

## NATIVE FORESTS

### *Motion*

Resumed from 6 May on the following motion moved by Hon Paul Llewellyn —

That in light of the Forest Products Commission's poor financial performance in the native forest sector; the failure of regulation and compliance of native forest logging; the impact of logging on the habitat of vulnerable species; the compelling evidence of native forest ecosystems at risk of irreparable damage; and the compounding impact of climate change, this house calls on the government to —

- (1) Set in place a full transition to plantation and farm forestry for the production of commodity timber products currently derived from native forests.
- (2) Immediately develop an exit strategy for the native forest commodity timber industry.
- (3) Put in place an independently refereed, scientifically based program to restore the ecological integrity of native forests which underpins the delivery of clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and natural heritage values of the south west region.

**HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West)** [11.07 am]: We have introduced a wide range of arguments on the management of our native forests in Western Australia. In summary, I remind the house of my proposition that if we can meet our timber needs from plantations and farm forestry, we need not log our native forests. The second proposition is that if we are logging our native forests at a loss or without any substantial financial gain, it is a double travesty to be stripping the natural capital out of our native forests at a cost and trashing our biodiversity and the World Heritage values in the forests themselves. We have put on the table a series of arguments that suggested that the Forest Product Commission was not performing particularly well and was, in fact, performing badly and that we should remove its commercial operations from native forests by removing its licences for the extraction of timber from native forests.

I brought to the attention of the house also the handling of the forest management plan, particularly the key performance indicators that suggest that the 2004-13 forest management plan is falling behind and that the midterm review suggests that all is not well in the management of our native forests. I will just continue briefly with the argument that one of the key performance indicators would be economic performance, and I think it has been fairly clearly established that the Forest Products Commission is not performing well. The second indicator would be whether the commission is meeting its obligations to supply timber out of native forests. I made a list of the royalty prices paid for native forest and plantation timber, and I noted that there is a distinct disadvantage for native forests, in that it is cheaper, effectively, to log native forests than it is to buy timber from plantation sources. This is primarily because the royalty has been loaded in favour of stripping native forests, rather than transferring our timber production to plantations and farm forestry.

This list is interesting because it relates to the estimated and actual volumes of sawlogs removed from native forest harvests. I am sorry Hon Adele Farina is not in this place because she made considerable comment during my previous remarks. I am reading from question on notice 79 in the Legislative Council. The question asks what were the estimated sawlog volumes and what were the actual sawlog volumes that were obtained from a whole series of coupes and locations in forest operations around the south west region. I will quote a few numbers from the answer.

The amounts of sawlogs obtained vary considerably and are not in order of importance; they are in alphabetical order. Arcadia 03, CAC0306: it was expected that we would get 9 600 cubic metres of jarrah out of that forest; in actual fact we got 1 192 cubic metres—less than half the estimated volume was actually realised in the field. I will pick another random example. Cambray 01, NCM0106: the estimated cubic metre jarrah log volume was 4 000 cubic metres; the actual realised jarrah was 1 827 cubic metres—less than half the expected volume.

What is happening in our native forests if our lead agency tells us we will get 4 000 cubic metres out of a particular block of forest, and only 1 800 cubic metres is realised? It is telling us that either the asset is being poorly managed or the agency is overestimating the capacity of the asset, or both. I would advocate that the agency is both poorly managing the asset and overstating its capacity. That is clearly revealed in these figures. I am not making this up; these are the actual returns from the Forest Products Commission.

I will give an example of another random coupe. This is a forest block called Leach 01, CLE0106: the estimated volume of jarrah to be realised was 18 500 cubic metres; the realised volume was 4 086 cubic metres. This tells us that the Forest Products Commission is overestimating the volume of timber available in the forest. We can link this evidence to evidence I presented yesterday of the Forest Products Commission consistently valuing the forest estate at a higher figure to cover its losses. This is not borne out by evidence. It is not borne out by the contracts; it is not borne out by the income stream; and it is certainly not borne out by these yields. I seek leave to table this document for the house.

Leave granted. [See paper 725.]

**Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN:** I have not quite finished quoting from it, but I will certainly table it.

**THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash):** If it was not the case that the member was coming to the end of this term, I would have to say to him that once the document is tabled, it is taken into the custody of the Clerks. However, we will just watch the member; that is all!

**Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN:** I am not going to knock this particular piece of paper off, because I really want the house to have it.

I will now turn to the south west region total estimated volumes for jarrah timber in cubic metres. The total estimated volume of timber that would be realised was 132 230 cubic metres; the actual realised volume in the field was 76 950 cubic metres. That estimation was 50 per cent out across the entire region. If that is the case, it would clearly explain why the Forest Products Commission is in financial difficulty and is not delivering an appropriate dividend to the people of Western Australia. Something is wrong with native forest management in Western Australia. I suggest it is a fundamentally uneconomic and ecologically unsustainable system if the Forest Products Commission expected to get that volume but did not.

I will now turn to the Warren region. For those who do not know, the Warren region is one of the southern regions that grows both jarrah and karri. I will quote the end figure realised because it makes the point quite clearly. The southern forests are often very much more productive than the northern forests because of the lower rainfall. Members might remember that I outlined the very clear relationship between rainfall, growth and carbon sequestration and so on. This is borne out in these figures. For the entire Warren region, for a series of something like 20 coupes logged in 2006, the total estimated volume was 151 760 cubic metres of jarrah; the actual realised volume was 101 562 cubic metres, which translates to one-third of the actual estimate in this highly productive landscape. No wonder we are posting a loss in our native forest management. No wonder the agency is having to cost shift and hide the costs of running its operations by charging taxpayers, through the Western Australian government, for the cost of producing the forest management plan, when it should have been a cost assigned to the cost of getting the timber out of the forest.

I think those points are very clearly made. Those figures I quoted relate to jarrah, but there was a slightly better performance in the case of karri. To be even-handed, I will put on the record that the estimated volume for karri in the entire Warren area was 50 590 cubic metres; the actual derived volumes were in the order of 69 540 cubic metres. The agency was also unable to make an accurate estimate of the karri resource. We must bear in mind that when we log native forests, about 80 per cent or more of the forest is turned into low-grade charcoal and chip logs and less than 12 per cent ends up as sawn timber. For that privilege, the state actually loses money and we lose our biodiversity and impact on our assets. I cannot understand how Western Australia can allow this business operation to continue and how a government trading enterprise can operate on that basis. Now I can table this document.

At the end of yesterday's discussion, I was talking about other key performance indicators in the "Forest Management Plan 2004-2013: Mid-term audit of performance report" by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia. I listed a number of species that had been impacted on as a result of logging operations fundamentally in the native forest sector. One of the key performance indicators is the status of critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable and conservation-dependent forest-dwelling species and ecological communities as determined by listing. The objective of key performance indicator 2 is to assess the success and implementation of the forest management plan in achieving its targets through monitoring the status—that is, the protection category—of threatened flora, fauna and ecological communities so that ecosystem management activities can be assessed and appropriate actions to better achieve the objective can be identified. The interesting thing is the results in the case of flora.

**Hon Donna Faragher:** I have the answer, but I've written on the back of it now.

**Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN:** The minister has the question and answer. I thank her very much. I lost track of my notes yesterday. It was an embarrassing moment, but I now have them. I have the Conservation Commission's report and I am quoting from page 140, which states —

Eight species of flora within the FMP area have moved to a higher category of threat since 2004. Six were previously listed as priority species and two species were new additions to the list. It is the view of the Department that there is no evidence to suggest that these species have been elevated to a higher category of threat as a consequence of management activities, ...

What is causing these species to go to a higher level of risk if it is not the activities of the department? That is an extraordinary claim. The principal activities in native forests are mining, logging and burning, which are

managed by this agency. It is not meeting its key performance indicators and it is claiming that in this case the agency is not responsible. I think that is interesting.

On the matter of fauna, the report states —

Four species of vertebrate fauna have moved to a higher category of threat since 2004 ...

They are all tabulated, and I have mentioned some of these. It continues —

The elevation in category of threat of the noisy scrub-bird is not related to management activities and therefore is not a shortfall in relation to the performance target for this KPI.

The noisy scrub-bird effectively appears in coastal areas and is not specifically a forest-dwelling species. I will go through the species. The report continues —

For the red-tailed black cockatoo it is uncertain if the move to a higher category of threat is related to management activities.

That is one species about which there is some uncertainty, but the cause of the move to a higher category certainly has not been ruled out. The report also states that the conservation status of the woylie has changed to a higher status. I think I have previously read out this list, so it is not that important for me to go through it again now. Nevertheless, the Conservation Commission is very clearly saying that, on this key performance indicator—that is, the threat to species and ecological communities—there are measurable impacts from the management of our native forest sector.

The report goes on to refer to timber yields, and I have just gone through that in quite some depth. It is clear that the management of our native forests under the forest management plan is depleting the resource and is running down the ecological assets and the economic—if it can be measured in economic terms—timber assets, because the kinds of returns that are expected are not being achieved. However, we are expected to believe that this is a profitable enterprise and a fruitful endeavour. I argue that it is neither profitable, fruitful nor intelligent to be depleting native forests in the south west when there is a stream of other economic values, including the ecosystem services for clean air, clean water, biodiversity, soil protection and so on.

I return to the motion, because I have been trying to work my way through it. I moved it on behalf of Hon Giz Watson. It states —

That in light of the Forest Product Commission's poor financial performance in the native forest sector; the failure of regulation and compliance of native forest logging; the impact of logging on the habitat of vulnerable species; the compelling evidence of native forest ecosystems at risk of irreparable damage; and the compounding impact of climate change, this house calls on the government to —

- (1) Set in place a full transition to plantation and farm forestry for the production of commodity timber products currently derived from native forests.
- (2) Immediately develop an exit strategy for the native forest commodity timber industry.
- (3) Put in place an independently refereed, scientifically based program to restore the ecological integrity of native forests which underpins the delivery of clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and natural heritage values of the south west region.

I turn my attention to the assertion about the compounding impact of climate change. The Conservation Commission stated in its midterm review that we have underestimated the impact of climate change not only in the productivity of forests, but also in their role in carbon sequestration. The commission has made some very clear statements to outline its deep concerns in that regard. The commission is saying that we should act earlier rather than later in a number of places. From the beginning of 2009, the Department of Environment and Conservation is giving greater weight to climate change whenever it makes management decisions; in other words, it is concerned that there is no delay in making these decisions as rainfall declines and the climate changes.

I will go into some of the ecology of jarrah forests. Jarrah forest is remarkably uniform as a forest species across a very wide range. In most ecological circumstances, one would expect to find at least five different tree species across that range, but in Western Australia the jarrah forest has an extremely large ecological range from north of Perth all the way across to east of Albany. In normal circumstances, five or six different species would cover that range, and jarrah goes from a coastal tree right through to magnificent tall forests. The interesting thing about the jarrah forest is that the ecological diversity is in the understorey. While we have seen a decline in the harvesting rates, we will also see a major impact on the understorey species. Those are the species that are listed in the report as being lost. Another interesting thing about the jarrah forest is that there is an ecological cline as the

rainfall changes from east to west. The north eastern jarrah forests—that is, the forests just south of Perth and to the east—have been most heavily impacted by dieback and declining growth rates as a result of the decline in rainfall. People are very concerned that we will lose diversity in the forest, and that some major species may be lost. The tingle forest, for example, hangs just off the bottom of the south west of Western Australia. The decline in rainfall will push the tingle forest range off the south coast of Western Australia, and we will lose that species. Decline in rainfall could even push the karri forest south. Its natural ecological rainfall range might be 100 kilometres south of the south coast. Climate change is an extremely important impact factor in the management of our forest ecosystems. Therefore, any responsible long-term management should take into account the way in which we manage the ecosystems in the long term to ensure that they can adapt to the changing climate. Stressing the forests through over-logging, over-burning, mining, and the construction of roads and powerlines does not contribute much to maintaining the ecological integrity of the extraordinary remnant of native forest in the south west. We need to take a very close look at what kind of management regime we put in place. It certainly should not be repeated, aerially-based and time-based extensive burning and logging.

Those stressor factors will deplete the capacity of our forests in this age of climate change to perform one of their key functions, which is carbon sequestration. Professor Brendan Mackey, of the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University, has produced a book entitled *Green carbon: the role of natural forests in carbon storage*. I remind members that the Greens (WA) believe that our forests should be incorporated into carbon trading arrangements, and that we should be measuring the amount of carbon being locked up in our forest ecosystems. Brendan G. Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra L. Berry and David B. Lindenmayer have undertaken an extensive study of the role of forests on the east coast in sequestering carbon. I think I have previously quoted from these authors. They write about emissions reductions from deforestation and forest degradation. By logging, burning and degrading the forests we are losing carbon storage. Their principal argument is that if we were to protect our native forests, we would have a massive capacity to store carbon. The document states —

Our analysis shows that in the 14.5 million ha of eucalypt forests in south-eastern Australia, the effect of retaining the current carbon stock (equivalent to 25.5 Gt CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide)) is equivalent to avoided emissions of 460 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> yr for the next 100 years. Allowing logged forests to realize their sequestration potential to store 7.5 Gt CO<sub>2</sub> is equivalent to avoiding emissions of 136 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> yr for the next 100 years. This is equal to 24 per cent of the 2005 Australian net greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors; which were 559 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> in that year.

The take-home message is that protecting native forests and allowing them to grow would reduce our emissions by 24 per cent; that is, if we had a policy of no logging, clearing or degradation of our native forests, we would be meeting our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and we would not be having this ridiculous argument about emissions trading schemes. The Greens believe that we need to go further than that, but in actual fact there will be no loss to society; there will be only gains to society by entrapping carbon in our native forest ecosystems and keeping it there to maintain the ecological and atmospheric balance of carbon.

I turn now to another part of the proposition in this motion; that is, to set in place a full transition to plantations and farm forestry. We are talking about a full and fair transition that takes into account employment in the communities of the south west and ensures that the transition leads to benefits to the regional communities rather than losses of employment and industry. Considerable studies exist on employment in the forest industry. It is clear that it would be possible to make the transition into plantations and farm forestry, and to generate more jobs and more economic outputs in the process. I have here a comparative analysis of some of the figures relating to employment in the forest industry. It shows the total number of people employed in the plantation forestry sector and the areas planted. In 2006, the aggregated area of plantation hardwood was 281 300 hectares, and the number of people employed was 1 169. Plantation softwood accounted for 105 100 hectares, employing 1 448 people—26 per cent of the people employed in the forestry sector. With 386 400 hectares, and 2 729 people employed, plantations accounted for 49 per cent of employment in the forestry sector. Native forestry, employing 2 840 people, represents 51 per cent of the industry. Our contention is that, with well-structured investment and planning, it is more than possible to replace that resource and shift those people into plantations and farm forestry. The evidence is already there. It requires the government to look at the long-term benefits of plantation and farm forestry and make an investment up-front. It should quit its operations in the native forest sector, because they are loss-making enterprises, and put those resources into the plantation sector.

The Greens believe that with a well-structured plantation and farm forestry strategy, a just and fair transition can be made out of native forests into the plantation sector with minimal impact on communities. People could then be reskilled for and redeployed in this more productive and reliable sector of the timber industry.

I will underpin the argument of shifting out of the native forest sector and into the plantation sector. The gross profit before tax and overheads by business for arid forests—I suspect it means the pooling of sandalwood—is

\$6 million, which is highly profitable; for plantations, the Forest Products Commission, \$13 million; and the south west forests, the native forests, \$18 million. Interestingly, we have already challenged whether there is an \$8 million profit. In the 2007-08 financial year the gross revenue, by business segment, was \$57 million for plantations; arid forests—the sandalwood industry—\$14 million; and south west forests, \$42 million. These figures suggest that the plantation and farm forestry sectors are considerably bigger and we need to have a good look at the economics of and revenue streams from the two sectors.

An argument could be put that Western Australia would be better off keeping its native forests intact by investing in and restoring the condition and integrity of our native forests. An independent refereed scientifically based program could be put in place to restore the ecological integrity of native forests, which underpins the delivery of our clean air. A case should be made that the hardwood sector of native forest logging is a loss-making enterprise and the World Heritage listing and protection of our native forests will deliver long-term benefits to the community, both economically and ecologically.

I have not raised the value of tourism and recreation from the south west forest. If we make all those arguments, it makes no sense to continue logging native forests, damaging the ecosystems and putting at risk their potential to mitigate the impact of carbon.

With those words, Hon Paul Llewellyn's introductory comments come to an end and I call on other members of Parliament to put their case for the protection or otherwise of native forests. They have an opportunity to put the evidence on the table that this is a fruitful endeavour and something that we should continue doing. It is a good way for me to leave Parliament.

**HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West — Minister for Child Protection)** [11.44 am]: The government opposes this motion, which seeks to shut down native forest harvesting quickly. The motion falsely suggests that plantation timbers can take over. The Greens (WA) do not want a balance between conservation and industry. The motion is predicated on many false claims. It seeks to link cessation of native forests with environmental utopia. Forests in developing countries will suffer if this motion is successful.

I have an article by Mark Poynter, a spokesman from the Institute of Foresters of Australia, which states —

With respect to forestry and forest products, the environmental movement is confused. In stark contrast to its normal preference for natural, organic products, it remains bitterly opposed to native forest logging, which delivers a wide range of naturally durable and highly decorative timbers.

Yet, after decades of promoting plantations as a preferred alternative, many environmentalists now deride them as bland, artificial monocultures reliant on destructive applications of pesticides and fertilisers. These conflicting attitudes highlight an impractical idealism that is counter-productive to sensible environmental outcomes. We do not live in a perfect world — something that anteforestry activists seem unable to grasp. In their ideal “green” world, it seems that wood can be obtained without felling a tree.

**Hon Paul Llewellyn:** Would you table that article?

**Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY:** I am very happy to table it.

[See paper 726.]

**Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY:** The article came from my file of information. Hon Paul Llewellyn and I represent the South West Region. I was saddened when all those people in the timber industry lost their jobs. That occurred because of the urging by the Greens and the environmentalists that logging in forests cease. From there questions were asked about the definition of old-growth logging. Regrowth was being harvested and the movement seemed to be saying that it was old-growth logging. Somewhere along the way their view of what was being harvested became blurred.

The loss of people's jobs saddened me because I had grown up with many of these people. They were proud foresters who loved their job and did it properly, yet they were made out to be monsters of the deep. All they wanted to do was to continue their jobs and keep living in the community that they loved. However, that was not to be.

The essence of the Greens' motion is to call on government to exit native forests harvesting in a large measure over the next five years. The Greens might support low-level harvesting of specialty timber, but consider everything else to be producing commodity timber products and, therefore, should be stopped.

The motion suggests that the impact that this would have on the WA timber industry and consumers would apparently be lessened or countered by sourcing those timber products from plantations and farm forestry. The apparent remedy mischievously ignores that it will take several decades and not five years for plantation sources

to replace the quantity and quality of the native forest timber that is currently used to produce furniture, joinery and flooring. If native forest harvesting ceases over the next five years, there will not be local industry capable of using increasing quantities of plantation-grown timber. The strong evidence is that the absence of native timbers will lead to greater demand for imported timber and energy intensive materials, thereby transferring and not solving sustainability questions.

In the period leading up to the 2001 state election, the community signalled a desire to stop timber production from old-growth forest in those forests that have not been disturbed by such activities since European settlement. This was balanced by support for ongoing production of renewable resource from forests that have previously been cut, regenerated and managed for multiple uses.

In 2001 the Labor government implemented a policy that involved the dislocation of many jobs throughout the south west and metropolitan area. The figure of 875 jobs has been given, but I believe it was higher when we take the contractors into consideration. The Greens' motion now seeks to adopt an extreme position whereby any last vestige of balance is removed from forest policy in this state. It is difficult to understand this at a time when we are all becoming more aware of and planning to respond to the challenges of climate change. The Greens should be promoting the sustainable use of all renewable resources to meet the needs of our society, from high-value timber furniture through to renewable sources of energy. Instead, we have a campaign to damage this sector on a set of false propositions.

In the motion, the call for a cessation of native forest harvesting is predicated on many false claims. Despite the claim that the habitat of vulnerable species is at risk from harvesting, the "Forest Management Plan 2004-2013: Mid-term audit of performance report", released for public comment on 30 March 2009, cites no evidence that vulnerable species of flora or fauna or threatened ecological communities are at greater threat as a result of harvesting or related activities. The claim that native forests' ecosystems are at risk of irreparable damage from harvesting not only is in direct contradiction of the mid-term audit of performance report, but also ignores the fact that over half of the public south west forests are reserved from harvesting. They are reserved from harvesting, and they are there for all of us. It fails to recognise that harvesting operations in countries such as Australia have been progressively refined to minimise the adverse impacts on wildlife, water and many other forest values. It also seeks to perpetuate the green myth that forest harvesting leaves a devastating landscape instead of a vigorously regenerating young forest.

The claim that regulation of native forest harvesting is failing is wishful thinking. The Forest Products Commission publishes an annual compliance report, which shows that there is room for improvement and just where greater effort needs to be focused. The Forest Products Commission has an accredited environmental management system. The Department of Environment and Conservation monitors and acts on non-compliance in timber harvesting operations and reports annually on the number of improvement notices and management letters it issues to the Forest Products Commission. DEC also hosts community forest inspections that provide community representatives with the opportunity to inspect firsthand the systems and processes that are in place to sustainably manage the harvest of native forest trees from state forests and to note compliance with existing management systems and processes.

The recently released "Forest Management Plan 2004-2013: Mid-term audit of performance report" recognises that there are difficulties in operationalising the requirements of the forest management plan. However, that is a long way from saying that regulation of native forest harvesting is failing. The claim that the Forest Products Commission's financial performance in the native forest sector is poor is completely wrong. The Forest Products Commission's annual report shows that over the past three financial years the south west forest segment of the business has generated an average annual profit—before tax, natural resource asset valuations and corporate costs allocation—of \$13.8 million, which is an average return on the south west forest assets of 11.8 per cent.

The motion seeks to establish a link between the cessation of native forest harvesting and a substantial improvement in air and water quality, greenhouse mitigation, biodiversity and heritage protection, albeit provided the government funds a major restoration program. This would be counterproductive. There is no threat to these forest values from ongoing, well-managed harvesting. In contrast with cleared land, south west forests are recognised and cherished for these values, despite having supported a substantial timber industry for 100 years or more. Harvesting of forests, which is followed by vigorous regeneration, captures more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, particularly when the wood is made into long-lasting products that lock up carbon for decades.

The Greens' portrayal of forest disaster also makes it more, not less, difficult to persuade landowners and investors that they will be able to grow and harvest plantations on cleared land and, in doing so, remediate salinity and capture more carbon dioxide. The best way to achieve more tree cover and more of these forest values is not to put a fence around the native forests but to encourage the full continuum of uses.

In 2008 the Australian Institute of Criminology published a report on illegal trade in timber and timber products in the Asia-Pacific region. This report highlights the high level of demand for timber and timber products, which leads to large-scale illegal logging operations in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the report shows that Australia is importing some of this timber. It is estimated that in 2002-03, some 22 per cent of imported wooden furniture involved timber from illicit sources. In 2003-04, 19 per cent of plywood and 16 per cent of veneer came from such sources. Again in the high-value end, 14 per cent of the category, including doors and moulding, also came from illicit sources.

It is also incredible that the Greens can argue that WA should reduce its production of furniture, veneer and joinery when the bulk of plantations in this state and across Australia are struggling to meet demand for structural timbers or are specifically grown to produce paper and address our resource shortage in that area.

**Hon Paul Llewellyn:** That's a deliberate misinterpretation of what we're saying. We are talking about extremely high-value, high-end industry and investing in that sector because that's where the profitability is. We're simply saying that it should not be based on our native forest timbers.

**Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY:** The member has had his say and now the government is responding. I live in the south west and I am very happy to be the one responding.

This year's "Australia's State of the Forests Report" from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry reports an increasing trade deficit in wood products up to \$1.9 billion annually. It would be irresponsible for any jurisdiction in Australia to take the measures proposed by this motion, which would inevitably lead to Australia importing more timber from our neighbours in the region and damaging their efforts to control and manage timber harvesting that falls far short of our own standards for forest management.

As a member for the south west, I wish to say that our forests are managed very well. We have a reputation in Western Australia of managing our forests above that of any other state; in fact, anywhere in the world. We are first class in managing our forests. There is room for trees on farms. Hon Donna Faragher was just telling me how many cubic metres have been planted. There is also room for harvesting our forests if it is done properly. It seems to me that it is being managed very well.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.58 am]:** It can sometimes be helpful in these discussions to try to backtrack a little through the arguments to see whether we can get to a point at which we all agree, and then take those threads and try to work through the arguments to find out what the real points of difference are. When I think about native forests and that very significant move that the Gallop Labor government took in 2001 to cease logging of old-growth forests, a picture comes into my mind that was put there many years ago when I was in Denmark talking to one of the shire officers whose father was one of the original surveyors in the area. His father had written accounts of what he was seeing as he surveyed the forests in that region for the first time. The man described seeing the forest all that time ago, going back more than 100 years now, and counting four of these enormous trees an acre. They made up the forest, which provided a complete unbroken canopy. There was one tree in every quarter acre, which provided a complete unbroken canopy, and his description of going into those native forests was that it was like walking into a cathedral. When we think about the size of those trees, we realise how things have changed over the past century. In fact there are very few places in the south west, or indeed anywhere in the world, where we could walk into a forest and have that sensation of walking into a cathedral.

Although Hon Robyn McSweeney pointed out that she was delivering the government's response to this motion, which technically was moved by Hon Giz Watson but spoken to in some detail and at some length by Hon Paul Llewellyn, she was a little unfair in quoting Mark Poynter from *The Age* in 2007. I do not believe the position of the Greens (WA) on the timber industry and the preservation of native forests is confused. I believe there are some major points of difference between the position of the Greens and the position that has been espoused by the Australian Labor Party, and I will point out some of those as I go along. However, I do not believe it is fair to say that the position presented by Hon Paul Llewellyn to us in this chamber—now over several hours—is confused. If I were to make a criticism of it, it would be that it did not take account of the full complexities of the argument. I am sure my colleague sitting behind me will forgive me if I say that one of the attractions of being a Green is that the Greens do not always have to take account of the full complexities of the —

**Hon Paul Llewellyn:** We're simple minded!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I am not saying that the Greens are simple minded at all. I am saying that it is something of a luxury, in an argumentative sense, to be able to go for the 100 per cent position without having to be accountable to other constituencies.

That was very much the spirit in which Labor made the momentous decision at the end of the 1990s: that if and when we got back into government, we would end logging in native forests. It was a very traumatic time for the Labor Party. The Labor Party has many members and is associated with unions whose membership was placed

under a great deal of strain by this decision. It was an argument that had raged within the Labor Party for many years. It was certainly a moment that made me very proud to be a member of the Labor Party when we made that decision at the conference at the end of the 1990s. The decision was largely made because we actually won the argument within the party. It was not a question of steamrolling people by using the numbers; it was a discussion that had gone on for many years. It was the argument from people like me who believed it was the right thing to do to stop logging native forests that ultimately won the day. The decision was made very much with those people who worked in the timber industry in mind, which, as we have heard in the contributions to the debate in this house, was a very large number of people. I am inclined to agree with Hon Robyn McSweeney that the figure of between 800 and 900 people is probably very conservative. I believe that around 900 jobs might have been affected; however, if we look at the communities and families whose lives were disrupted by this change, I agree with Hon Robyn McSweeney that it would be significantly more than that.

**Hon Paul Llewellyn:** Are you looking accurately at and have you completed your research? They actually quote all the numbers for employment in both sectors.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** No, I was referring to a comment that Hon Robyn McSweeney made when she quoted a figure from the government's response. I am therefore agreeing with Hon Paul Llewellyn that it was more than that.

The key aspect about assessing this argument—as we assessed it in the Labor Party in the late 1990s that led to the decision of the government in 2001 to stop logging in old-growth forests—is that the argument cannot be presented in black and white terms. That is my criticism of the stance that Hon Paul Llewellyn takes. These are not black and white issues.

I suppose the question remains—it will be for history to determine the response to this—about whether Labor's policy went far enough. One thing that is certain—Hon Robyn McSweeney will not be able to deny this—is the Liberal Party in opposition, and indeed the coalition government at the time, opposed this step every inch of the way. If Labor had not won the election in 2001, it is clear that we would have continued logging in old-growth forests. What does that mean? Obviously in the broader sense it means that our native forests would have continued to diminish year by year; and by now—I do not know—we might have had no native forests left.

The question I must ask is: why were we logging in those days prior to 2001? This was very much part of the discussion within the Labor Party. We were chopping down old-growth forests to make things such as roof frames. It was the wrong sort of timber for that and it was unnecessary. We were generating industries and products that without as much economic and social disruption could have been replaced years ago.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.