

FOREST PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 25 November 2021.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [12.24 pm]: I rise to speak on the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021, following the contributions of other members of the Nationals–Liberal alliance opposition, including the members for North West Central, Moore and Roe. I will start by addressing the mechanics of the bill. I note that this legislation has come about to enable the Forest Products Commission to expand its functions to allow it to trade in carbon assets associated with its forest products. Specifically, the FPC will be able to deal with carbon assets when the assets are associated with forest products located on land that is either owned by the Forest Products Commission or to which the FPC has rights. The bill will also amend the Forest Products Act to allow the FPC to purchase land for the purpose of establishing plantations—I will go into that a little—which will allow the FPC to acquire ownership of land and sell land in its own name for plantation purposes. It will also enable the FPC to validate the number of freehold purchases that have already been made for plantation purposes, which the FPC has already commenced. It will be interesting to see how this bill allows for the purchases that have already been made. That is an outline of the pure mechanics of the bill.

I guess what sits behind the legislation is the McGowan government's announcement that it would provide funding of \$350 million for the expansion of the state's softwood plantation. The minister at the time claimed that it would add at least an additional 33 000 hectares of softwood timber plantation or up to an additional 50 million pine trees. That is not an insignificant amount. From the outset, I absolutely support the expansion of the state's softwood plantation.

I know that the minister and others on the other side like to say that we did nothing when we were in charge of this portfolio, but that is not borne out by the facts, particularly in relation to softwood plantations. On that point, I remind members and the minister of the \$21 million investment that we announced as part of a broader softwood industry strategy. We made a commitment to increase the softwood plantation by 10 000 hectares, which would have been planted by the FPC over five years. A media statement was made and a strategy was developed. We carried out a significant amount of consultation with industry to get to that point. I recall as minister that there were regular conversations relating to concerns about the softwood estate. Anyone in the industry would understand that it was under enormous pressure. There will be a supply gap in the 2030s that, even with this investment or the investment that we were making, will still pose a problem for those reliant on supply, given that it takes some time to get that continuous supply. There were a number of reasons for that—one, that there had been limited planting over a number of years, but also there had been a number of force majeure events that were beyond the control of government or industry that had a significant impact on the amount of softwood available to those who required it.

When we made the announcement about the softwood industry strategy, when I was the Minister for Forestry, the CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association, Ross Hampton, who is still in that role, said that we were leading Australia in promoting forestry and the expansion of softwood plantations on a nationwide basis. We announced the expansion in and around two industry hubs. That was after consultation with industry, taking into consideration that a whole raft of things went into the management of that supply chain to make it economic and reasonable, and there needed to be certainty for those who were processing the materials. At the time, Mr Hampton was quoted as saying that the WA plan involved growing the right trees in the right places. We were quite specific about where we could see an opportunity to increase the estate. We put a time limit on it. There was a commitment that we believed could be achieved in that five years. The broader strategy was about investing in uplifting the entire sector, and it involved six key areas of action, including renewing the focus on attaining higher levels of certification, which is very important when we are talking about industries such as this. People want to know that it is sustainable and done with the highest levels of environmental approvals. Another area of action was the development of new training and employment pathways for the sector to work with the FPC collaboratively. We were talking about improving the community engagement of the FPC. I would be the first to put on the record that from time to time in the history of that organisation, there have been moments when that has been done incredibly well and there have been moments when that has not been done so well. Certainly, depending on who we talk to and their interaction with the agency, we hear that there are some wonderful people who are passionately involved in the organisation. That particular organisation has a chequered history, with its outward facing approach to embracing and communicating the importance of the industry.

The other issue that was raised as part of the softwood strategy was around increasing efforts to protect plantations from fire. As members would understand, that is one of the biggest risks faced in plantation management. There was also an innovation fund that was designed to look at how we could encourage and partner with the private sector to invest in the plantation sector, and to make sure that it participates not only at the processing end but also in building private plantations. A forestry adviser was also appointed to work with farmers and landowners looking to develop forestry enterprises. I imagine that as part of this, the Forest Products Commission will need to work closely with landowners. Aside from it purchasing parcels of land outright, I have no doubt that there will be opportunities to work with individual landowners and farmers to utilise less productive areas of their properties,

although that will need to be done with an amount of engagement and understanding of how that will impact their businesses and what opportunities it will create for them.

As the member for North West Central mentioned, and as I have just spoken about, there were a number of force majeure events during the period that we were in government, but they are not limited to our tenure in charge of the Forest Products Commission. We had fires in Waroona that impacted the estate. There were a number of years with significantly low rainfall and drought conditions that impacted the ability of the government to deliver on those state agreements. We also made a decision during our term of government to remove the pine plantation sitting over Gngangara mound, because that was having an impact on the recharge of the aquifer. That was part of a broader project, but it was certainly an interesting intersection for me as Minister for Water and Minister for Forestry at the time. We had discussions about the need to look at the impact of climate change and drought and the reduction in recharge of a very important aquifer, as well as the importance of being able to meet state agreements and having a sustainable supply of timber going forward. That intersection was probably the pointiest of them all at that time. That was made more complex by the involvement of the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the fact that it was a habitat for Carnaby's black-cockatoo. If we removed the pine plantations that we had planted in order to achieve the outcome of reducing the pressure on Gngangara mound, we needed to find an alternative food source for the Carnaby's black-cockatoos. It was a quite complex issue that had an impact on the forestry portfolio. From an FPC perspective, it knew that it had to meet its state agreements with the likes of Wesbeam and Wespine. This portfolio is not without its challenges when you get into the weeds of some of these issues.

The sad reality is that many Western Australians probably have a limited understanding of how the forestry sector works and how vital it is to everyday life here in WA. I think most people have a great appreciation for our native forests—they understand and appreciate their beauty and what they have to offer—but beyond that, their interaction with the industry might be down the aisle at Bunnings or if they are building a house and supply becomes restricted and costs go up. Unless someone is from a community that receives direct employment benefits from the industry or is surrounded by it, of which there are many in the south west, they do not understand the impact and importance of the industry as a whole—not just the plantations, but native forestry as well. I add in sandalwood as well, because it is part of the forestry portfolio and a very important part of our state's economic base. There are the harvesters, the haulage contractors, the sawmills and the furniture makers, a number of which I have in my electorate.

We have private and public infrastructure that relies on having timber that is fit for purpose. Although I understand that this bill relates only to plantation timber, I will take the opportunity to talk about native forestry further down the track, because the two are not interchangeable. They are important, and this government has made some significant policy decisions that will impact the entire forestry industry and the people in it. If members have not visited manufacturing or processing facilities, such as those owned by Wesbeam or Wespine, which manufacture the laminated veneer lumber products that we see in so many of our houses and commercial projects these days, I really encourage them to do that. What they are doing is cutting edge. It is well worth the time for members to go and familiarise themselves with what happens in those facilities. The industry supports hundreds if not thousands of jobs. I think everybody has an understanding that we should be self-sufficient or at least as close to that as we can when it comes to building materials. We have seen the challenges we have experienced in a COVID environment, but we may potentially have to rely on eastern states or international sources to sustain an industry that we have always managed to sustain here in Western Australia. It will come with added costs if we are not able to maintain and grow that plantation here. I reiterate that the Nationals support increasing the softwood plantation. However, I have some questions about how that will be done, because we were given limited detail in the announcement made by the government. That has certainly created some queries, concerns and questions as we progress with this very big policy initiative.

The minister was up-front in his second reading speech about the need to manage and mitigate climate change. It is noted in a whole raft of international literature that sustainable forestry has a role to play in assisting our globe, our communities, our nation and our state. Our nation is on a pathway to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and I understand that the state government has that ambition for our state as well. The Nationals accept the science of climate change and the science that underpins climate change. We acknowledge that climate change is having real and significant impacts. We live in the driest corner of the driest state of the driest nation. My electorate is dealing with the changing climate and those impacts on a daily basis. From a farming perspective, our farmers are growing far more with far less water every year. That has been a process of adaptation. The central wheatbelt area has gone from being a very safe rainfall zone. We used to call areas on the edge of Southern Cross or towards the goldfields marginal land, but that line has slowly encroached towards the west of my electorate boundary. I think there is an understanding of this in regional communities, and certainly a desire for governments of all persuasions to work with business to make sure that the policy settings are right to ensure that we adapt and enable our communities to address these challenges. There is absolutely no doubt that sustainable plantation and native forestry has a role to play.

This government has made a very big commitment to increase the plantation estate. As previous speakers from this side of the house have noted, very little detail accompanied those big announcements. The plantations will need to be developed strategically within a radius of industry hubs to ensure that the costs within the supply chain remain economical, and planted in areas in which they are going to grow. My understanding—I am happy to be corrected by the minister or anyone else—is that they will need annual rainfall of around 600 millimetres to be sustained. If we draw a line around the industry hubs at the moment and that rainfall area, it will encompass what we would consider to be prime agricultural land in Western Australia. That has the potential to put the FPC and the government on a collision course with landowners in the state's agricultural region. I am not saying that that is what will emerge, but it needs to be managed. In states like New South Wales and Victoria that have smaller landmasses and where there have been conflicts between mining, agriculture and forestry, it has become a really challenging conversation. We should be trying to diversify and support all these industries, but they are at loggerheads because one seeks to take something away from the other. They need to be able to work together. That needs leadership and a plan. We need to understand how that will roll out. Uncertainty creates frustration and anger. That is not what we would like to see roll out as a result of this significant investment.

Given the amount of taxpayers' dollars attached to this, there may well also be distortions in land prices in those areas, because it is a significant investment. The questions we have asked and are seeking answers from the minister on are pretty simple: What land is the FPC targeting? How will that be approached? What is the plan to get the trees in the ground, noting I think that around 5 000 hectares was planted last year? How will the estate be scaled up, and over what time frame, because we are going from 5 000 hectares planted last year to, presumably, significantly more in the coming years? There is still the remaining question: what will be done with the supply gap in the 2030s, noting that plantings going in the ground today will not be ready until after that period—that is, unless something significant has changed since I was the Minister for Forestry? I am happy for those questions to be answered. I am asking them so that they will be canvassed in debate. It is important that those questions are answered as we consider this legislation for the plantation estate.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In the last few minutes that I have left to speak, I want to address the policy decision that was made at the same time as the McGowan Labor government decided to end native forestry in Western Australia. I refer to comments from Mr Ross Hampton, the CEO of the Australian Forests Products Association, which I know were echoed by the Forest Industries Federation (WA) and other local governments leaders who are in communities, or represent communities, that are directly impacted by this decision. Mr Hampton made the following comment —

“The WA Government has cynically attempted to cloak the devastating impact this decision will have on timber supply for WA by also announcing at the same time a \$350 million fund to expand plantations,” ...

AFPA condemns the decision, rightly calling it out as “a decision driven by politics not science”. Quite frankly, it is a shocking decision. It shows no foresight or understanding of the sector, and it illustrates perfectly what we have seen from a McGowan government that is more worried about polling and popularity than it is about statesmanship and governing. It is a difficult decision. Forestry discussions are difficult and people are passionate about it, but there are real people sitting behind these decisions.

I also point members in the chamber to a statement in the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that states —

In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit.

The native forest sector directly employs around 500 people. It contributes over \$220 million to the WA economy and for every job that is directly created it creates 1.8 FTE other jobs in the economy in the native forestry sector. Ninety per cent of those jobs are in regional Western Australia, not just in the south west. There are businesses in my electorate in the Central Wheatbelt that are employing a number of people in the industry. There are people employed in the industry in the Perth metropolitan area, and certainly from a supply chain perspective, the impacts of this decision will flow across the entire state. But the very pointy end of this decision is focused, I think, on direct employment and the businesses that have made significant investments.

A lot can be said about a government that makes a decision that will ultimately just pull the rug out from underneath an industry—shut them down and leave workers and businesses shattered because they are not part of a popular industry. There is more sentiment of support for shutting down the industry than there is about doing the hard graft to explain to people why it could be an important part of our economy and why it could contribute towards mitigating climate change and why there are all sorts of other risks that will come about as a result of this decision in terms of fire management, community, sustainability and the impact on other sectors and businesses that I have had discussions with.

I have to say that hand on heart, unlike the minister, I have sat in the room with some of those businesses and community leaders and listened to them pour their hearts out about how this decision has impacted on them. I have heard from seasoned and pragmatic business men and women from the big end of town and industries that have a significant bank balance in the native forestry sector, as they sat alongside small intergenerational businesses, run by families who aspired to hand their businesses down to the next generation and who have adored the fact that they have been able to work in a small community surrounded by their friends and family in a business that their parents and grandparents invested in. They are simply being told that there is no future for them or that there is a very different future for them. I have to say that they feel as though they have been dealt with heartlessly and callously. They have not been able to have a conversation with the minister. I wonder, and they wonder, why the minister did not take the time, given that the announcement was made some time ago now, to do what the shadow Minister for Forestry and I did the other day at the invitation of FIFWA. I understand that an invitation was extended to the minister to do the same. We sat in a room in Manjimup and listened. For me, the very least a minister can do when making a decision that will impact on families and people's livelihood is to front the people that that decision impacts on—not through an intergovernmental working group that is stacked with government departments, not from a remote office in Perth, but to talk to them face to face. I do not think that that is unreasonable.

As these discussions have gone on and as people have become resigned to the fact that they will not see a change in the decision in this sector, we have learnt that as part of the just transition plan—which FIFWA, business owners and community leaders tell me is far from just at this point—the Australian Workers' Union has been gifted \$200 000. Not one person in the room that I was in thought that that passed the pub test—not one person. The businesses that are impacted by this disgraceful decision will leave the industry with less in their pocket, probably bankrupt, because they will not have the capacity between now and when the final decision comes into official play to be able to transition or to change what they are doing. They simply can't. They are hobbled by the fact that workers in the industry will have no future and will be seeking employment elsewhere. Those businesses are on a slow spiral downwards and do not have the support that they need to leave the industry with dignity. At the same time, \$200 000 has been handed over to the AWU. That stinks! We know that that payment was never discussed with the working group negotiating the just transition package—it was handed to them as a *fait accompli*—and no other parties that have been involved in working with the government as best they can have been paid for their services to provide support to those business that will be impacted. It stinks! The Manjimup Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that that was taking money away from the people who the government is meant to be helping; it does not pass the pub test. The government has put the death knock on those businesses. There was real grief. I am not over-egging what I heard as I sat in that room. It was difficult to see people in so much pain. I likened what I saw in those people to what I have seen when I have sat in rooms when there have been major events beyond the control of everyone—drought, floods, fires. People feel helpless and lost, except in this case this is a decision by the government.

Amongst the anger and the confusion—they are literally going through a process of grief—they are still devastated. Some in the room were around in 2001 when the original decision was made to end old-growth logging. I was not party to those conversations when that decision was made, but the people in that room said that they were told that the restructuring package at that time—it was a Labor government—was just and allowed people to transition with dignity. But they were also given assurances that that would not happen again, they could be confident that that transition would happen once, and this decision now was guided by the forest management plan, with the science and all the things that go into making this a sustainable option for our state, and would provide certainty for those businesses and communities reliant on that sector. They have gone through it twice and many of them will simply walk away, probably with very little in their pockets. People looked haunted. One local reflected to me that part of the conversation going around the community at the moment is, "Perhaps it's just as well that they are taking it all now because there's nothing left to take. There'll be nothing left to take so they can't hurt us anymore." I mean how is it that we are at the point at which a community is in so much pain as a result of a state government decision? People feel left out, unappreciated and let down.

I encourage members as they stand to talk about this bill and this issue to remember that there are real families and real people with mortgages and debt who have made investments based on the encouragement of this minister and this government. There are families who have been in this industry for many, many years that are reeling. It may not be your family or your community, but they are part of this state and they deserve more than they are getting from this minister and this government. I encourage everyone to try to understand that there is a human face to the policy decisions that are made in cabinet. It might be popular across the state, but popularity is not a key performance indicator for a minister; it is about making solid decisions based on making sure we look after everyone in this state. Certainly, from my perspective, native forestry can play an ongoing role in managing the challenge we face with climate change, and internationally there is literature that supports that. From my perspective, there is so much further to go on this issue. The National and Liberal opposition will stand with these communities to make sure that these issues continue to be raised as these packages are being discussed. But so far, in relation to some of those negotiations, I can tell members that it is not passing the pub test and people feel let down, devastated and distraught. It is simply not good enough.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka) [12.53 pm]: I rise to talk to the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to do so for a number of reasons. I want to acknowledge that this is an important bill because it recognises the importance of government acting on the issues of climate change. It should be self-evident that it is true governments need to do this but I cannot help comparing the work of this government with what we have had in this space from the federal Liberal–National government for many, many years. It has, in fact, had a policy of deny, ignore and pretend climate change is not real, and in doing that I think it has done a great disservice to the people of Australia.

Although it should be self-evident that it is true governments need to take the issues of climate change seriously and implement and enact good legislation and policy initiatives even when they are difficult, it has not been true of our federal government, but I am very pleased to be part of a government that is approaching the issue head-on. We know that young people are very concerned about issues of climate change, but it is not just young people; many, many people are concerned. Governments and industries around the world are getting on with the business of adapting and managing a transition, and I am very pleased to be part of a government that is also doing that.

I am also very pleased to have the opportunity to talk about this bill because I think it is very forward-looking and has a focus at its heart on creating new jobs and finding new opportunities for industries that are being affected by climate change. The government is confronting that issue head-on and making sure that we have sound plans that will not leave communities high and dry but will assist them in making really important transitions to ensure that as change comes—whether we like it or not change is coming—working people and their communities will have the tools, resources and time that they need to be able to adjust and adapt. We are making sure that they will have the funds, resources and government support that will allow them to do that. This bill makes me think, and reflect on, that it takes a very mature government to be able to do that.

It takes a Labor government, in fact, to bring together parties and to confront these difficult issues head-on. Time and again we have seen that it is mature Labor governments in partnerships that have the ability to manage structural change in the economy and find outcomes that will protect communities and working people, and ensure that there are new industries for people to work in. In this instance, we are grappling with climate change, but there have been transitions in the economy throughout time. Many communities and many industries are grappling with the question of climate change. I am very pleased to be part of a government that has the maturity to do the work that we need to do to manage those transitions in a way that will protect the economy, communities and working people. I want to commend the minister and all cabinet members, in fact, for their work in this area, because it is very important. It is extremely important that we as a government manage those transitions and have the maturity, vision and dedication to do that even when it is difficult. I think anyone who doubts this government's approach need only look at what federal Liberal–National governments have not done in this area to see that they lack the maturity, certainly, but also the dedication and ability to bring partners together to find outcomes. There is no doubt that this is important work and this is an important bill.

I also want to commend the member for Warren–Blackwood because I know she is very active in her community, working with a number of people and organisations to ensure that the government has a central role in managing this transition. It is foremost in her mind to be part of managing those transitions to protect her community.

There have been a number of contributions on this bill already but it is important to note that this bill will amend the Forest Products Act 2000 and its main purpose is to provide the Forest Products Commission with the ability to own, deal and trade in carbon assets in relation to plantation resources. It will help the state to enter the lucrative carbon offsets market, generating revenue and future carbon industry jobs for Western Australia. In that sense the legislation is very forward-looking. The government understands that our industries are changing and we need to change to take advantage of the opportunities that these kinds of transitions are presenting around the world, and that if we do not move to do that, we will be left behind, in much the same way as the Luddites were when they refused new technology. I think in their case it was perhaps the wheel or something similar. Maybe not the wheel, but technology was coming and at the time people were very threatened by it. But change is happening all around us all the time so it is essential that we step up and respond to that rather than stick our heads in the sand. That is why I think this is a very sound bill.

I am also excited because at the heart of the legislation is a recognition of the important role that carbon can play in our economy and in our response to climate change. As I said, at its heart is a recognition that the work that trees in the ground do has value because of the emerging carbon trading markets. This legislation will allow the state to receive revenue from the sale of carbon assets in rapidly developing markets. There will be an alternative way for forest products to generate resources for the state government and we will not have to cut down forests to get a return on revenue; we can look to what the future holds and be a part of that.

This legislation will also empower the Forest Products Commission to purchase land for the purpose of establishing plantations so that it can engage in those emerging industries. In that sense, it is a sound bill that recognises the future is here whether we like it or not and our job as a government is to manage those transitions, as I said earlier,

to protect communities and working people. We have to make sure we take advantage of these opportunities to create new jobs.

Members will know that the McGowan government has made a commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The McGowan government accepts the science on climate change. Again, this should not be radical, but it is when compared with the federal government's approach; it has had an appalling position on climate change for some time. We understand that climate change is real and acknowledge that it has already had a significant impact on both our environment and our community, and that is ongoing whether we like it or not.

The state budget has contributed resources to act on and address the state's contribution to global emissions. There has already been \$750 million committed to the climate action fund, which will do a number of things to drive a low-carbon future for this state. One thing worth mentioning is the record \$350 million that has been invested to expand the softwood plantation estate. Again, this is a really important initiative that will create local jobs and ensure that we have a strong and sustainable timber industry into the future. Sustainably produced Western Australian plantation timber will play a key role in addressing the challenge that is climate change.

In the time available to me today, I want to acknowledge the really significant aspects of this bill and the fact that it is part of a suite of initiatives that are essential to managing transitions in the economy. When I was preparing my comments today and thinking about this bill, I kept reflecting on the important decision that the McGowan government has made to protect our native forests, and what that meant for me. I know that a number of members, in their comments on this bill and perhaps others, have made those personal reflections. It is really important to recognise that the commercial value of our forests is in not just cutting them down, but also ensuring that they are recognised for their contribution to carbon markets. When we think of our forests, many people do not think about them as things of just commercial or economic value; we think about them as things with a great deal of subjective value. Through all of it, we would probably have a number of personal feelings and reflections about our time in the native forests of Western Australia. It is impossible to stand in the native forest of Western Australia and not be struck by its beauty and magnificence. In my comments today, I want to speak a little bit about that, and I want to reflect on my personal attachments. In doing that, I want to talk in particular about the work of Western Australian artist Howard Taylor.

Howard Taylor has been described as one of Australia's leading modernist artists and one of Australia's most revered artists. Yet many Western Australians would not immediately recognise his name. People reach for Google to look it up and see who this Western Australian is. His works are displayed in our art gallery and also in federal Parliament. I wanted to talk about Howard Taylor in my contribution today, really, for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to do it because, as well as being a well-respected Western Australian artist, he loved our native forests. Much of his work, which is significant, is about capturing the uniqueness and beauty of our south west forest. He spent his life seeking to do that. I also wanted to talk about Howard Taylor today because in my house, Howard Taylor is also referred to as grandad. I hasten to add that there is no genetic line from him to me, and I have none of his artistic talents, but he is my husband's maternal grandfather. Although I only met him in later years, and only knew him for a relatively short time, I wanted to talk about him today because he did so love our forests, and, as I mentioned, he spent 55 years as an artist capturing that unique beauty of our south west forest.

Members might not recognise his name, but there is a fairly good chance that many of you might have seen his works, which hang in the Art Gallery of Western Australia. He has also produced a number of pieces of prominent public art. Some members who have been around for a while might remember *The Black Stump*, which was commissioned by the AMP Society, and lived outside its building on St Georges Terrace before it was relocated when that corner was redeveloped, and moved to the University of Western Australia near the Octagon Theatre. Howard Taylor has a number of works on the grounds of Curtin University. People of my vintage may remember, as I do, visiting the university and seeing his tall columns that stood outside the entrance to the TL Robertson Library. He also has an installation—the member for Bunbury will be interested to hear this—called *Forest Trees*, which is an eight-metre sculpture out the front of the City of Bunbury's building, which the city commissioned him to produce.

During his life, he was also commissioned to produce installations that hung at the Fremantle Port Authority—although, I am not sure whether it is still there; I think the building has been redeveloped since that time. The WA government commissioned Howard to produce an artwork named *Compass and Perspective*, which was a gift from the people of Western Australia to the federal Parliament on the occasion of the new Parliament House opening in 1988. In addition to UWA and Curtin University, his works are also found at Edith Cowan University, the Holmes à Court collection, the National Gallery of Australia, and the art galleries of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland.

Howard Taylor created a significant body of work, and, as I said, he worked for more than 55 years. In 1989, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia and was honoured as a living treasure by this government in 1999 whilst he was still alive; however, he is sadly no longer with us. For all his success, Howard had very little interest in these kinds of awards and public accolades. He pursued his art not for fame or fortune. He made only a modest living

from his art during his lifetime, but he was incredibly passionate about his work. As I said, for more than 55 years it was our unique native forests that inspired him and the unique light of Western Australia that he tried to capture.

Howard was not someone who was initially known for his great artistic talent. He was born in 1918 and moved to Perth in 1932. He attended Perth Modern School and was best known for his football and athletics rather than his artistic pursuits. In 1937, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and was sent to World War II. He was captured and interned as a prisoner of war in May 1940, and he spent his time as a prisoner of war learning to draw with materials provided by the Red Cross. He perhaps had little else to do with his time as a prisoner of war, and there were plenty of people willing to be life models.

After his release and while in London, he met and married Shelia Smith, and they returned to Perth in 1946. He first lived in Bickley, in what was then a very bushy environment, on 24 hectares of bush. He started painting while still working part time at Perth Technical College. In 1967, Howard and Sheila moved to Northcliffe where they lived on a bush block for the remainder of their lives. It was here that I first met him. It was a relatively small bush block, thick with jarrah and karri trees. Howard lived in a pretty simple and small home. If members can imagine a house built entirely of floorboards—the floors, walls and ceiling—that was the nature of it. He had built it himself. It had four simple and very small rooms, and was best described as a kind of log cabin. It was a very modest home. On that same block, though, he had a significant and large studio. It was very big and had a vast workspace with an enormous window that looked out over the stands of karri and jarrah in that area. He worked every day in that studio. Even as he aged, he would work from early morning until it became too dark to stay there. He never, for the time that I knew him, took a day off; although, I do believe that he took some time off to come to our wedding. He had no time for socialising and little interest for any kind of other leisure activities. However, both he and his wife Sheila loved their extended family, and they also loved their German shepherd dogs. They had four or five that lived in the tiny log cabin with them, so it was rather crowded!

Howard was not someone who was interested in getting fame or fortune from his art, but he was driven by a passion to capture the beauty of our native forests. He never attended exhibition openings and had little interest in all of that. But he was interested in our bush and, as I said earlier, the unique natural light that we enjoy here in Western Australia. Books have been written about him—one in particular was titled *Forest figure*, which gives you a sense of how closely forests were aligned to his work and how dedicated he was to capturing them. When I reflect on our forests, I reflect very much on Howard Taylor's work, and it gives me a great understanding about the fact that our native forests are a unique and special gift, and I think we have a responsibility to protect them.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I think we can all relate to standing in the forest seeing the beautiful dappled sun through the canopies and the way light moves and reflects. We can all picture the kind of shimmer that comes off our native forests at a distance in a hot Australian summer. Anyone who has ever really admired the intricacies of the burl of jarrah wood and its grain will understand that our forests are unique and special, and it is our duty to protect them.

We should protect them not just because they are a uniquely Western Australian feature, but also to understand that they are a unique part of our Western Australian identity. They are part of who we are, which is why there were so many public commissions for Howard's work. That really underlines that many organisations understood that here was someone who could capture not just the beauty of our forests, but also their uniqueness and in doing so say something about the uniqueness of Western Australia and the special part of who we are. I think we understand that WA is a unique and special place; we see it all the time. We make much of our quokkas on Rottnest Island that are a part of our unique cultural heritage. We make much of our sunsets over the Indian Ocean, a unique and beautiful part of who we are. Howard Taylor and artists like him understand that our forests are a unique treasure. I think he spent his life trying to capture that and tell a unique story about Western Australia. I think it is our responsibility to preserve those forests for future generations so that his story and others like it make sense to the generations of Western Australians that come long after us. The arts are important to us all. They are a way of telling a story of not just who we are but also our place in history and our place in our world. When we consider the work of Howard Taylor and his depiction of the Western Australian landscape, we can only come to the conclusion that our native forests are a unique gift.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak on this bill because it is a way of recognising the important work that the McGowan government is doing to transition our economy, protect communities, protect workers and make sure that we are taking advantage of emerging opportunities in the forest industry. For me, I reflect that the decision to protect our native forests is really significant and important, and it is of value to anyone who has spent time in the forest. It is also an important decision for anyone who values Western Australia as a unique and special place. All of us who come here to represent the people of Western Australia understand that we live in a unique and special place. It is a great gift to have the opportunity to be here to protect the uniqueness of Western Australia. This bill is important for a number of reasons. It is not just about commercialising our forests to make sure that they have value in the ground, although it does that, and that is significant for all the reasons I outlined in the beginning of my contribution; it does much more than that. It underlines the work that this government is doing to protect our

forests for future generations, to protect our special cultural heritage and ensure that it is around for the generations of people who will come after us so that people who are inspired by the work of artists like Howard Taylor can see the forests that were his inspiration and can experience them for themselves, rather than being reduced to simply looking at an artwork hanging in a gallery and trying to make sense of what is the unique and beautiful landscape that we enjoy in Western Australia. With that, I commend the bill to the house, thank the minister for his work on it and conclude my comments.

MR M. HUGHES (Kalamunda) [1.13 pm]: I will make a few comments regarding the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. I will not outline the purposes of this bill. They have been made abundantly clear in the contributions so far. It may not be obvious to members that although the Forest Products Commission can register projects and create carbon credits, the current legislation does not allow the commission to trade in carbon credits at all. That seems to be a bit ridiculous and does not make much sense, importantly, given that we are looking to transition away from a carbon economy. It would make sense that the Forest Products Commission was enabled to in fact just do that. Before I turn to aspects of the bill, I think it is important to re-emphasise the point that has been made across the chamber: that the bill is effectively complementary to the decision of the McGowan government in September last year to end native logging by 2024. That is a position that the opposition is clearly in high dudgeon about and very unhappy about. However, the bill before us today and the decision of the government to end native logging are two measures that need to be viewed as complementary to one another, not separately. I think the Leader of the Opposition's contribution alluded to that fact.

We will not go into the reasons why we need to do this in the face of climate change. Climate change is obvious; we have only to take a trip across to New South Wales or the southern parts of Queensland currently to see the devastating effect that climate change is bringing to this continent. Climate change is one of those things. If we can actually bring together protecting Western Australia's ancient forests and the refocusing of the Forest Products Commission on plantation timber and trading in carbon credits, we can do a number of things: we can tackle climate change and, in fact, create sustainable jobs, not ones that are attached to a traditional industry that over a significant period has proved to be, we will not say inefficient, but not profitable.

Members may be aware of a document published by the Australia Institute, *Barking up the wrong trees: WA's Forest Products Commission (FPC) and the performance of its native forestry*. The member for Roe might like to read this, if he has not already had access to it. One of the observations that it makes is that the native forestry component of the work of the Forest Products Commission has not been profitable for a good number of years; in fact, it benefited from government support—I will not go through the figures, they are on page 1 of the report—to the extent that over the four years prior to the publication of the report, the subsidies, or rather losses, of the native forests division totalled about \$34 million. The lack of profitability in logging can be taken across all those jurisdictions within the commonwealth that are currently involved in native forest logging. A report that was published by the same Australia Institute in February 2020 points to the fact that the industry is being kept afloat by numerous government grants. The Tasmanian forestry industry receives substantial government funding with almost \$1 billion of state and federal grants. This includes the 2005 Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement of \$203 million and the 2012 Tasmanian Forest Agreement worth \$420 million. It is not a profitable activity.

Native forestry is something that, of course, the Leader of the Opposition is emotionally attached to. We do not deny the fact that people who have been involved in this industry for generations are facing a pivotal change in their life experiences and what they thought their future careers might include. Disruptive decisions have been taken by commercial enterprises and governments across history and this is one of them. It is pivotal, a turning point, in the way in which we see the economic value and importance of our native forests. I place that well above holding on to what is an industry in significant decline, and has been for years, without substantial support provided by the state government in the way that the books of the Forest Products Commission have been, can I say, massaged, to a certain extent—if I may use that term without being disrespectful to the Forest Products Commission.

If we concede the fact that native forestry is not profitable and no longer essential, and place its continuing activity against the importance of ensuring the conservation of our remnant native forests, I know what I would put first—that is the conservation of those forests, against what is effectively a dying industry. Conservationists have long argued that continued logging threatens the last strongholds of the unique ecosystems of Western Australia's south west karri and jarrah forests, which support listed threatened species including the western ringtail possum, the quokka, the woylie, the forest red-tailed black-cockatoo and Baudin's black-cockatoo.

I accept that the importance of habitat protection is secondary to the interests that have been enunciated by the opposition in the course of this debate. What is this government doing? We have heard some of this. To ease the transition from native forest logging, and to concentrate the efforts of the Forest Products Commission on renewable and sustainable timber, the McGowan government has committed \$350 million to expand the state's softwood timber plantations. It has also allocated \$50 million for the just transition plan to support workers and communities that are dependent on forestry, the details of which have been recently announced.

Member for Roe, conservationists have praised this move. The WA Forest Alliance has called it “massive”, “historic” and “marvellous”. Notwithstanding this praise, member for Roe, the native forest logging sector is understandably critical of the government’s decision. Sections of the native forest logging sector have expressed fears that entire towns will be wiped off the map. This is to make out that this decision will be something of a catastrophe. That is not the case. For years we have been told that forest protection is in conflict with economic prosperity and employment. That is also not the case. The native forest timber industry essentially is not profitable. Mills had already closed and workers had lost their jobs prior to the decision to end native forest logging. It is an industry that has been in deep decline for years. A well-managed transition to a more sustainable model is overdue. Its time has come. The member for Roe and other opposition members need to get behind it.

Mr P.J. Rundle: The member for Warren–Blackwood will have her say on this.

Mr M. HUGHES: The member for Warren–Blackwood will have her things to say. Whatever the member for Warren–Blackwood has to say about this, the member will have to say. We are talking about something that is much more important to this state. We do not deny that this decision will be disruptive, in that a longstanding traditional south west industry will come to an end. It will come to an end. If the member for Roe wanted to, he could compare the motor vehicle industry in South Australia with what we are talking about here. It is disruptive. He could talk about the circumstances that beset the colliers in Collie and the changes that will result from the way we believe we should go about our business both economically and sustainably. Jobs will go, and new jobs will be created. There is no doubt that people are very upset about this. However, rather than simply looking for the simplistic headline, the member for Roe should be getting behind something that is fundamentally important to this state, and he is not. He is crying in his soup. It might be crocodile tears, actually. I think that if I were to have a discussion with the member for Roe outside this chamber, he would accept as a farmer that he would not be pursuing activity on his farm that was no longer economically viable; he would not.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I don’t accept your comparison.

Mr M. HUGHES: Member for Roe, there will be some job losses.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member for Kalamunda, if you could just address the chair, thank you, rather than inviting interjections.

Mr M. HUGHES: Sorry, Acting Speaker. I am being a bit provocative; I understand that.

There will be some job losses. However, the native forest industry is in terminal decline and has been for many years. What will we do with respect to that? We will pivot and focus on the sustainable nature of our forest assets and our plantation timber. On the flip side of the job losses that will result from ending the logging of native timber, the government will support at least an extra 33 000 hectares of renewable softwood timber to plantations, with an estimated 50 million pine trees to be planted. As a result, some 140 timber industry jobs will be created, and close to—this is an important figure—2 000 existing jobs will be retained. I am pleased, member for Roe, that at long last the conservation value of our forests has been placed above hanging onto an industry that effectively is no longer fit for purpose.

The tragedy of this is that wet sclerophyll forests, like the karri forest, pack extremely high conservation value into the mere 0.75 per cent of Australia’s landmass that they occupy. These forests occupy high rainfall areas across Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. The scientific consensus is that logging is stripping them of their ability to sustain their precarious ecosystems, not just here in Western Australia but across the commonwealth.

Professor Wardell-Johnson of Curtin University has observed that Western Australia’s south west forests provide unique habitat for creatures that have clung on for millions of years. The wettest corner of the far south west includes incredibly important higher rainfall-dependent relict plants and animals that have been left over from Gondwanan times. Ecologically and in terms of biodiversity, the south west forests are globally significant. They should not be overlooked, trivialised or subsumed into an activity that was important to the economy of this state over generations but no longer suits the circumstances that we face as we tackle the issue of conservation, coupled with climate change.

Climate change is a global challenge. It also poses a threat to our forests. The south west of Western Australia is one of the few places in Australia from which we have good documentation of drying and warming since 1970. It is known that climate change and the resulting reduction in rainfall are adversely affecting the capacity of our forests to grow as fast or as big as they used to. They are under increasing pressure.

There is no doubt in my mind—although there is significant doubt in the minds of the member for Roe and the Leader of the Opposition—that the need to protect for posterity those native forests that are currently subject to logging is an important component of this government’s approach to tackling climate change. In the process, the government has set about the means by which it will create new and long-term sustainable jobs for Western Australians in the south west as part of our state’s pathway to a low-carbon economic future. If opposition

members had any sense, they would get behind that strategy and help those persons who are assiduously embracing the romantic notion that these jobs could and should be retained to understand why, as painful as it has to be, this change is so important and necessary.

I will now get to the bill itself. Carbon farming is one of a number of land management practices that result in carbon being removed from the atmosphere and stored in soils and plants. Where these gains can be demonstrated to be permanent, verifiable and additional to business-as-usual, carbon farming can be used to generate saleable carbon credits. Expanding our plantation timber estate, while at the same time preserving our native forests, is an economic opportunity that needs to be embraced. It makes eminent sense in my mind to take up the opportunity that this bill will provide for the Forest Products Commission to trade in carbon credits.

The bill seeks to provide the means to achieve what has been a huge unrealised opportunity that will become available to the FPC primarily with regard to Western Australia's plantation timber estate and the government's plans to increase the state's stock of plantation timbers. As Minister Kelly commented in his second reading speech, sustainably produced Western Australian plantation timber will play a key role in our climate change battle because of its potential to sequester millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. With an estimated 50 million pine trees being planted, the potential is to sequester between 7.9 million and 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M. HUGHES: Expanding our sustainable Australian plantation timber becomes the means by which the state can enter the carbon offsets market, and with it will come the capacity to generate revenue and future carbon jobs for Australians. At the moment, Australian carbon credits are trading at around \$50 a tonne. I will leave members to do the arithmetic on that. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. Protection and management of Western Australia's south west forests for carbon credits and biodiversity have the potential to provide a significant source of employment. That is my view. I will truncate what I had to say.

Globally, we need to do more. Nations across the world and jurisdictions such as ourselves have to do more in the race to meet emission reduction targets. In Australia, the race to meet emission reduction levels set by the Australian government is requiring industries to look very, very carefully at the purchase of Australian carbon credit units. I think up to about December last year, it caused the offset price to jump by about 75 per cent. Currently, prices are at an all-time high. I think the COP26 summit is another reason behind the surge. Most nations fell behind meeting targets so credits have become limited as more and more purchases occurred. For example, in the European Union, carbon prices have soared this year as well, costing in the region of \$70 a tonne. In response, ACCUs are issued, as we know, by the Clean Energy Regulator, which expects to issue 17 million ACCUs this year—an increase from 16 million last year. If our Forest Products Commission participates in this process, we can be part of a global carbon market that is expected to reach \$22 trillion by 2050, which is not surprising overall, if we think about it. Carbon credits will provide an opportunity to offset emissions, improve the environment and spark economic activity, which is why international interest has increased.

In concluding, the bill will unlock the carbon value potential of the FPC-owned and managed plantations. It is important to note that this bill will not restrict the FPC to dealing with carbon that is associated only with softwood pine. As long as forest products are located on land that is owned by the FPC or that the FPC has a relevant right in respect of—that is, the relevant forest products are not native forests located on crown land—this bill will allow the FPC to own, trade and otherwise deal with carbon assets in those forest products regardless of species.

This bill will enable the Forest Products Commission to continue to build and maintain a sustainable and commercially viable forest products industry, and provide economic and social benefits to the people of the south west—despite the doomsayers and naysayers across the aisle—and, as a result, the Western Australian community will benefit as a whole. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking action to address climate change while at the same time ensuring sustainable long-term jobs in the forestry sector. I commend the work of the government and the minister in this regard.

MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands) [1.35 pm]: It is with enormous pleasure and pride that I rise in support of the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the two major challenges facing our world today: climate change and the pandemic. Both are a consequence of human action. The impact of human activity, industry and our way of life on the climate is well documented. The pandemic arose from the transmission of an animal-based virus to a human community, as a human community encroached upon an animal environment.

Addressing these challenges requires concerted local, national and international effort. With the COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to be a cliché of “we are all in this together”, but this cliché is a true statement of reality. We will continue to see the emergence of COVID variants that are more or less transmissible and deadly until the vast majority of the world's population is vaccinated, or until we deal with the impact of people on our environment, because other pandemics will emerge. The distant hope that we will eventually overcome this current pandemic

will not be achieved without the determination of the international community. But I guess that is a story for another day.

Our government's world-class management of the pandemic in this state is delivering a comparatively soft landing in this Omicron outbreak. However, we do not know what other variants may emerge and take hold just as expeditiously and insidiously as Omicron. We hold only the threads of a tiny square of a huge tapestry here. Without worldwide commitment and momentum, we are at the mercy of a virus that literally has a life and trajectory of its own. All we can do here is take every action necessary to ameliorate the effects of the pandemic on our health, community and economy. That is why this government has based its responses on the science, and particularly on the advice of the Chief Health Officer.

The challenge of climate change is much like the challenge of the pandemic. We are caught up in a worldwide phenomenon and all we can do is take every action at our disposal locally to meet this challenge. Just like with COVID-19, whatever actions we take need to follow the science. I am proud to say that this government accepts the science that underpins our understanding of climate change, and we acknowledge that climate change has already impacted significantly on our environment and our economy. Indeed, it is impacting on our health. It is in this context that the McGowan government has made a commitment to transition the Western Australian economy to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This demonstrates leadership. Leadership has been lacking from our federal government; it has hedged its bets every way and failed to deliver leadership in this arena. We just have to look at the palpable impacts of climate change with the extreme weather events evident around the world. Europe and North America have experienced extreme cold and associated snow and ice. In summer in North America, fires have literally obliterated whole towns. I was appalled to see a town in western Canada rapidly wiped out due to intense fire arising from unprecedented heat and dry weather conditions. We have also seen the melting of the poles and the consequence of rising sea levels that is all too evident along our own coastline. I am old enough to have had photographs taken of Cottesloe Beach that show the lovely wide stretches of beach that used to be there. More recent photographs today show a narrowing of that beach front as a consequence of rising sea levels and associated storm surges. Buildings at Port Beach are also under threat because of rising sea levels. The melting of the poles has an enormous consequence for the weather systems in both our hemisphere and the Northern Hemisphere. In eastern Australia, we have seen droughts followed by devastating fires and now record-breaking floods. These events are monumental. We are told that these are one-in-1 000-year floods. These extreme weather events are coming rapidly one after the other. In Western Australia, we have just endured the hottest and most protracted of summers with the consequence of destructive bushfires. Last year, cyclone Seroja came further south and affected areas of the midwest that do not usually experience such intense weather systems. We have also seen the impact of rising sea water temperatures on marine environments, including its massive effect on the growth of seagrasses in Shark Bay.

In WA, the long-term impact of climate change includes devastatingly declining rainfall levels with an impact on water consumption and the vegetation of our state, especially the growth and regrowth of native forests. That is why the initiative to end logging in native forests is so crucial. My good colleague the member for Kalamunda outlined very clearly that our native forests in Australia are experiencing a major impact from climate change. It has impacted the viability of the native forest industry, not only in south-western Australia, but also right across Australia. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change talks about the importance of a sustainable forestry industry as a mechanism for sequestering carbon and seeing a positive impact on climate change, but when it refers to native forests it is not referring to native forests in Western Australia, which have been adversely impacted by declining rainfalls. Our native forest timber industry in south-western Australia is no longer viable. That industry has had a slow death and it is really unfortunate that so many people will be affected and have to make an adjustment. But our government has shown leadership in the face of this challenge by supporting the just transition of those affected.

In the recent state budget, we demonstrated our commitment to act and address our state's contribution to global emissions. We have committed \$750 million to our climate action fund that will drive WA's low-carbon future. This fund contains a suite of measures to shape climate resilient communities, create low-carbon jobs and develop new industries. In my electorate, I have been working with members of our community who have formed a green jobs working group that is focused on supporting local companies to address the jobs of the future, because our response to climate change brings not only job losses in certain industries, but also job creation in others. For example, I am currently working with a group of companies that are seeking to establish a Western Australian manufacturing hub for electric vertical take-off air taxis using existing aircraft design. This would represent an entirely new industry for WA based on well-developed capabilities of local innovators and manufacturers. Recently, I was visited by representatives of a company that has developed a durable engineered wood product using waste that can be used and re-used as form work in concrete construction. This is a great example of how the tough get going when the going gets tough. Climate change impacts adversely on parts of our economy, but it provides us with many new opportunities for doing things smarter and better and managing our scarce resources optimally.

Our government's climate action fund builds on Western Australian climate policy and includes a record \$350 million to significantly expand the state's softwood plantation estate. This investment will create and secure local jobs and ensure a strong and sustainable timber industry in the future. I was really grateful to the member for Kalamunda for so clearly articulating that this investment will not only bring direct jobs into the forestry industry in terms of managing these softwood plantations and their output, but also put us in a strong position to play a part in the carbon economy through the use of carbon credits. Sustainably produced Western Australian plantation timber will play a key role in our climate change battle. Plantation timber is renewable and has the potential to sequester millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It is estimated that the government's \$350 million investment—I note that it is an investment—is not just money that is burned or expended; it is an investment that will provide at least an additional 33 000 hectares of softwood timber plantation, with the planting of up to 50 million pine trees that will sequester between 7.9 million and 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is important. We are doing what we can locally to address climate change with the tools we have available. This is one of those tools.

Sustainable WA plantation timber also has the power to support the state in entering the carbon offset market and generating revenue and future carbon industry jobs for Western Australia. The Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021 will support the state to enter the lucrative offsets market, generating revenue and future carbon industry jobs for Western Australia. I have always been amazed that the federal government under Tony Abbott choose to do away with the system of carbon trading that we were transitioning to. It was a very effective system of pricing carbon, and it did away with it. It presented an enormous economic opportunity for our state and our country. To do away with it was short-term vandalism. Addressing climate change is just as urgent as addressing the pandemic. Our government is applying the same rational principles based on the science and balancing environmental, economic and social considerations. This is why the recent state budget has demonstrated that the time to act on climate change is now. Sorry, I am getting tongue tied.

The Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021 amends the Forest Products Act 2000. The main purpose of the bill is to provide the Forest Products Commission with the ability to own, deal and trade in carbon assets related to plantation resources. It is not just about owning forests for the sake of owning forests. Yes, we have an industry around our forest products, but we also have another industry around carbon credits, which are assets. Carbon assets are things such as carbon credits provided under the commonwealth carbon farming legislation. The bill will assist the government in making the most out of our \$350 million investment to expand the softwood estate. As an established state agency with experience in commercial forestry operations, it is appropriate that the Forest Products Commission is given these functions rather than a larger department or a newly established body. It has the smarts, the knowledge base and the capability to manage in this new environment. Without this bill the Forest Products Commission would have no rights in respect of carbon assets and would be restricted to dealing with physical forest products such as log timber. The state will have the ability to receive revenue from the sale of carbon assets in rapidly evolving markets. In addition to obtaining revenue from traditional forest product sales, this bill empowers the Forest Products Commission to purchase land for the purpose of establishing plantations in order to drive development of this growing state industry.

The bill further contains a number of ancillary provisions, including those allowing the Forest Products Commission to sell land and premises it owns. It amends reporting provisions to provide the Forest Products Commission's new functions. The bill further validates land purchases that the Forest Products Commission made in good faith prior to this bill. I commend the bill to the house. It is an important piece of legislation. It is an important piece of the puzzle for us to address climate change in the most sensible way, using the tools at our disposal. I am very proud to be a part of a government that has shown leadership in this area. I commend the bill to the house.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [1.53 pm]: I rise to make my contribution to the second reading debate on the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. In doing so, I firstly acknowledge the important contribution this amendment bill will make in protecting our environment through its potential to sequester millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. I would also like to acknowledge and recognise the work of those involved in its formation, as well as the tireless efforts of the broader community campaign on forest protection and climate action. I will begin by congratulating the McGowan government and the minister for their commitment to transition the Western Australian economy to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The McGowan government accepts the science that underpins our understanding of climate change, and we acknowledge that climate change has already significantly impacted our environment and community. We only have to look across to the east coast to see the damage and devastation caused by the current floods or to look to our own state and the fires that continue to trouble and plague our communities to really understand that those impacts are here, they are severe and the time to act is not just now, but going forward. Unfortunately, we cannot undo the opportunities that we have had presented to us in the past, but we can certainly do something now. Again, I acknowledge and congratulate this government for taking that action.

That climate change policy sets out the state government's plan for a climate-resilient community and a prosperous low-carbon future. This bill is an important feature of the policy's commitment towards storing carbon and caring for our landscapes alongside clean manufacturing and future industries, transformation of energy generation and

use, lower carbon transport, resilient cities and regions, and government leadership. I, along with my colleagues who have spoken, have already acknowledged the work of the McGowan government since coming to government in 2017. I could go through a list all of the various actions that we have taken to date on climate, but I do not have that much time so I will go back to my notes. Additionally, this government's creation of a dedicated Minister for Climate Action is further evidence of how seriously we take climate matters. In the recent state budget, we demonstrated our commitment to act and address our state's contribution to global emissions. An amount of \$750 million has been committed to our climate action fund, which will drive WA's low-carbon future. Within this fund is a suite of measures to shape climate-resilient communities, create low-carbon jobs and develop new industries.

Again, just referencing a local context, the member before me mentioned that those of us who live in electorates along the waterways, our rivers and our oceans in particular, are very mindful of the immediate and pressing need for this action. The climate action fund builds on the Western Australian climate policy and includes a record \$350 million to significantly expand the state's softwood plantation estate. This investment will also create and secure local jobs and ensure a strong, sustainable timber industry in the future. There are many opportunities within this bill.

I would like to again go back to a local context and take a moment to highlight a long-term, sustainable timber company based right here in Western Australia called Wesbeam, of which I am familiar through Bicton businessman and vice-chairman of the Wesbeam board Alex Bajada. The story of Wesbeam is quite impressive and inspiring, with innovation a core feature. Softwood timber is integral to the product, a product this proudly Western Australian owned and operated business produces. In 1928, Thomas Cullity, the son of Irish immigrants, started Cullity timbers in Perth, Western Australia. It was the beginning of an association between the Cullity name and the timber industry that endures to this day. The Cullity family and a team of investors and industry experts formed Wesbeam in 2001. Three years and \$115 million later, the first billet of Wesbeam laminated veneer lumber rolled off the production line. Today Wesbeam is an Australian-owned, unlisted public company whose board and senior management have over 70 years' experience in the manufacturing and sale of timber and wood panel products. What is it about laminated wood products, specifically laminated veneer lumber, that is so important and so relevant to this debate before us?

We will start with the basics. Laminating is a process of gluing things together. The process of laminating wood typically refers to plastics or other materials laminated to plywood, solid wood or composites. Laminated veneer lumber, or LVL, is an engineered wood construction product. LVL is made of multiple veneer sheets and assembled with waterproof adhesives. It is used in headers, beams, ringboards, truck bed decking, roadways, signposts, tresses and many other applications. LVL is an innovation for the construction field. It is a versatile engineered product and combines the best of modern process technology with the aesthetic beauty of natural wood. The main raw material used to produce laminated veneer lumber is wood veneer of various grades, and it has been used structurally for several years in North America and many European countries, as well as here in Australia. Just one of the benefits of using wood veneers is affordability; it is far more affordable than solid hardwood. There is an endless variety of unique choices, given the very thin use of the wood veneer within the product. It also has enhanced strength and durability. It can have luxurious appeal when used as a feature, but the thing that I want to highlight here is that it is eco-friendly.

Wood veneers help protect the environment; they are manufactured from a single log, whereas more wood is needed for making conventional hardwood items and products. Wood veneer sheets can be easily recycled and can be crushed and transformed into wood fibres and utilised in many and varied ways. Currently, WA business Wesbeam is the only manufacturer of LVL in Australia. Wesbeam's vision and, in fact, slogan is "Building Better Wood". The McGowan government's \$350 million investment in the expansion of the softwood industry is welcome news for Wesbeam and many other wood product-related businesses that rely on continuity of supply.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 977.]