

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — TRANSITION PACKAGE

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to ensuring that communities such as mine have a fair, just and supported transition out of the logging of native forests. Can the minister outline to the house how the state budget will provide further support for these communities in transitioning to new industries and ensuring that they have a vibrant and strong future?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for her question and for her ongoing support on the issue of native forest logging.

Members will be aware that last year we made an announcement to end logging in native forests at the end of 2023 due to the unsustainable nature of the industry and the impacts of climate change. Since then we have announced a \$19.3 million package to assist workers who are directly impacted by that decision and we have workers now applying for assistance under that scheme. Last month, we announced a business support program for businesses that are directly involved in native logging and are going to be impacted by that decision by the end of 2023. It is a very comprehensive package of assistance for those businesses that are directly impacted.

Last week in the state budget, we announced an additional \$30 million for that just transition program. The initial program was \$50 million. After consultation with the member for Warren–Blackwood and the community, we have increased that figure to \$80 million. That additional \$30 million will fund a community and industry development package that will provide assistance to secondary businesses, if you like, that are not direct customers of the Forest Products Commission but may source timber through that industry. It will also provide grants to existing businesses that are not in native forest harvesting but operate in the south west and want to expand and create new jobs, or it may provide assistance to people who want to establish new businesses in the south west. It will also provide assistance to community groups that may want to fund small programs or projects to attract jobs or improve amenity in the south west. It is an \$80 million program—a very significant commitment to ensuring that there is a secure, sustainable future for the communities of the south west.

Not everyone is happy about it. The Leader of the Opposition has been a constant critic of this decision. On 9 May, he was out there accusing us of virtue signalling. In a tweet on 9 May, he said —

This Labor Government is overseeing regional jobs being destroyed ...

A member: Leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry; it was the Leader of the Liberal Party. My apologies for accusing the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Liberal Party said —

This Labor Government is overseeing regional jobs being destroyed as their Forestry Minister wipes away a thriving, sustainable, ethical industry simply to virtue signal.

Leader of the Liberal Party, virtue signalling is when you go out there and say things that you think people want to hear but you are not really sincere about it. On this side of the house, we have made a concrete decision. We have backed it up with \$80 million worth of funding for a just transition package, with \$350 million in plantation funding. What we have said we were going to do, we are doing, and we are backing it up with real money. On the other side of the house, however, members opposite are going out there —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Members are going out there telling the workers and businesses involved in native logging that their industry was sustainable, that their industry was viable and that it is a terrible thing we have done. The challenge to the Leader of the Liberal Party—and the Leader of the Nationals WA for that point of view—is: tell us what you are going to do if you get elected at the next election. Are you going to restart this industry?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr D.J. KELLY: If they are not, they are the ones who are virtue signalling because they are out there saying how terrible our decision is and how this industry is sustainable, but they are not going to back it up. Their insincerity on this decision is overwhelming because they know deep in their hearts that this decision is right. This is absolutely the right decision, and we have made the commitment of \$350 million for plantation forestry and \$80 million for a just transition for those workers and those businesses. Many of those workers will go into better paying jobs, like at the lithium mine in Greenbushes. This is the right decision for the south west. It is the right decision for those

workers. It is time that members opposite came out and said what they will do if they get elected. Are they going to restart native logging in our forests? If they do not say that, they are the ones who are being dishonest.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition with the last question.