

## LOGGING — SOUTH WEST

### *Statement*

**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [9.46 pm]: First of all, I would like to say that we have a serious issue in the south west. We have a very valuable forest down there. It is very important to many people. It has value from the timber, has value for our economy, has value for the biodiversity, and has value for the planet. The COVID-19 crisis is even more important because these values are important to the people down there in getting back on track and getting the economy going again. The tourism businesses and the small businesses that support those tourism businesses need people to go there. For timber trucks to be rolling up and down the roads making it more dangerous for other traffic and seeing the destruction caused by them makes no sense at all. During the climate crisis, the values for biodiversity and the environment, the air we breathe and the water, those trees are very important; the forests are very valuable to us. Unfortunately, we seem to be stuck in the Dark Ages. When the Europeans first arrived here 200 years ago, they saw this as a resource to be felled, to be milled and to be used. Now, 200 years on, we are trying to continue to reap the value by cutting it down, failing to realise that the value of the forest is in the standing forest and having it there for us.

Only today, I asked the government to reconsider the harvest of a small but very important forest, Treenbrook near Pemberton. The government knows that businesses such as tourism depend on this forest; honey is gathered from it and other businesses support them. Even though the government knows that these businesses depend on this forest, it is scheduled to be logged from Friday this week, and I would like to express my anger at this. The impact that this will cause to our environment and to these businesses and tourism operations is outrageous. It is dreadful and it should not happen. The value of these forests is in them standing. The sooner we end logging and transition to plantations, the better. That is what we need to be doing. We need to harness the intrinsic value of these forests. We need them for our oxygen and water management. We need them for their health, their beauty, their sanctuary. They provide a place for us to go. When the regional borders open next week, a lot of people from here will head south for that sanctuary—that clean, fresh air—away from it all in the forest where they can feel relaxation and meditation from it; where they can get in and enjoy it.

It is interesting that in the 20 years since the Forest Products Act was enacted, we have gone backwards. The few years of small profits that the Forest Products Commission received either from sandalwood or revaluations of the forest—not actually from logging, but from revaluations of it—were completely reversed because of accounting treatment that was changed in last year's annual report, but it was not changed to reflect last year's income. It was changed to reflect the year before, basically to cover it up so that nobody noticed it. It was \$134 million. In 20 years, I am not exactly sure, but I do not think that the FPC has shown that sort of profit in that time, so it has gone backwards. If it has shown a profit, it is only from the sandalwood industry that it also operates.

In addition to this, while the Forest Products Commission was haemorrhaging money through the logging of native forest, our forests were quickly declining in health, becoming more susceptible to lowering water supplies and more prone to fire. That is right—logging made them more prone to fire. In the magazine *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, David Lindenmayer et al reported on the area burnt in last summer's fires in Victoria. I would just like to read a bit from that article. The article states —

Beyond the direct and immediate impacts on biodiversity of disturbance and proximity to disturbed forest, there is compelling evidence that Australia's historical and contemporary logging regimes have made many Australian forests more fire prone and contributed to increased fire severity and flammability. At a site level, logging and other silvicultural treatments leave large amounts of debris (up to 450 tonnes per hectare). This addition of fuel close to ground level increases the severity of subsequent wildfire. Other major logging-generated changes in forest composition and stand architecture, such as the creation of extensive areas of young even-aged stands characterized by densely stocked trees of short stature and a paucity of mesic elements such as tree ferns and rainforest life forms, can influence fire dynamics and patterns of spatial contagion in wildfires. For example, fires spreading from logged areas have burnt into adjacent old growth eucalypts and rainforests dominated by ancient Gondwanan lineages. The former have either never burned since establishment or are subject to extremely rare fires (for example, every 300–500 years), and the latter have never burned, with fire only at the rainforest edges at intervals of ~1,000 years.

So here we have it. We are still logging, making it more fire prone, damaging the area, trucks are travelling up and down the roads—one thing after another. The Forest Products Commission and this state's approach to forest management is devastating our remaining native forests and depriving Western Australians of the opportunities a healthy forest can provide, all the while making a loss in the process. This Forest Products Act was established in order to separate the revenue-raising side from the regulating side of the former Department of Conservation and Land Management. It makes no sense. Back then, when they were making a profit, it was fine, but they are not making a profit. There is no need for it.

I would like to add that in managing our forest, the Forest Products Commission was charged with the development of a plantation industry. After 20 years, we have gone backwards. Western Australia is in a far worse position for supplying the timber needs to the state. It signed up a number of share farmers and then paid them incorrectly over the last few years. One constituent who has been coming to me since I got into this place is still trying to get the right payment from the FPC. That is four years on, and he had been working on it for, I think, about six or eight years before that. He still has not managed to get it. Also, we have set a price with the mill. In order to get the pine processed here, we made a deal to sell it at a price determined by the mill. It has undercut all the people who are growing pine on their own accord. It is just not working. We can develop this industry. We need a pine industry but we have to have more plantations. There is no reason for us to be importing wood when we have the space and the ability to grow it here. That is what we should be focused on—those pine, hardwood and sandalwood plantations.

Sandalwood is another story. I am going to have to get to that tomorrow night because there is a whole other story with sandalwood. There is so much that the FPC could do if it were to do it right, but it cannot. It has been losing money and making a mess of our forests. We have to move on. We need to protect our forests. We need to end native logging. We have to change the system, because the Forest Products Commission has not been able to manage our forests. The Forest Products Commission has been destroying our forests. It is not returning anything to the state. The industry is quite small down there. We can have a just transition for the people who are involved in this industry into new industries, into the plantation and construction industries. We should be encouraging that. We need to be doing some post-COVID infrastructure building rather than pouring \$170 million into a concrete road near Albany, which is built for a city of a million people, yet that is what we are choosing to do. We should be using the pine that we grow here to build houses for some of our homeless people. I could go on and on. There is so much that could be done here, and I would really like to see those sorts of changes come through. We can offer solutions instead of just causing more problems. We can offer jobs instead of just destroying what we have left. Those jobs could be in the construction industry. Those jobs could be in planting those plantations and raising the seedlings and then planting them. We could address climate change at the same time as we address the economic issues that we are facing. We need to find out what the residents of Western Australia want to do with the forests. We need a deliberative process, but we have to end logging first. The Forest Products Commission is driving this problem. It is not making it any better. It is time we got rid of it. It is time we stopped logging our native forests, and it is time we abolished the Forest Products Commission.