

WORLD FORESTRY DAY

Statement by Minister for Forestry

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Forestry) [9.06 am]: This Friday, 21 March, we will celebrate World Forestry Day. Communities across the world will be recognising the contribution that forests and forestry make to our everyday lives. Here in Western Australia, we have more than 2.25 million hectares of native forest in the south west, approximately 100 000 hectares of state-owned plantations and 290 000 hectares of privately owned plantations. The forest industry is an important part of our local economy, providing more than 3 000 jobs across the state. It is also managed in an environmentally sustainable way. The timber produced from the state's forests is independently certified to Australian and international forestry standards. This provides customers with the assurance that timber products they purchase come from responsibly managed sources. Our native forests are beautiful and produce highly sought after timber for quality furniture, flooring and cabinetry.

We always seek to find the balance between conservation and productive use, which is why 62 per cent of native forests are set aside in national parks, reserves and other areas for the community to use and enjoy. This includes all areas identified as old-growth forest. The remaining 38 per cent is regrowth forest, which is available for harvest. Harvested forests are regrown to ensure these environments continue to be available for future generations. Forests provide habitat for native fauna, are a place for recreation and are visually appealing. For communities in the south west, the timber industry provides a high level of employment as well as contributing economic and social benefits. It is a vital part of these local economies, and this government remains committed to the native timber industry.

World Forestry Day is a day to recognise the important contribution that plantations make to the economy. The state's pine plantations provide products for our housing and construction industries. The wood harvested from these plantations provides a well-managed source of high-grade timber, which is sold in both internal and external markets. Sustainably harvested timber products provide a renewable building material—the alternatives include oil, steel, plastic, aluminium and cement, all of which are non-renewable. Trees capture and store carbon dioxide, and the carbon remains stored even after the wood is processed into furniture, flooring or construction material.

I recently attended the Forest Industries Federation (WA) industry dinner along with the member for Gosnells, at which the Forest Products Commission launched its newly developed information sheets highlighting the importance of WA's forests. I would like to table a copy of that information today and encourage members to have a look at the animated film that the Forest Products Commission has developed about sustainable forestry, which is available on its website. Forests and the forest industry make a significant contribution to the environmental and economic life of our state and it is important to recognise that fact on World Forestry Day tomorrow.

[See paper 1483.]