

FOREST INDUSTRIES FEDERATION (WA)

Statement by Minister for Forestry

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Forestry) [9.09 am]: I rise today to mark an important occasion in the history of the forestry sector in Western Australia. Last night, the industry gathered, along with members of both sides of this house, to celebrate 120 years of the Forest Industries Federation (WA) or FIFWA, as it is known. For 120 years, the forestry industry has been an integral part of Western Australia's and Australia's economy. It has formed part of the collective Australian identity; along with our farmers, pastoralists and miners, this industry is a part of our national DNA. The sandalwood story is our oldest; the first Australians have used this resource for thousands of years, understanding both the healing properties and using it as a food source. Early Europeans quickly established that the product was unique and highly desirable, a status that has not waned in over 170 years. The industry underpinned the development of the mining industry, working the wood lines to support the gold rush in Kalgoorlie. This triggered the delivery of the goldfields pipeline, one of the state's most iconic infrastructure assets. It also included those who ventured into our state's south amongst the tall trees, clearing these giants to build their communities and support a growing capital city. They were tough men and women; they were pioneers. They played an instrumental role in developing this state.

These days, forestry plays an important role in providing a renewable building material, as well as being an important driver of economic growth, particularly in our regional areas. Native forestry provides a unique and beautiful hardwood, renowned for its beauty in creating artisan furniture. The softwood industry is pivotal to the domestic building industry, providing building supplies across this state. We currently supply upwards of 60 per cent of the world's supply of sandalwood. It is an important industry for WA and I was delighted to join the sector in celebrating its contribution. On behalf of the WA Parliament, I would like to congratulate FIFWA on 120 years of supporting the forestry industry here in WA.