



Hon Steve Martin MLC

Parliament of Western Australia

Member of the Legislative Council (Agricultural Region)

Shadow Minister for Housing; Forestry



16 June 2022

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Via email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Petition No 052 – Native logging ban

I write in support of opposing the ban on native hardwood logging in Western Australia, as requested by 361 community members in a petition to the Legislative Council, and a further 2,452 signees through an online petition.¹

Native hardwood harvesting in Western Australia is recognised by the Forest Products Commission as a regenerative and sustainable industry.² Of the forest area in our State, just 38% of regrowth forest is available for harvesting. Of this, less than 1% is harvested annually and *always* regenerated. The native timber sector directly employs more than 500 people and contributes over \$220 million to the Western Australian economy.³ Secondary industries that utilise timber products, including furniture manufacturers, construction and joinery businesses, firewood suppliers and landscaping services all contribute millions more to the economy and provide thousands more Western Australians with secure employment.

On 8 September 2021, the McGowan Government blindsided the forestry industry with its announcement that native hardwood logging will cease in 2024. The announcement came without prior warning and without legitimate consultation from the forestry industry, South West communities and secondary businesses who rely on native hardwood to continue their operations.

The basis for this shock decision is often cited as a response to the results of an unscientific \$56,700 survey conducted by the then Minister for Environment.⁴ This survey was open to any person around the world and had the potential to be completed numerous times by an individual respondent. The opinions from those within the forestry sector or from those with a deep understanding of how the sector operates in Western Australia were not considered any more so than members of the general public. To base such an important decision on a singular opinion survey without any legitimate and meaningful industry consultation is incredibly poor governance.

¹ 'Save our forestry industry': <https://petition.org.au/save-our-forestry-industry/>.

² Forest Products Commission Annual Report, 2020-21.

³ Forest Industries Western Australia: forestindustries.com.au/native-forests.html.

⁴ See WA Legislative Council Questions Without Notice (2021) numbers 403, 677, 748 and 803.



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The government have not provided any evidence or modelling specific to the environmental impact of banning native hardwood harvesting in Western Australia. As the Forest Products Commission has said, the native hardwood industry in Western Australia is sustainable and regenerative. To meet community demand for hardwood timber, businesses will be required to import hardwood from interstate and international markets.

Shipping substantial volumes of hardwood products into Western Australia from countries with questionable forestry practices could lead to greater carbon emissions and a significantly worse impact on the environment.

Although the government has allocated \$75 million of funding to support packages, those involved in the industry continue to argue that this is an insufficient amount to compensate for the impact on businesses and their livelihoods and imposes unreasonable requirements. When old-growth logging of native forests was banned in 2001, the previous Labor Government provided the forestry industry with over \$160 million in compensation for businesses and workers. Businesses were supported to either completely or partially leave the native forest timber industry, while workers were provided with redundancy top up payments and assistance and training to obtain new employment. The current government have not been able to provide any modelling or substantive reasoning behind the \$75 million in funding for the Just Transition Plan.

The full consequences of the decision to ban hardwood harvesting are yet to be seen. Businesses who utilise native timber have already reported a shortage in materials. This has so far been manifested in shortages of construction and flooring materials, heritage building repair materials, wood chippings and mulch, firewood and even a shortage of the wood used to fire pizza ovens and meat smoking equipment. This will only worsen once the sector is shut down.

It has now been over nine months since the announcement was made and businesses, workers and communities in the South West are still facing an uncertain future. The decision to announce the end of native logging in Western Australia will have far reaching consequences that were not considered by the government and are still to be addressed. By opposing the decision to end native hardwood harvesting in Western Australia, the government will have the opportunity to re-consider these issues and provide a future to the forestry sector.

I thank you for considering the request to oppose the ban on native hardwood logging.

Yours sincerely

Hon Steve Martin MLC
Member for the Agricultural Region