

SANDALWOOD HARVEST TENDER

Statement by Minister for Forestry

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Forestry) [9.10 am]: I rise to notify the house that contracts for the future harvesting of wild Western Australian sandalwood are open for tender. This competitive tender process is part of broader sandalwood industry reform and takes into account the recent reduction in Western Australia's annual harvest quota of wild sandalwood. Harvest contracts open for tender are in two components—primary services for larger contractors interested in harvesting more than 250 tonnes of resource per annum, and secondary services for smaller businesses looking to undertake smaller volumes of harvesting.

Briefings are being held this week by the Forest Products Commission for those seeking consideration in the tender process. A briefing in Kalgoorlie on Tuesday was attended by almost 50 people, and another is being held in Perth as I speak. The FPC is very encouraged by the early response to the briefings. Haulage tenders will also open soon following the outcome of a request for proposal process conducted earlier this year seeking respondents for the sales, marketing and processing of wild WA sandalwood.

As a high-value product, wild WA sandalwood continues to be an important component of the state's forestry strategy. The FPC and the Department of Parks and Wildlife have created a pathway towards better protecting the sandalwood resource and improving conservation and management outcomes for our native tree. The FPC is leading a sandalwood industry restructure that will develop social and economic opportunities for regional Western Australians. The restructures have been designed to assist in delivering benefits to our state, particularly those regional and remote communities in proximity to the resource. Encouraging new industry entrants, regional investment and job opportunities is the focus of this restructure.

Separately, investment in science is evolving our agencies' understanding of wild WA sandalwood and the natural relationships that assist its regeneration. Members may have heard of the mechanical woylie that FPC uses in its regeneration program. The machine mimics the sandalwood seed planting behaviour of the locally extinct woylie, which is critical to successful placement and planting depth sandalwood seeds need in order to maximise germination and survival rates. Legislative measures introduced by this government through the Biodiversity Conservation Bill will also vastly improve the legal verification process of tradeable sandalwood, and increase penalties for illegally taking the resource. As Western Australia transitions towards a mixed wild and plantation-based industry, it is important the right steps are taken to sustain sandalwood and the state government is leading the way in this area.