely the candidate and now member for Warren–Blackwood, Jane Kelsbie, would have mentioned to the locals in Manjimup and Nannup that she had a bright idea. She had been talking to the forestry minister and the Premier, and they came up with a plan for the local area. They were going to shut down the hardwood sector. If she thought it was a great idea, she might have mentioned it. It did not happen. Perhaps she did not know about it. Surely the forestry minister could have popped into the main street of Manjimup, met with the locals and said, “Look, I tell you what. An election is coming up. If you vote for us, we’ll shut down the thriving industry in your town.” It did not happen. Perhaps the former minister did not know about it. The Premier must surely have known about it, or was it not on his agenda? If he had gone to Manjimup and said it was not on his agenda, the locals would have run a mile. There was not a word from the Premier about the significant policy announcement that would be made a few months later, in September 2021, months after the election, that he intended to shut down that industry. There was not a word.

Neil and others would have thought, “Okay. We’ve got at least four years until the next election, until someone can do something stupid, but in the next four years, if the government has not said anything, we’re okay.” What has occurred? Dozens of jobs have been lost, businesses are closing their doors and the flow-on to those communities will be extraordinary. They are small towns, like Nannup, but the impact will be large. Post the decision, the Just Transition plan was announced. How is that working out? For Neil and others and people like the other Neil, who has been in the business for 45 years, there is substantial amount of money on the table from the government. I acknowledge that. For a lifetime of investment in Whiteland Milling and other businesses like that, a few dollars from the government really cannot compensate for the decades of business that has occurred—that family business, and the investment in machinery. We should remember what Neil said. Surprise, surprise, everyone is selling their machinery and equipment, so it is worthless. Businesses cannot plan. The workers will receive a redundancy payment; many of them have, and there will be more to come. But as we heard from Hon Neil Thomson, many of them will have to leave town to get a job.

I want to read some comments made by a person whose name will be well known to members opposite: the shire president of Nannup, Mr Tony Dean. I thought it would be useful to let you and other members know, President, exactly how Tony sees the impact on his small community. I quote from a publication a few weeks ago in the south west. He talked about the various packages that the government has announced. The article states —

“There are no jobs created in Nannup,” he said.

“If they want a job, it’s fine to be retrained — but that job won’t be in Nannup.

Tony is looking at this with very clear eyes. The article continues —

“Nannup is based on agriculture and timber and wine and you take one of those main planks out, which is the timber industry, [and] you have a local economy that is going to struggle.”

...

“It’s a significant amount of the working population of Nannup, we’re not a very big shire and that is a significant blow to the economy of Nannup,” he said.

That should be obvious to anyone who is seriously looking at the impacts of what is happening down there.

I turn now to the newly appointed Minister Jarvis. I congratulate Hon Jackie Jarvis on her elevation. As a fellow first-term member in this place, it has given me great hope that first-term members can come from the relative obscurity of the back bench and leap past their more experienced colleagues to the very comfy chairs of the front bench! Well done, Minister Jarvis, and congratulations. You will have a fair bit of work to do. One of the things the minister can do is to look at the Just Transition process so far; it has been a shambles. Consultation with the locals has been frankly appalling. Press releases have evidently been written before meetings occur; the former minister waved them around and said, “Look, everyone’s on board; it’s all good.” There has been no real engagement with the local communities, and as we heard from shire president Dean, he does not expect anything to come out of that process that will keep those jobs in Nannup. He is being realistic. Let us hope some of them stick around and that some of them are re-employed in those jobs, but if someone has been in that sector for 30 years, they may not want to be retrained. Those jobs are just gone.

The other thing is that closures are happening earlier than expected. In her brief time in the job, Minister Jarvis has made some comments about the early closures and has said that Parkside did not have to shut when it did. Apparently the government can highlight to the sector that it will be shutting the sector down entirely within 10 months, and that if people do not work until the last day before the shutdown, that will be their problem. I think it is wildly optimistic for the government to assume that workers will continue all the way to the end. I urge Minister Jarvis to commit to an engagement process with those communities to see what we can get out of what is left of the timber sector.

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Obviously a lot of businesses rely on the timber sector. Most of them do not know, from the draft forest management plan, what is coming. Will there be any timber mills left for furniture and firewood businesses, or restaurants that burn woodchips for their pizza ovens or smoked ham? It is not clear in the draft plan. We need to know what is coming, and so do those businesses. I believe the furniture manufacturers have been in touch with the minister and have pointed out the obvious: they do not have a future in the draft of the new plan; they are not mentioned in it. Those businesses need to be assured that they have a future, otherwise they will do what the coal industry in the south west is doing, which is importing coal from New South Wales. Furniture businesses will probably have to import timber from somewhere else, which would be a shame.

In the short time I have left I will end on a slightly positive note. It appears that not everyone in the Labor camp got the memo about the evils of the hardwood logging industry. We saw a breathless media release from Hon David Templeman on Sunday, headed “Stunning heritage balconies at His Majesty’s Theatre open”. Can anyone guess what the new balconies are made of? I will give members a clue: it comes from Nannup, Pemberton and Manjimup. The media release states —

For the first time in 70 years, the beautiful wrap-around balconies that were a prominent feature of the original facade of His Majesty’s Theatre have been reinstated, ready for Western Australians to enjoy again.

...

The two levels of reinstated balconies contain more than 400 square metres of jarrah decking and 4.4 kilometres worth of jarrah battens.

That is great news, Minister Templeman. It is good that the work has been done, because in a very short time that timber will not be available. I hope the minister will have a chance to reassess and let us know what environmental thinning means. There are mine hectares that will have to be cut down, so do we have a sustainable industry or not? It would be nice if, after 20 or 30 years’ time, when thousands of opera-goers, including the minister, have worn out the jarrah decking on His Majesty’s—it is very tough wood, and it will last a long time, but at some stage it will wear out—it could be re-replaced with some more jarrah decking. It is a sustainable wood that has been used for decades in this state.

Minister Jarvis has a large workload. The previous minister did not cover himself in glory by telling us that the industry had a bright future and then, a very short time later, overseeing its demise. There is real pain in those south west communities. Jobs are being lost daily now and businesses are closing. There is a lot to do to get that industry and those towns back on their feet. Thank you.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.26 am]: I, too, want to make a contribution to the motion moved by Hon Steve Martin. I will start on a slightly different tack before I get into the motion. I would like to congratulate the new Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; Small Business on her elevation to the cabinet. It is well earned. It is obviously a privilege to be an elected representative of the people in any case, but that elevation to the next level of the ministry is really something else, and probably something that not many of us in this place will ever have the opportunity to experience. I will probably be carrying an oxygen bottle and a walking frame before I ever get that opportunity!

Hon Sue Ellery: You’ve got to have some margin of hope, otherwise you can’t go on!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I might be carrying an oxygen bottle next year—you never know!

Hon Sue Ellery: I hope not!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I hope not, too!

I would like to focus on the latter part of the motion in particular, around the agriculture sector, and the final paragraph of the motion, which calls on the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry to “acquaint the Legislative Council with the details of her plans to fix the many issues the McGowan government has inflicted on both industries.” There has been a multitude of failures in respect of agriculture. This is an \$11 billion industry, second only to mining. Mining gets a lot of attention from government, whereas agriculture seems to fall by the wayside to some extent, and that is very disappointing because it is an industry that supports so many regional communities and also provides the food and fibre that people need all over the world. It does so in this state in a way that is world leading. Our farmers and producers of food and fibre across the state lead the world in innovation and adaptation. We all know that the threats posed by the changing climate are real, and that is not felt more acutely by anyone than those who work on the land. They work very hard to address those issues and adapt to those changes, and to find new systems that will work to keep their businesses and communities viable and, importantly, to keep producing the food and fibre that our world needs.

At an early point during the previous minister’s tenure as Minister for Agriculture and Food, she probably got off on the wrong foot and that really did have consequences that lasted for her tenure as minister. That is not a reflection

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on the minister herself; I have great respect for Hon Alannah MacTiernan. She is certainly someone who stands up for what she believes in and works damn hard to get outcomes. I do not necessarily agree with where she was going with some things, but, at the end of the day, getting off on the wrong foot had ongoing consequences.

We have to see a change, a reset, under the new minister. I want to start by talking about the live sheep export industry. This is a very important industry to Western Australian agriculture. It employs many people and generates much income for the state. It also importantly feeds people in other nations whose preference is to purchase live animals. No matter what we might think, that is what they want and they will get them from wherever they can. On Tuesday, I asked a question in this place of the minister, and I was very pleased to get a succinct and straight answer to that question, which was unequivocal support for the future of live export from this government. That is great, and it is fantastic that the minister made that statement. The issue, of course, is how we are going to achieve that, and how this minister and this government will advocate to their friends in Canberra who are hell-bent on closing down that industry. That will be the real test. What will that advocacy look like and what will it deliver for farmers and Western Australians? We need to make sure that that industry continues. We need to see a clear outline of what processes will be engaged in with the federal government on this issue and how the new minister will work with the industry locally to restore confidence, because that confidence has been lost by our markets due to statements that came out of Canberra in the aftermath of the federal election. We need to ensure that we do not lose important markets. Those markets are not just for live animals; they will be for other products that we sell. It is very risky for an export-driven economy to risk damaging or losing markets. I wholeheartedly encourage the new minister to jump on a plane at her next available opportunity and meet with some of our consumers in other countries to see what we can do to help remedy that situation.

We also want to know what happened to the \$2 million live export relocation study announced by the government in May last year. Where has that money gone, is there a report and do we have anything to show for that \$2 million? It would be a good outcome to see what has happened there.

The next area I want to talk about in the brief time I have left is farm labour. We have spoken about this endlessly in this chamber since I became a member of Parliament in 2017. We have been talking variously about labour and agriculture. Of course, the pandemic really brought to light how reliant our nation, and in particular our state, is on imported labour. Backpackers and other travellers might fill a job somewhere else so that another person can do a job in agriculture and so on. Obviously, with the closure of borders and so on, that immediately brought to the fore how reliant we are on that labour source and how much of an issue it is for not just agriculture, but also other industries such as tourism, for example. We really need to have a clear focus on ensuring that we can provide a well-trained and available source of workers for farming, as well as other industries. The government tried; it had its little regional travel and accommodation workers scheme, which was an attempt to make up for those shortfalls. We all remember the glitzy adds of people skipping down rows of fruit trees in their linen cloth looking very merry.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Skipping down the aisles.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: They were skipping down the aisles, but I do not think that reflects the true work out there or approached the right market. It missed the mark and we missed an opportunity to attract workers. I certainly want to hear from the new minister about plans to attract new workers.

Biosecurity is another area that came to the fore last year, with the threat of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease from Indonesia. These are incredibly important and serious issues that agriculture has to deal with and the flow-on effect through our community could be huge, with dire consequences if anything like that were to come in. Biosecurity within our own state is important as well. We obviously have issues with feral pests and weeds. Hon Dr Steve Thomas knows all about arum lilies, I understand. Those sorts of invasive species can damage not just agriculture, but also other native species. Biosecurity measures, keeping those pests out and making sure we manage those invasive species as well as we can, are incredibly important. It is a real challenge. It is going to be a real challenge with crown land. The Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act is under review. It will be interesting to see when that hits the chamber. It is incredibly important that we get the settings right so that the management of that state government land does not just fall to volunteer organisations, the regional biosecurity groups, that do that work as volunteers. They often end up having to do a heck of a lot of work on what is essentially not their land; it is state government land. How that interaction and that biosecurity system is funded and so on into the future will be important. I look forward to hearing the minister's plans and perhaps an update on where we are with the review of that act.

In the brief time available, I want to say that I look forward to hearing from the minister about her plans for the future of this vital industry in Western Australia and how she will address some of the issues created by the previous minister. I look forward to a constructive relationship with her in her tenure as the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [10.36 am]: I was going to wait until later to speak on this motion, but after two speakers patronising and mansplaining to me, I think it is time to

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step up. The surprise they have expressed that I should be the Minister for Agriculture and Food—they seem to be surprised and shocked.

Hon Steve Martin interjected.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: There we go. It is probably worth noting that the Leader of the Opposition in the other place was actually shocked and surprised that a woman should be the Minister for Agriculture and Food, which is interesting, given that the last minister was also a woman.

Hon Steve Martin interjected.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: President, I am not taking interjections. Quite frankly, I have had numerous newspaper reports mansplaining how to be the Minister for Agriculture and Food, and I am a little cranky about it, truth be told.

I stand here to say that I am incredibly excited to be part of the McGowan government. I support the decision to stop logging in native forests—not hardwood forests, native forests only—and I support the McGowan government’s efforts to reverse the funding decline in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, formerly the Department of Agriculture, that happened under the previous government. I will very quickly address Hon Colin de Grussa’s comments and then I will move on to forestry.

I was waiting with bated breath for the multitude of failures and problems to be outlined. What I heard was that on live sheep export we are in furious agreement that we support the sector. Okay, we are in furious agreement on that one. He asked about a \$2 million study. As the member should know, that \$2 million study is part of a suite of studies commissioned as part of Westport and the Future of Fremantle program. I suggest the member put a question on notice to the Minister for Transport on that one. On farm labour, again, as the Minister for Small Business, I publicly acknowledged that labour supply for small businesses has been an issue across the whole economy. Biosecurity is my top priority. Hon Colin de Grussa talked about recognised biosecurity groups. I was with some recognised biosecurity groups for two hours this morning. One of my senior policy staff was with them all day yesterday. Where is the review of the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act? It is in consultation. That is what we are doing with the recognised biosecurity groups, which is why we have been with them for two days.

I will take some time to focus on forestry. Hon Steve Martin called the decision “unscientific”. This is despite the numerous reports and studies tabled, including reports from CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. He referred to some different reports. I note that climate change sceptics have a long history of picking and choosing the science they want to quote from.

I want to know whether members opposite really believe in taking up to one million tonnes of timber every year from Western Australian native forests. We are not banning hardwood logging; blue gum is a hardwood. Blue gum is grown in plantations. We are banning the logging of up to one million tonnes of timber every single year. Jarrah trees and karri trees take between 250 and 400 years to reach maturity.

The Barnett government signed a 10-year forest management plan in 2013 allowing for the harvest of 787 cubic metres per annum, which equates to around one million tonnes of timber fibre. That was allowed to be taken each and every year for 10 years. Where does the one million tonnes go? Last year, 70 per cent of sawmill-quality logs went to Parkside Timber’s mills in Nannup, Greenbushes and Manjimup. Parkside is a Queensland-based property development company. All that timber went to the east coast for value adding, so 70 per cent of all quality sawlogs harvested in Western Australia went to Parkside and then straight to the east coast.

Whiteland Milling is, indeed, a longstanding family business in my electorate. They are in Busselton, and the member for Vasse would know them very well. It is an intergenerational business. I know it, and I have visited its facility. It is a business that has had an export focus. Whiteland Milling certainly does supply some small amounts for decking, heritage buildings and heritage shingles, but the majority of the timber—I have been there and I have seen it—is milled into slabs, loaded in containers, and sent to China and other export markets. When members go to the large national furniture retailers—I am not talking about the bespoke furniture makers; I am talking about the large ones—and they buy Australian hardwood furniture, more often than not, it is made in China. We are exporting value-adding jobs with our timber. A tiny proportion of the one million tonnes available to be harvested went to WA manufacturers of furniture, decking and floorboards, and I can assure members that there will be enough timber for pizza ovens, decking, WA furniture makers and heritage buildings through ecological thinning.

The honourable member said that he does not know what ecological thinning means. He is the opposition spokesman on forestry! We will get him some reports on that as well.

I want to talk about our magnificent karri trees. When our karri trees were harvested and were not of sawmill quality or had some bushfire damage, they were not being salvaged for firewood or pizza ovens; they were being sold to a Japanese company and exported as woodchips. That is what we were doing. We were allowed to harvest up to one million tonnes a year to export and to export jobs. The McGowan government came in and committed to keep

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those supply agreements going for the full 10 years of the 2014–2023 forest management plan. As we got towards the end, it was clear that our native forests could not regenerate the 787 cubic metres of wood that was allowable.

Apparently, according to the media last week, Whiteland Milling was shocked. Whiteland Milling was advised in September 2021 that we would be exiting the native forest industry at the end of this year. It was told in September 2021. In the lead-up to that decision, when I was elected a member for South West Region, Whiteland Milling contacted me to complain that it was not getting enough timber supplies. The Forest Products Commission could not fulfil the contracts under the forest management plan because there simply were not enough large trees anymore. Remember, folks, that these trees take from 250 to 450 years to reach full maturity. Whiteland Milling, which is a great business, has received a generous industry restructure payment. It accepted that payment in December last year and signed the deed of settlement to receive that money, so I am not sure why it would be surprised.

Point of Order

Hon SANDRA CARR: I am concerned about the honourable members across the floor. I am wondering whether they are aware that we can hear their conversation. The minister sat quietly while they all had their turn. Ironically, some of her first words were about mansplaining. They are conducting a conversation that we can hear and is competing with the minister's speech. It would be nice if there could be some respect in the chamber.

The PRESIDENT: Background conversation is always difficult, but there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Thank you, President. I want to know whether all the opposition members really think that our native forests should continue to be harvested. Does the member for Vasse agree that logging native forests is no longer environmentally, economically or socially accepted? Does the member for Cottesloe believe that? I would be interested to know whether Hon Tjorn Sibma thinks his constituents would like logging to continue. Do they believe in the science we have presented?

We have committed \$80 million to a transition process. Again, I am not entirely sure why the opposition spokesman on forestry does not understand the stages of the just transition process, so I will lay it out for him again. Stage 1, of over \$22 million, has already been paid to the 24 sawmills, harvest and haulage businesses as part of an industry restructure payment. That money has gone out the door and is now available to be circulated in regional communities.

Stage 2 is \$15 million in small business grants, and round 1 applications have been received. A number of businesses have applied for amounts between \$20 000 and \$400 000 for small businesses that want to diversify or do something else. These are small businesses that do not have direct supply agreements but support the logging industry. Round 1 of that grant application process has closed. It was oversubscribed, and there will be another round. The reason for another round is that we are allowing businesses time to catch their breath and consider what they want to do.

Stage 3 is \$4 million in community development grants and will open next week. Stage 4 is \$10 million to attract new industries, with up to \$2 million in matched funding. That will not open until closer to the middle of the year, for very good reasons. The member himself has said that some timber workers—like the gentleman who has done 50 years in the timber mill—are unlikely to be able to work in a hospitality or tourism business, so there is a new industry fund. I accept what Tony Dean says, and I echo his statements. Parkside Timber was the largest employer in Nannup. Nannup is in my electorate; I was there. I have spoken to the people and I have spoken to Tony Dean. It is a blow for the town, but the town is looking forward. In 2026, it will host an international mountain bike race that is expected to attract millions of people.

Hon Steve Martin: Millions of people?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Sorry. Apologies—thousands of people. I said millions because I have been talking about millions of dollars. I met with the Shire of Nannup recently, and we discussed a number of tourism ventures that are on the table and ready to apply for that new industry fund.

Finally, stage 5 is \$1 million for small businesses that, after this entire process, then decide that they still want to exit the industry. I am confident that there will be sufficient timber, and as I said, I am happy to provide the member with details of what ecological thinning means and what mine-site clearing means, because the member clearly does not seem to understand.

It is indeed a difficult day for the workers such as the Nannup worker who has done 50 years. I was in Greenbushes when workers lost their jobs. I was in Nannup. Workers will be affected in Busselton and Manjimup. On top of the requirements of their normal redundancies, every worker who has done more than 12 months' service will receive between \$30 000 and \$45 000. They get ongoing access to training and employment support. This could be for uniforms, tools or help with their CVs. In some cases, we are helping workers' partners who want help to update their CVs, and we have done all that. I can tell members that, of the money for uniforms, tools and training, \$22 000 has

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already been paid out. That is actually undersubscribed; the money we have set aside to provide ongoing support to retrain people has been massively undersubscribed because people have either decided to retire or found other jobs.

I said this on radio: my wish and my desire for those workers who are in their fifties and have decided that they might retire or have a break is that I really want them back in the workforce. We have a labour shortage. I do not know whether members have noticed, but Hon Colin de Grussa mentioned a massive labour shortage. We have a labour shortage, and I would love to have those workers back in the system. When I was first elected, I visited Whiteland Milling. People there told me their number one issue was retaining workers because there was too much competition. The mill is in Busselton, where there are 20 fly-in fly-out flights a week. Whiteland Milling was having trouble keeping workers because there was a massive labour shortage.

This government has done a just transition. For the life of me I cannot understand why members opposite do not understand that this is a staged process—it blows my mind. If we are going to have a new industry fund offering matched funding of \$2 million, the types of investors we want are not just sitting around with shovel-ready projects; there is work to be done. We need to socialise the idea with them. There was a claim that we have not done any consultation. A native forestry transition group was set up with representatives from chambers of commerce, local governments, the development commissions and the Department of Jobs and Tourism, Science and Innovation. I have been to my first meeting, and, do you know what, most people around the table were pretty happy. At the meeting I went to as minister, the only person who was not happy was the president of the Shire of Manjimup, a gentleman named Paul Omodei—some members might know him. At that meeting, Paul Omodei's main issue was that he wanted more money to make the Manjimup Airport runway longer so that emergency services planes can land there. He did not mention workers in Manjimup; his main issue was more money to make the airstrip longer. The only other issue he raised was his concern that Parkside, which has retained ownership of the Pemberton mill site, would not clean up the site. I told him that as part of our negotiations with Parkside we offered to take back the sites but it elected to keep all the mill sites. As I mentioned, Parkside is a property development company. It has elected to keep those sites and absolutely undertaken to clean up the Pemberton mill site, which some members may know had some issues with asbestos contamination following a fire. Paul Omodei scurrilously suggested that Parkside was not going to do what it should do in cleaning up that site, despite Parkside confirming that it absolutely would. With that, I will leave it there.

HON JAMES HAYWARD (South West) [10.51 am]: I rise to support this motion. I have to say that I am pretty disappointed with our new minister's opening words. To introduce the idea of mansplaining and skew this issue to an argument about sex is absolutely disgraceful.

Several members interjected.

Hon JAMES HAYWARD: The new minister told us that it is how the Labor government does business and the opposition should sit down and be quiet and not speak up for the people of Manjimup and Nannup.

Hon Sue Ellery: Are you in the opposition?

Hon JAMES HAYWARD: I am non-government, thank you very much.

The new minister said we should not speak up for the people in those communities who are not experiencing the fantastic transition that she explained to us today. I hoped that the new minister would bring her experience to this space. It was not so many years ago that Hon Jackie Jarvis was a commissioner with the Forest Products Commission. In her role there she signed off on a 2017 report that explained how we have a fantastic timber industry. Apparently, between 2017 and 2021, there has been a massive change in the social licence. All it took to end people's jobs and the life of the native timber industry in Western Australia was a Facebook survey that got 17 000 or 18 000 responses.

I am very pleased that the minister said there will be enough jarrah for makers of boards and fine furniture in Western Australia. That is fantastic news; it is a shame that nobody seems to have communicated it to the guys who are doing the manufacturing. Certainly, the people who I have spoken to have told me that they are about to import wood from Indonesia by the container load. Again, this is one of the challenges that we have with these types of social-licence arguments that say, "It's not popular to cut down trees." Some numbers were bandied about to claim the industry is unsustainable. The reality is that a sustainable timber industry is a fantastic help in dealing with climate change via carbon capture. We are exporting our problem to other countries, because we have demands and needs in this state that require that resource. We are not going to allow it to happen because we have a higher morality and woke thinking that we should not be doing these things. We are saying, "We're not going to do that here, but it's okay to import it." I asked a question on notice the other day about how much CO₂ would be emitted transporting 100 000 tonnes of coal from New South Wales and the extra burden that would place on the environment. The answer I got back from the government was, "It's not our problem. Talk to the people who sent it or who bought it. It is not our issue." The government is exporting its responsibility for global warming and carbon and making

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it somebody else's problem. It is now somebody else's issue. It is now an issue for Indonesia. If we are going to import the hardwood timber we need from Indonesia, that is where the carbon cost will be.

According to the 2017 report the new minister signed off on in her role as commissioner, we had a world-class sustainable timber industry. Apparently now we do not. The solution is to import timber from Indonesia. I do not know whether the minister would be happy to sign off on Indonesia having a world-class sustainable timber industry; it would be interesting if that were the minister's view. I do not think it would have been in 2017, and I certainly do not think it is today. This is the problem we have. It is a false economy. Absolutely, we need to be sustainable. If the numbers do not add up, action needs to be taken, but not this action based on nothing but a Facebook survey. We were told that people who are not members of the government do not have the right to be upset about how these communities have been treated, because by doing that we are apparently mansplaining —

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon JAMES HAYWARD: I am not taking interjections, thanks very much.

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon JAMES HAYWARD: That is the reality. It is a false economy. It is our right to stand up for these people and bring these things to the government's attention. I challenge the new minister to get down to Manjimup and have face-to-face meetings with these people. She needs to call community meetings and explain the process because, despite the government saying it has done that, those communities do not feel they understand these things and the path forward for them is not clear; they have a lot of anxiety. Given the minister's previous experience, which I acknowledge, there is a real opportunity for her to go down to those communities and explain the way forward.

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [10.58 am]: I listened with great interest to both sides of the argument today. I rise to say that I will not be supporting this motion, but I want to add a few words.

I want to acknowledge the need for managing our environment. I came into contact with logging as a young boy in Borneo in the 1960s. I saw vast amounts of jungle being removed and with that, of course, came deforestation and environmental concerns with run-off and flooding. What is happening in the Amazon is endangering our environment. Australia can set an example to the world by taking care of our environment. The thought of willy-nilly cutting down trees that take 200 to 400 years to mature for export angers me. We need to look after our environment. One of our concerns is that we need to do it sustainably, and cutting down trees that take such a long time to develop is simply not a good idea. I think about our wildlife and our economy, all of which can be improved by looking after our environment.

Yesterday I gave praise to the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, and I will keep on repeating that because we need to actually change the way we think. Not so long ago—well, it was more than 100 years ago when automobiles came into general production. Those involved in building the carriages and the buggies and making the trappings for the horses and the buggy whips were facing an existential crisis because their profession was no longer going to be needed. People who said that the car was just a minor thing that was not going to take off were ignoring what was happening. They said that employment and support for those whose jobs would be lost needed to be maintained, but some amazing changes happened because a new development had come into being. We could say that it was either a good or a bad thing considering the pollution levels these days, but a change happened and those who were making buggy whips had to change what they were doing. They either survived into a new era or they went under and had to find an entirely different profession. We must innovate. Innovation is the core of who we need to be to develop in this current world. Who needs buggy whips anymore? Very few people—although there are always a few who need them. We are in a time of transition. By definition, a time of transition is always painful. We are going to have to realise that the status quo is no longer acceptable. Yesterday in my speech I mentioned that the status quo is our enemy. We need to move forward. If we are not moving forward, we are going backwards. When I think about the changes in my lifetime, my transistor radio has now been replaced by my phone. I loved my photography and used a digital SLR camera, but it has been replaced by the phone. I can access most of my computer stuff on this phone. Transition has resulted in some people losing their jobs, but we have moved forward, and I would put it to members that we have moved into a better place. Alarm clock manufacturers are no longer thriving because we wake up to the sounds on our phones. We have created something new, and this is what we are doing in this industry. It will not surprise the minister to hear where I am going with this because we need to think more innovatively. One of the areas that we need to work on is, of course, replacing the wood that we currently use in our buildings with, honourable colleagues, hemp. Did the minister not guess that?

Hon Jackie Jarvis: I am surprised it took you so long to get there.

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Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: I waffle. We know from science that hemp is so much better than forest woods at capturing carbon. It can be harvested two or three times a year. From hemp we can make manufactured wood, which is, if members have ever seen it, absolutely stunning and useful in buildings right now and can capture carbon for 90 years. Hemp can be used for building not just houses, but also furnishings. It has multiple uses. One of my favourites is transforming it into colour bond-type roofs that turns sunlight into electricity, powering houses with hemp. A friend of ours Ramon Granados tells us that hemp batteries are about eight times better than lithium batteries and very much better for the environment. We need to get innovation into our minds and to leave the status quo behind because we are an ever-evolving civilisation and staying in the past is not who we are supposed to be. I put it to members that the old ways of thinking will hold us back; we need new thinking, and with new thinking, people who cling to the past will be disadvantaged. They need to be retrained, their thinking needs to be improved and we need to look at the advantages of transforming from what was one standard business into the future standard business. What our children are learning in school now, for example, will make them fit for jobs now, but in 10 years those jobs will no longer exist. That is not who we are going to be. Our world is advancing so quickly, and education must follow suit.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: There will still be doctors and vets.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: Sadly, yes. There will still be doctors and vets. We are potentially looking at a new industry worth billions of dollars with a new mindset and a society that is looking to, embracing and absorbing the future, because we are the future.

Could we have managed transition better? We could always do things better, certainly. Do things need to change? Yes, they absolutely have to change. Innovation is needed. We are developing and we must learn and move on. I commend to the house the idea of innovation, moving on, learning, adapting and improving in every single way. Sticking with what we used to do in the past serves us no longer.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [11.04 am]: When we come to these debates, we need to come with a degree of credibility and authority that is based on, in part, our legacy when we were in government. If we look at the legacy of the previous government in the agricultural portfolio, I am amazed that opposition members have the gall to raise a motion that, in part, talks about the issues the McGowan government has inflicted on the agricultural industry, because it just invites me to talk about what their side of politics inflicted on the agricultural industry when they were in government.

The respective Ministers for Agriculture and Food during their term in government were: Terry Redman, Ken Baston—Ken and I were, at one period, remotely related; his niece married my cousin, because that is Western Australia—Dean Nalder and Mark Lewis. The lovely Mark Lewis was shocked when he became the minister for agriculture, and, frankly, so was everybody else. He could not believe that he had become the minister for agriculture, and I am pretty sure he very quickly starting to regret it because as the last minister for agriculture under the previous government, he inherited a severely depleted department and an industry that was furious with that government, which I will talk a little about in a minute.

Somebody—it might have been the mover of the motion, I cannot remember, or Hon Colin de Grussa—mentioned Jane Kelsbie and her election as a member of Parliament. The interesting thing to note about Jane and the 2021 election was that Jane was preselected about six weeks before the election and she subsequently knocked off Terry Redman, who was a very well respected and highly regarded local member. In fact, he was a reasonably well-respected minister for agriculture as well as the first minister for agriculture in the Barnett government. Jane is an outstanding member of Parliament and I have had the opportunity in the last two and a bit years to go with her to Manjimup, Denmark and Margaret River—there might be one other town that I went to with her. Jane Kelsbie and Hon Jackie Jarvis made an outstanding team that dealt with some really challenging issues in that part of the south west. I want to commend Jane Kelsbie for the job that she is doing in that area and for all the work that she has done with all the industry groups covered by the motion in front of us.

The damage inflicted by the previous government on agriculture is really staggering. Under the member for Warren—Blackwood, Terry Redman, and Ken Baston and Dean Nalder, funding was slashed, dangerously so, and I will talk about who described it as that in just a minute. In addition to the budget of the Department of Agriculture and Food being slashed, nearly 40 per cent of cuts were built in across the forward estimates in a range of the department's budgets. Staff numbers were slashed. What was devastating to the industry and the leaders of its respective stakeholder groups was the level of skills and expertise and the science knowledge that was lost out of the department.

I went back and looked at the debates, because there were many. Some people who have been around for a while might recall that my old friend Hon Ken Travers had the portfolio when we were in opposition. He systematically, methodically and deliberately exposed, time after time, the devastating impact that the Liberal—National government had. What was astonishing about that is convention in Western Australian politics would say, "That's your heartland;

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those people are your people”. The former government treated them with such disdain and such disrespect that it beggars belief that opposition members come in here now and claim that the McGowan government has issues in the industry. It goes to the opposition’s credibility and authority. If they are going to come in here, they have to have some credibility and authority on this issue and their side of politics has none. It is not just me saying that. I will tell members who else said it. An article in *The Weekend West* on 16 May 2015 written by Brad Thompson reads —

WA’s leading rural lobby groups have condemned the Barnett government for failing the farming sector expected to play a key role in the State’s economic recovery.

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the WAFarmers said that, well into its second term, the Government had increased the costs of production and delivered virtually nothing in return. The PGA, a breeding ground for Liberal Party MPs, rated the Government’s performance in agriculture a four out of 10. WAFarmers, which is more closely aligned with the Nationals, rated it two out of 10.

It said the decision to make farmers carry a heavier load than other West Australians ... was typical of the Government’s careless approach to the sector.

Their long-list of government failures included:

- The debacle over management of grain freight rail lines in the Wheatbelt —

We are now having to fix it —

- Big cuts at the Department of Agriculture and Food WA.

...

- Half-hearted attempts to deal with packs of wild dogs mauling sheep and cattle ...

PGA president Tony Seabrook said the Government was hiding on the rail issue, was guilty of an “absolute belly flop” on James Point and was trying to fob off tenure reform for pastoralists.

WAFarmers president Dale Park said that when the Government wasn’t sitting on its hands on issues like the closure of rail lines, it was dipping them into farmers’ pockets.

The Nationals pledged \$300 million in Royalties for Regions funding to agriculture before the last election, but less than 10 per cent of the money had been spent. The Budget papers show projects costing \$62.6 million have been approved ...

Members who were around at the time might recall that *Farm Weekly* described one of the Barnett government’s agriculture ministers, Dean Nalder, in this way —

A politician must have a fair degree of self-confidence and self-belief, which often manifests itself as arrogance, as in the case of Nalder.

There has seldom been a more arrogant politician than Paul Keating, but his performance as a great federal treasurer gave him a reason for it, whereas Nalder has yet to demonstrate any achievements that could justify his arrogance.

I think we can all forgive a bit of arrogance when it is backed up by performance, but what a cutting description of one of the previous government’s four ministers for agriculture. The previous government ripped out the science. That was one of the most devastating things for the agricultural industry during the previous government’s term. It ripped out the research base. It ripped out the science from the department of agriculture. In the eyes of many in the industry, that was unforgivable. In budget after budget after budget, they ripped the guts out of the department. I will make the point I made a little bit earlier; this was the former government’s heartland. It is no wonder that, six weeks after being preselected, Jane Kelsbie won the seat in the way that she did.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I think you are meant to call her the member for Warren–Blackwood.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sorry—you are right, I am.

In order to prosecute the opposition’s argument, its members need to be able to stand with some confidence on how they should be judged by their actions. Their own actions when in government were appalling. The previous Minister for Agriculture and Food in this government did an outstanding job in trying to repair some of the mess left by the previous government. I have absolute confidence that the new minister will do the same, if not better. I really look forward to working with her in achieving that.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [11.15 am]: I pass on my congratulations to Hon Jackie Jarvis for being placed in cabinet. I have known Hon Jackie Jarvis for a long period. I first interacted with her when she was the candidate in the seat of Forrest many years ago; I have sort of forgotten how long ago.

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Hon Jackie Jarvis: It was 2010.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It was 2010, so we have known each other for a very long time floating around the south west. I do not remember whether I did it specifically for Hon Jackie Jarvis but I have chaired I think the last seven federal Forrest campaigns and I generally have a habit of contacting the Labor candidate and telling them it is my job as the chair to make sure it is conducted in a civil and polite manner and we do not do personal attacks. I probably did it for Hon Jackie Jarvis at some point but I do not remember because it was so long ago and I am getting old now. That is the way we traditionally operate. Congratulations, and I congratulate her on her enthusiastic defence of the motion today. I may not agree with the things she said but I am absolutely supportive of her opportunities to do so.

I want to raise a few issues and respond to some of the issues raised in the debate today. Before I start, can I say to Hon Dr Brian Walker that I thought he was going to take us down the Luddite description when he was talking about jobs changing. I am pleased that he did not go that far back in history! I thought that was where we were headed. Let me say a few things about the contributions that have been made today. With the timber industry, the first thing I generally talk about is that the Labor Party certainly switched its position. Labor Party members might argue that the science changed its opinion but the reality is, as the debate today has demonstrated, which bit of the science you want to use to justify your position is one of those interesting things. Remember the old statement, “Lies, damned lies and statistics”? Where people stand on the timber debate generally depends on where they want to focus their political activity. It was interesting that the minister, in a sterling defence, referenced people in Cottesloe, Vasse and other seats where there is a very limited timber industry. To me, it was somewhat telling that the focus of the government is very much on votes in the metropolitan area as a result of its current timber policy—a policy that has changed dramatically. We can look at what the original Minister for Forestry said in 2019 and the mover of the motion mentioned this media release in which I think the first two dot points are critically important. The third and fourth dot points are —

- WA’s forestry industry supports more than 6,000 jobs, particularly in regional areas
- McGowan Government committed to maintaining a sustainable forestry industry

Those were the direct words of the Minister for Forestry on 3 December 2019: “McGowan government committed to maintaining a sustainable forestry industry.” It was so much so that the minister, Hon Dave Kelly, put a foreword into the *Djarlma Plan for the Western Australian forestry industry*. If members look up my media on it, I said that I was not a big fan of the plan because I did not think it was strong enough. The former minister, at that point said —

The Djarlma Plan sets out the strategic directions for the entire Western Australian forestry industry ...

He repeatedly said that the government supported the forest industry until the point we had an election at which the Labor Party, on the back of a COVID response, was triumphant to the point that it controls both houses of Parliament and it was all thrown out. The current minister has been the minister for only a short period and none of this is her responsibility. The Labor Party has left the Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry with something of a mess that has to be cleaned up. It is because it is an enormous change in direction—a backflip worthy of the Premier, who is the Treasurer, and some of his economic policies. A number of things were said today, and in a minute I will come back to some of the failings in agriculture, but I take heart from the guarantee that the Minister for Forestry has now given this house that sufficient timbers will be made available for a range of things such as furniture manufacturing and firewood. We will go back through the *Hansard* and we will make sure that all the industries that were listed as those that will receive adequate timber will actually receive it.

The minister was concerned that we did not understand ecological thinnings, and that would probably be a reasonable assumption if the government actually understood what ecological thinnings are! I have repeatedly asked questions in Parliament on the definition of “ecological thinnings”, and the government itself has said that it does not know what ecological thinnings are because, to date, ecological thinnings have only occurred around the harvest of timber. Therefore, if we do not have the harvest of timber, we do not know what ecological thinnings are. Do not shoot the messenger. That is not me saying that. That is the Labor government of Western Australia telling me that in Parliament. Therefore, what are ecological thinnings? We do not know; that is why we worry. But the government does not know either. The government cannot define it. The government cannot explain it because we do not know what it looks like, and that uncertainty is the risk that the industry is absolutely forced to face.

In the very short time available to me, I will make this point to the Leader of the House. The Leader of the House mentioned that she had been to, I think, three towns with the current member for Warren–Blackwood. I would say that I beat the Leader of the House; I have been to a lot more towns than that with the current member for Warren–Blackwood. We just turn up at things all the time —

Hon Sue Ellery: That’s your electorate!

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, that is right. I will give the member some credit that the member for Warren–Blackwood does actually get out and about and attend things, because we find ourselves together in a lot of places. That is absolutely the case. The Minister for Forestry repeated several times: Do we support a sustainable timber industry? Do we support the harvest of timber? The question is always: can timber be harvested sustainably? This is the great failing of the government because timber can be harvested sustainably. I have never said that the way it was harvested in the past was on a sustainable basis. Members can look at all of my comments going back, many years, probably to about 1999 on this and discover the same thing. But the government could have put in a sustainable harvest management plan. It could have maintained that industry, not at the size that it was, but the government could have put it in. However, the government chose not to because that was the politically expedient thing to do, as the minister said, to pull up the votes, particularly in the metropolitan area.

I have very limited time to talk about agriculture. The minister was concerned that we had not mentioned the failings in agriculture. I am happy to name a few. One that came up was biosecurity. Somebody said that I have a passion for biosecurity. There is some work being done on arum lilies. It is a shame that the Minister for Emergency Services is not here because I know it is a passion for him as well. As we drive through our electorate, there is certainly some action on arum lilies, but not much of it is happening in the government estate. There are plenty of arum lilies down there still. There is an explosion of blackberries all the way through our electorate, mostly through the forests around Balingup to Nannup and all through the Preston Valley. There are failings in the agricultural system.

If members want another failing, and I think this is a really good one to use, I have lost track of the number of times that I have asked this government: what is happening with the tier 3 rail line business cases? I note that in one of the country papers today—one of the rural papers; I had better not take sides—that we have hit a 26-million-tonne crop this year by the look of it, the biggest crop ever, which beat the biggest crop ever last year at 24-million-and-a-bit tonnes. It best the biggest crop after that. I have lost track of the number of times I have asked: what is happening with the business cases that the Minister for Transport promised in 2021? That is two years ago now. Two years ago the government said that it would get business cases done. Most recently I asked this yesterday: where are the business cases for the tier 3 lines? If the government wants to do something in agriculture, here is a challenge for the Minister for Agriculture and Food: get on the back of the Minister for Transport and find out what is happening with the transport process and logistics, as we seem to have set a standard of massive crops and it will have to deal with that. Will we increase even further? Can we get those crops out to the market in a timely manner?

I am sick and tired of asking what is happening with the business cases that we were promised two years ago. The answer that I got back yesterday, and comments that the minister has made, suggest that she might start working on one of those business cases. I think there is \$72 million set aside for a business case to work out whether one of these rail lines might actually get up and going. The other two rail lines the government promised the business cases for have been utterly forgotten, but the one that she says she might do a business case for—there is \$72 million for a business case; man, I would not mind getting wages on that particular budget—still has not been done. Therefore, the business case might come out sometime this year, maybe; if we are lucky. It would be two to two and a half years after it was first promised, to work out whether this government was going to look after logistics in relation to the crop.

I would have thought that that would be a really good target to set if we could get some actual answers, because the biggest issue that you guys have is transparency and accountability. It starts at the top and it goes all the way down. It would be a good opportunity to tell the people of Western Australia what is going on.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.24 am]: I had no intention of speaking today. I thought the opposition would be able to fill 80 minutes on its own motion. I only have a minute or so left. It is a case of second verse same as the first. We had this yesterday. The members opposite came in here with something that they had not researched. I do not know what they are talking about. I will not talk to parts (a)–(c) because that is regarding forestry and the Minister for Forestry is more than capable of talking about that herself. But I will touch on part (d), which states —

the ... failures and problems that the new Minister for Agriculture and Food has inherited through a lack of support from the McGowan government for the agricultural sector.

Members opposite have to be kidding us. We are going to reopen those lines that were closed under the member's government. The Barnett government was the worst government in Western Australian history. Its carcass is the worst opposition, and it is actually quite pathetic to read this when members opposite clearly have no idea and no finger on the pulse of the agricultural sector as to what it had to endure under the opposition's last tenure of government. The Leader of the House has read out the media statements, and there was more than that. There was gross disappointment from the sector, which was traditionally supportive of the former government, about how members opposite handled that sector. There is now an enthusiasm for the McGowan government from that sector

Extract from *Hansard*

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for how we are rectifying the wrongs of the past. Therefore, members opposite should do their research and bring in a motion that they can at least fill 80 minutes with and know what they are talking about.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.