

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — TRANSITION PACKAGE

506. Ms E.J. KELSIE to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting the communities of the south west as they move away from the logging of native forests. Can the minister outline to the house how the additional \$30 million allocated in the state budget will help strengthen regional communities like Bridgetown, Greenbushes, Nannup and Manjimup and outline how this investment will support local regional jobs?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for the work she has put in to assist us developing the native forest transition plan.

I am very pleased to advise the house that today we announced the outline of the community and industry transition fund. That is a \$30 million fund to assist businesses transitioning away from native forestry. Members will be aware that since we made the decision in September last year to end native logging, we have announced a package to assist workers affected by that decision. We have also announced a package to assist the mills and harvest and haulage contractors who are directly impacted by that decision. We announced today the third part of our transition package—that is, a \$30 million fund to assist the broader community and industry in the south west to develop new opportunities as we move towards the end of logging of native forests. That \$30 million fund has three components. There is a \$15 million small business development and diversification program that provides grants of up to \$400 000 for small businesses that were impacted by the decision but who were not direct customers of the Forest Products Commission. These secondary businesses may have relied on the native forest logging industry, but not been direct customers. They may have been furniture manufacturers or they may have been providing services to the sawmills. Small businesses that demonstrate a direct impact will be able to seek grants of up to \$400 000 to either expand or pivot their businesses to enable them to continue to employ existing staff or employ additional workers in their businesses.

The second part of the fund is a \$5 million community development small grants program. This fund will provide grants of up to \$100 000. It could be for community groups or it could be for local governments that want to run small projects to increase the liveability or amenity of the community as we transition away from native logging.

The final component is a \$10 million new industry development and attraction fund. This will provide grants of up to \$2 million. This fund will require matching funds from proponents who want to establish new enterprises or significantly increase the capacity of existing businesses, particularly around Bridgetown, Greenbushes, Nannup and Manjimup. A particular focus for all these grants is that the programs should either support existing jobs or attract new employment into the industry.

Members, I am really pleased by the feedback that I am getting on this decision. A lot of people agree with us that the future economic wellbeing of the south west of Western Australia relies in large part on building on the natural assets and natural beauty of the region, and the native forests are a substantial part of that. Many businesses tell us that they are very excited about the decision that we have made to preserve our native forest and the substantial investment that we are providing to new and existing businesses that want to grow their existing business or establish new businesses. We really encourage that transition away from native logging.

I want to thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for the work that she has done, I want to thank the members of the native forest transition group who have worked on this package, and I look forward to seeing the region reap the benefits into the future.

The SPEAKER: The member for Vasse with the last question.