

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — PARKSIDE GROUP

535. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Forestry:

I note the announcement by the Premier last week about ending native logging in the south west. The minister stood shoulder to shoulder with Parkside Group in Nannup in 2019 celebrating its multimillion-dollar investment in the industry. Did the minister notify Parkside of this announcement ahead of last week or was it and its employees blindsided like the rest of the south west?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I am glad that the member has asked me a question about this issue. It is true that there were two mills. A substantial part of the native forest industry was on the verge of disappearing in 2019, and had it not been for Parkside Group purchasing those two mills in 2019, the bulk of the industry would have finished then. When Parkside advised the government—we did not court it—that it would buy those mills and continue those jobs, we naturally welcomed that decision. That was some time ago. We simply know more about the industry than we do now —

Dr D.J. Honey: What more? You're a joke.

Mr D.J. KELLY: If the member for Cottesloe listens, he may learn something. Parkside came to the government in August this year—2021. Parkside gave us a presentation, only a few weeks ago, in which it sought a \$25.8 million grant from the government to ensure that its business was viable. It advised us, and I read from its presentation —

The \$25.8 million grant from the Western Australian Government will make Stage 1 and 2 of the project operationally viable.

That is some expansion plans. It continues —

Without the grant investment, Parkside Group mills will be forced into closure by 31 December 2021.

I do not know what the member for Roe's understanding of the industry is, but Parkside came to the government seeking a \$25 million grant in August this year —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The SPEAKER: I would like the member for Cottesloe not to continuously interject. This question has been asked by the member for Roe, and I will accept minimal interjections from him, but if the member for Cottesloe would like to ask a question on this topic, perhaps ask it separately.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Parkside asked for a \$25 million grant; otherwise, it advised us, its mills would close at the end of this year. That did not drive our decision. Obviously, we do not have \$25 million. We were not going to give them \$25 million, but the science around the yield drove us. But that was Parkside's position to us. Before the member starts talking about Parkside, he should get his facts right. We are building a sustainable forestry industry here in Western Australia. We are committing \$350 million to expand the softwood plantation estate. We point out that when members opposite were in government, they did nothing to support softwood. The Leader of the Opposition last week in private members' business, on 8 September, identified that she gave responsibility of the portfolio to the member for North West Central. Anyone who knows anything about who is competent and who is not would know that for the Leader of the Opposition to give this industry to him is clearly a disaster, but she said —

My colleague the member for North West Central was my parliamentary secretary. He was directly responsible for the portfolio when we were in government ...

The member for North West Central the same day said about the softwood industry —

Anyone knows that it takes at least 25 years to grow a bit of pine. Everyone knows that there is a shortage of pine. Everyone knows that there is a lot of pine over in New South Wales; that is what we were trying to negotiate for when we were in government.

There we are. The previous government for some years did not plant a single tree. It was trying to build jobs in New South Wales, and it did nothing. The Leader of the Opposition is shaking her head. That was a quote from *Hansard* from the person whom the Leader of the Opposition put in charge of the portfolio when she was the Minister for Forestry. He said that the previous government was looking to New South Wales to provide pine to support the construction industry here in Western Australia. We have a coherent plan to build the forestry industry here in Western Australia. The Nationals WA's history in this portfolio is woeful. We will build and secure sustainable jobs for the people of the south west. That is what we intend to do.