

## **LOGGING — SOUTH WEST**

### *Statement*

**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [6.26 pm]: Last evening, I began describing a number of reasons why we should repeal the Forest Products Act and abolish the Forest Products Commission, and I intend to continue with that tonight. Yesterday, I reported on the failure of the Forest Products Commission to profit from our native forests, although that was the reason for its creation. It is even included in the act that the commission should make a profit, but it has not been able to. I commented on the environmental damage caused by logging our native forests and I raised the scientific research demonstrating that logging increases fire risk and fire intensity. We know these things are happening and our forests are diminishing, yet we continue to cut them down with no profit or benefit to the community. Sure, it supports a few mills and a few people, but we can do that so much better if we invest in plantations. Last evening, I demonstrated that the underlying rationale for the Forest Products Act was to separate the government regulatory arm for the forest from the profit-making arm. This continues to be a valid rationale. The government should not be regulating and making a profit from the same industry. This is not something that should be done and should not be continued, especially in this case when there is no profit to be made. Maybe 20 years ago there was, and maybe there was a reason for it, but there is not anymore. The Forest Products Commission is losing money and I do not expect it to try to make money. When it tries to make money, all it does is destroy forests faster.

We acknowledge that the resource is diminishing and trees are becoming smaller. This week, the FPC is starting to make up for this. It has contracts for large logs, so what does it do? It has gone to the areas that have not been logged for a very long time and pulled out the best trees, the ones that support biodiversity, the ones with hollows; the old-growth trees. The machinery is lined up at Dalgarpur. The community, the protectors of the forest, are on the other side of it. That is what it has come to. They are sitting there this evening trying to stop more very old trees from being cut down tomorrow, to go to a mill that only last year, under previous ownership, was selling whole logs overseas against the terms of its contract. It lost that contract because of that but here we are back trying to provide the new owners with very old trees. It is just wrong. The Forest Products Commission will say it is at the direction of the forest management plan and the Department of Conservation, Biodiversity and Attractions. That is where the decision is made about where contractors can log, and it says they can take logs from this forest, which used to be part of a national park, but was excised and is now able to be logged. If it can happen there, what hope is there for our national parks if we continue to say that the FPC must make a profit by taking these very old trees? Speaking of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, tell me, what part of “conservation, biodiversity and attractions” is felling trees?

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Honourable member, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions doesn't fell trees.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** No, the FPC does under the direction of the forest management plan.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Exactly. It's not the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. FPC—there's a Minister for Forestry—is very different, so you'd better get your facts right.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** Yes. We had better get the department's facts correct. Let us have a department that actually looks after the forest and not one that cuts it down.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** The department is responsible for managing the laws of this state, and guess who makes the laws? Everyone in this place.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** All right; let us change the laws by starting with the repeal of the Forest Products Act in this place.

**Hon Stephen Dawson** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Order, member! This is a member's statement, not a debate. But I am sure that if the minister wants to respond, there is plenty of time tonight. If the member would like to complete her statement, please.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** Thank you.

The act is no longer required. There is no profit. Our timber resource is diminishing. We need rapid and secure development of plantations and a farm forestry plan. We needed this 20 or 40 years ago; in fact, we started on it some time ago and then it failed, again, under the realm of the Forest Products Commission. The Forest Products Commission was supposed to be out there developing the plantation industry, yet it has not worked. I spoke about this yesterday. Again, the Forest Products Commission was underpaying its sharefarmers. Why would landowners take this up if they cannot trust the organisation that is supposed to pay them? The Forest Products Commission made a deal with a mill in which the mill was the only one that benefited. Again, why would other people take this up? It leads to lack of profits for the Forest Products Commission anyway.

The Forest Products Commission has failed to develop this industry. We need these plantations integrated on farm so that landowners can make a profit from them, to gain the co-benefits of on-farm diversity—benefits from ecological diversity and benefits in financial diversity. The actions of the Forest Products Commission have undermined the industry and diminished potential profits to private landowners—in effect, discouraging them from even entering the industry. It is abysmal that this is what is happening when we have so much land that we could be growing pine on and developing the resource so we no longer had to import any. Given that this should be integrated into farms, it is my expectation that it could come under the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which is a great idea, and it is in the regions that we are going to be growing this. It makes sense. The act and the way the current Forest Products Commission is set up denies this from happening, and I think DPIRD could be the one to do this. It could integrate pine onto farms and get those benefits from having trees as a part of the make-up of the farm.

The other area of the Forest Products Commission is sandalwood, which has been a cash cow. It is how the Forest Products Commission has funded all the losses in the other areas. The Forest Products Commission has to stop because it is in a situation in which it is the regulator as well as the owner of some of the resource and receives a profit from the sale of the resource. Of course, the Forest Products Commission's expectation was to manage sandalwood so that it was able to make a profit and not the other people who had access to wild sandalwood and not those people who had invested in sandalwood plantations, who have been affected by the regulations put into effect in 2016, which made it no longer profitable to harvest the sandalwood that they planted 20 years ago. Why would anybody take on planting more sandalwood as another viable on-farm exercise? They do not want to, but they need to, so we no longer have to harvest our wild sandalwood.

Do not get me wrong, there are a lot of problems with wild sandalwood because there is the greenwood and the deadwood, and criminal interests and native title are involved. A lot of issues need to be sorted, but they can be sorted under a regulatory arm. However, the profit-making arm cannot be handled by the same organisation, and that may be the same state. We have to continue to support the sandalwood industry because it is a very viable industry if we make it so. If we have regulations that stop it from happening, we are doing the wrong thing because sandalwood can add to the landscape and on-farm biodiversity and financial diversity, all of which are going to be good for it and good for those landowners. We have to manage the sandalwood industry, but, again, with the Forest Products Commission at the helm, it just does not work.

I recognise the difficulties. I recognise that the Forest Products Commission is in a difficult situation because it is told that it has to make a profit and that is what it is trying to do, but it is doing poorly and badly. I do not think it can be done in a way that does not affect Western Australians in a negative way, so that is strike 1 against the Forest Products Commission and the Forest Products Act. It harvests native forest. It is unnecessary. It is unprofitable and unwarranted. Strike 2 against the Forest Products Commission and the Forest Products Act is in plantations, which have been ill-managed and ill-developed. It can be better and we can do better, but the Forest Products Commission, under the Forest Products Act, has been a nightmare. Strike 3 against the Forest Products Commission and the Forest Products Act is in sandalwood. The wild harvest has been poorly managed and it has had poorly supported plantation development. Again, we should be able to do better. We are stuck in a system that is driving us down and making it bad for all those involved. It can be done better, and I need to say that it is time for the Forest Products Act to go and the Forest Products Commission to be abolished.

*House adjourned at 6.36 pm*

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