

Submission to Petition No. 067 – Sustainable forest management

The Hon Dr Steve Thomas

The McGowan Government has sacrificed the timber industry in Western Australia in order to boost its attractiveness to conservationists and green voters, especially in the metropolitan area far away from the regions in which the industry currently exists.

Nobody doubts that the Government has the power and authority to do so, and I am sure that they will meet their primary goal of attracting green votes. However, this comes at a massive cost to the South West region, and the McGowan Government has failed to deliver a proper scientific underpinning of the statements they have made when they have attempted to justify the decision on all grounds apart from political gain.

The best example of the Government's change of ideology is that of the statements of the Minister for Forestry prior to this decision and after.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2019, prior to the last election, the Minister for Forestry put out a media release lauding the purchasing of two south west timber mills by Parkside Timber (release attached).

In this release the Minister Dave Kelly stated that the industry *"supports more than 6,000 jobs, particularly in regional areas."*

He said that the *"native forestry industry injects \$220 million into the Western Australian economy each year and supports more than 800 jobs in the forestry industry."*

He also said that *"The native forestry sector is an important employer and economic contributor that supplies our community with sustainable, renewable building materials and other timber products."*

The Minister is also quoted as saying that *"The purchase follows the release of the McGowan Government's Djarlma Plan which set out the strategic direction for the future of the Western Australian forestry industry to support healthy forests and WA jobs."*

The Djarlma Plan was launched by the same Minister five months earlier on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2019 (release also attached) and was described by him as *"a plan setting out the strategic direction for the future of the Western Australian forestry industry to support healthy forests and support WA jobs."*

The statement says that *"The Djarlma Plan for the Western Australian Forestry Industry was developed under the guidance of an independent panel, and with extensive industry and community consultation."*

It also states that *"An increase in the use of locally grown wood will support Western Australia's vibrant timber industry which employs more than 6,000 people and generates \$1.4 billion for the economy."*

I highly recommend the Committee obtain copies of the Djarlma Plan, which as pointed out was the McGowan Government's plan in 2019 for the timber industry.

They will no doubt be interested in page 7, which identifies Jarrah and Karri sawlog and bole timber made available under the Forest Management Plan 2014-23 which was not accessed and therefore remained in the forest.

It came therefore as a massive shock to timber workers and communities when the Government announced on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 the effective ending of the vast majority of the timber industry in this state.

In a stunning piece of Government treachery the announcement was made without warning, and without consultation with the industry.

Imagine being the owners of Parkside Timber, who when buying into the industry less than two years earlier were told by the Minister that *“this investment is another step towards native forestry's transformation into a resilient, future industry”*.

The Opposition has repeatedly sought from the Government the scientific studies that should have underpinned such a decision, with little success. We are especially interested in how barely or unmanaged forests that will be the result of the new policy will result ultimately in better forests? And what evidence the Government has used to come to that conclusion?

We also want to know how much domestic wood production will simply be replaced by imports from other countries that do not have sustainable timber industries?

There was always an opportunity for the Government to define a sustainable level of timber harvest in this state, and structure the next Forest Management Plan (2024-33) to achieve it. This would have delivered a tangible benefit to both the community, the economy and the forests themselves. The McGowan Government simply refused to do so.

Instead, it embarked upon the destruction of the industry.

I do not ask the Committee to examine whether the Government has the power to do so – it does. I simply ask on behalf of the businesses that have already and will in the future be closed down; on behalf of the workers that have and will lose their jobs; and on behalf of the communities that will decline and see services downgraded, that the justification for the decision be demanded.

# Media Statements

Home



Hon Dave Kelly BA MLA

Minister for Water; Fisheries; Forestry; Innovation and ICT; Science

## Local timber industry gets a boost as leading miller joins WA

Tuesday, 3 December 2019

- Parkside Timber purchases two South-West mills
- Plans to re-open the Manjimup processing centre expected to create local jobs
- WA's forestry industry supports more than 6,000 jobs, particularly in regional areas
- McGowan Government committed to maintaining a sustainable forestry industry

More Western Australian jobs are expected to be created in the local forestry industry over the coming months with Queensland miller, Parkside Timber purchasing two South-West mills.

Parkside Timber, a Queensland-based company, has a long history of creating hardwood products on the east coast of Australia. The company has now expanded to Western Australia after purchasing Auswest Timbers' Greenbushes mill and Nannup Timber Processing.

The company has identified WA as a growth opportunity given the sustainability credentials of the WA native forestry industry. It plans to re-open the Manjimup processing centre which was closed in 2016 and focus on value-adding timber through secondary processing. The company will also invest \$1.5 million in a finger jointing machine to process high-value products such as furniture, long-length flooring and decking.

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.

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. This transformation started with the Gallop Labor Government's decision to protect the South-West's old growth forests.

### Comments attributed to Forestry Minister Dave Kelly:

"The McGowan Government sees Parkside's investment as a step forward in maintaining a strong forestry industry that supports WA jobs, while still protecting the environmental values of our beautiful native forests.

"This is the largest native forest industry private investment consolidation and restructure in 15 years which will secure hundreds of direct and indirect jobs in the industry.

"I welcome Parkside's commitment to creating high-value timber products from smaller, younger regrowth trees.

"The native forestry sector is an important employer and economic contributor that supplies our community with sustainable, renewable building materials and other timber products.

"The purchase follows the release of the McGowan Government's Djarlma Plan which set out the strategic direction for the future of the Western Australian forestry industry to support healthy forests and WA jobs."

# Plan sets vision for the WA forestry industry

Tuesday, 2 July 2019

- A strategic framework sets a path forward for the Western Australian forestry industry
- The plan focuses on healthy forests, community benefits and job creation
- Wood Encouragement Policy has been developed and is a key action item of the plan

Forestry Minister Dave Kelly today launched a plan setting out the strategic direction for the future of the Western Australian forestry industry to support healthy forests and support WA jobs.

The Djarlma Plan for the Western Australian Forestry Industry was developed under the guidance of an independent panel, and with extensive industry and community consultation.

The plan was inspired by the Noongar concept of Djarlma that reflects the interconnected relationship of people, forests and woodlands, and aims to build new job opportunities in the WA forestry industry.

It sets out a framework for action for the next decade to support the transformation of the industry to deliver better economic benefits through the implementation of ecologically sustainable strategies, building on the foundations of the Forest Management Plan 2014-2023.

The plan identifies opportunities to secure investment and foster innovation in the forestry sector. These opportunities include optimising the use of harvested wood fibre to produce a range of environmentally sustainable products such as engineered timbers and bioplastics.

A key action item from the plan, a Wood Encouragement Policy for Western Australia, has already been developed by the Forest Products Commission. This policy aims to support the forestry industry by encouraging the use of responsibly sourced wood in the construction and fit-out of buildings in Western Australia.



Hon Dave Kelly BA MLA  
Minister for Water; Forestry;  
Youth

The Djarlma Plan and the Wood Encouragement Policy can be downloaded from <http://www.fpc.wa.gov.au/industry/djarlma-plan>

**Comments attributed to Forestry Minister Dave Kelly:**

"I am pleased to announce the launch of the Djarlma Plan which delivers an ecologically sustainable approach to transform the forestry industry and seize new opportunities for economic growth and job creation.

"The Djarlma Plan prioritises healthy forests and woodlands, while driving innovative practices to secure the industry into the future.

"The Wood Encouragement Policy highlights the benefits of building with wood, which is natural, renewable and stores carbon making it one of the best tools we have for fighting climate change.

"An increase in the use of locally grown wood will support Western Australia's vibrant timber industry which employs more than 6,000 people and generates \$1.4 billion for the economy."

Minister's office - 6552 6100