

SOFTWOOD PLANTATIONS

590. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Forestry:

I have a supplementary question. Is the minister confirming that he did no investigation of appropriate sites prior to the government's announcement to shut down the industry and this so-called expansion of softwood?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

No. Prior to making the decision to commit the \$350 million to expand the softwood plantation, there were thorough investigations into what land might be available. That investigation revealed there were a variety of options. We want to purchase at least 30 000 hectares, probably more, and we are having discussions with the private sector about how we might leverage the state's investment so that we get some private sector investment as well. That investigation revealed there were multiple options. We have been working on the softwood plantation position ever since we came to government. Members opposite may not be aware that we put out a market-led proposal on this topic so we had a whole bunch of people come to us with various proposals. Finance, Treasury and the FPC went through them all, having seen what other options were out there, and we have made a decision—one that will underpin thousands of jobs in Western Australia. As members know, for the first time carbon credits will be something that the FPC will be able to trade in. We are moving forward, guaranteeing a supply for the industry. The member should stop being so negative about it. The federal minister gave this proposal 10 out of 10 and the member is still whingeing about it!

The SPEAKER: Members, that concludes question time.