

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — TRANSITION PACKAGE

745. Ms E.J. KELSBIE to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting the communities of the south west as they transition away from the logging of native forests. Can the minister update the house on how the government is supporting the development and diversification of small businesses, and outline what this support will mean to those communities in the south west?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for the question. I had the privilege to be with her along with other members of cabinet in the south west, in Warren–Blackwood, in the last couple of days. I had the pleasure of seeing the member in Margaret River, twice in Bridgetown and in Manjimup. I have to say that the reaction from the community to their local member was fantastic. The member for Warren–Blackwood has obviously worked extremely hard in that electorate. I think there was a bit of surprise on the faces of some members of the community at exactly how much work she has put in in such a short period of time. It was a pleasure to be down there with the member for Warren–Blackwood. It was also a pleasure to announce some of the new programs we have to assist her community as it moves away from native logging. We were in Manjimup yesterday in particular to announce a new program—that is, the community small grants fund. Grants of up to \$100 000 will be available to not-for-profits and small businesses that want to improve the liveability, the amenity, of the local area. Those grants will be available in February but we announced them yesterday because we announced a community advisory group that will assist the Minister for Forestry to make decisions on those grants. People put up their hands to work on that committee, which the member for Warren–Blackwood will chair. It was a great pleasure to announce that Nicola Sheridan, Jayde Darin, Sean Tysoe, Belinda Meehan and Marilyn Morgan are the famous five, as I would put it. They showed great enthusiasm yesterday in Manjimup at the prospect of assisting their community to be part of this transition.

This program of course comes on top of the small business development grants that we have already announced. They are grants of up to \$400 000 for small businesses that want to invest to protect existing jobs or to diversify their businesses and create new jobs in the south west. There are two more planks of business assistance to come. One is a \$10 million fund for grants of up to \$2 million for businesses that want to bring new businesses to the south west. That tranche of funding will require co-investment. The last tranche of funding will be for businesses that want to simply close, given the decision that we have made. We are very excited about this round of funding. It is on top of the redundancy packages that were put in place for affected workers and the significant financial assistance that we are giving to the mills themselves. All the mills now have an offer that they can consider.

I want to congratulate the member for Warren–Blackwood for the work that she has done. The reception that she received in the last couple of days, in my view, was quite outstanding. I look forward to continuing to work with her, as does the rest of the cabinet, on the transition away from native logging.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Liberal Party with the last question.