

SOUTH WEST FORESTS — ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Motion

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [10.07 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house recognises —

- (a) the important role and enormous potential of our south west forests to increase economic opportunities and job creation in —
 - (i) the production of bees for export and the collection of pure honey; and
 - (ii) the development of tourism activities, events, and businesses; and
- (b) the economic opportunities and job creation potential through the expansion and development of plantation forestry in the south west.

We in this house often speak of the regions and our desire for and interest in getting people to move to the regions because the regions need people. There is space and plenty of opportunities are out there, but people in the regions need to have an income. An income can be derived from producing or selling goods and services, and what I would like to show today is that those goods and services can be derived from healthy, resilient forests.

The first part of the motion refers to honey. Honey has been very topical, and I do not just mean as the flavour of the month! Jarrah honey has proven anti-bacterial, anti-microbial and anti-fungal properties. It is comparable with, or possibly better than, manuka honey. There is huge potential to collect more jarrah honey and sell it overseas to fulfil people's need for pure honey. I note the recent scandal about adulterated honey, but Western Australia had a clean bill of health. It was shown to be producing no adulterated honey, unlike many other states, such as New South Wales, where 50 per cent of samples turned out to be adulterated. We would like to keep it that way by providing opportunities for increasing the amount of honey collected in the south west. It is estimated by the Bee Industry Council of Western Australia that the current value of honey and associated products in Western Australia is \$30 million to \$50 million per annum. By comparison, the recent Forest Products Commission annual report, tabled last Tuesday, shows that the revenue generated by the harvest and sale of all our native hardwoods was \$34 million. Compare that with the \$30 million to \$50 million worth of honey that we currently gather and the potential of what we could be doing. After expenses, the \$34 million that was received from the sale of our native hardwoods provided \$350 000 for the state. In other words, it cost the state 99c for every dollar it raised.

A study was done by John Karasinski of the department of mineral and energy economics at the WA School of Mines at Curtin University. He did this study because he was seeing, over and over again, the figure of \$4 billion as the value of the honey industry across Australia. When he did some research, it turned out that the data had been collected, without that much scientific rigour, in 1989. The same figure was coming back repeatedly. He looked into it further and did an in-depth study looking at the pollination services delivered by bees, taking into account native bees, feral bees and other insects that might do this pollination. He looked at the different crops that we produce that might be bee-pollinated. He worked out that, across Australia, the value to the industry is \$14 billion. One thing his research showed me was that in China there is a particular area where they do not like having bees, and they have been basically exterminated from the area. Every year, 30 000 people come in to pollinate the apple trees, using little feather dusters. That seems crazy to me. We do not have that kind of thing; we have bees. I want to manage the health of our bee industry so that we will never have to go to such extremes. The value across Australia is \$14 billion, and just in Western Australia it is \$1.2 billion. That is the value of the pollination services delivered by the managed beehives.

There are over 1 000 beekeepers in Western Australia, and probably many more. Of those, 225 are registered commercial beekeepers, who would not uncommonly have 50 or more hives. There are at least 1 000 beekeepers, plus another 500 people currently employed in the industry, and this industry is expanding. As the varroa destructor mite spreads across the world, our bees and our honey become even more important. The industry has been growing in the past few years, but the pressure on it to grow even further means that we need to provide for expansion. We need to work with the beekeepers of Western Australia. Bees are not always out pollinating farmers' crops. They also need a place over the winter that is near water and has some available food so that they do not starve in the winter. Our forests have been able to provide that for many years. I have a map of a small part of the forest, with all the pinpointed red dots showing where the beehives are kept. It is quite impressive, because it fills a lot of the available forest, and we are now finding areas that are not available. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has to approve the beehives in the forest, and there are more and more restrictions on where they can go, such as in areas where there is human habitation or where logging is about to

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take place. Not only do prescribed burns and wildfires stop trees from producing flowers for up to five years, in the case of marri trees, but also the smoke from those fires, if they occur at a time when the trees are about to flower, renders them useless for honey. We need to work with the industry, the DBCA and the FPC to make sure that we have as many opportunities as possible for the bees to collect their honey. We are looking at \$30 million to \$50 million presently, but just imagine what we could do if we could double that by setting aside more areas for bees, such as in the high conservation value areas. There is plenty of room there; we just have to free it up so that we can get more bees in there.

We know that the world is experiencing a serious decline in bee health. There have been two scares in the eastern states already, and there is concern that it may have already entered Australia. It may be just a matter of time before the varroa mite gets across to Western Australia. Managed hives afford some control, because somebody is looking after them, checking for problems, and they can control the mite with different chemicals. However, our feral bees, and also our native bees, of which there are 1 500 species in Australia—I was quite surprised to hear that—may have no protection against this mite coming in. We need to be very aware of how important it is to keep that mite out and to protect the hives we have, should it get in. One benefit of Australia not having the varroa mite is that Canada needed to import bees. I am not sure whether anybody has heard this, but in 2014–15, Australia actually exported 40 million bees to Canada. Canada still imports a few, although not in those numbers, but what a potential industry. We are back into live animal exports—this time bees. It is very interesting that other countries are looking at that as something that they need to do, because they are having such a problem with the bee decline in their own countries, and they need the pollination services.

I will now go on to tourism. Tasmania seems to be a few steps ahead of us on this. It is interesting to note that Tasmania currently has more than \$1 billion earmarked for investment in hotel developments, with a series of new projects expected to add more than 4 000 additional rooms to the state. That was in an ABC news item on 27 April. This was updated in another ABC news item on 4 September, which stated —

The Government says the state's national parks support the businesses of 200 nature-based tourism operators, and it is investing more than \$65 million in the management of the state's parks and reserves to protect wilderness assets and provide opportunities for people to engage with natural areas.

The item goes on to state that close to half of all visitors to the state say that they came specifically to see the parks and reserves. It continues —

New figures released by the Parks and Wildlife Service show overall visitation increased by 7 per cent in 2017–18 ...

Nature-based tourism is increasing across the country, and in Western Australia the south west is probably the second most visited area after the Perth metropolitan area. The region generated \$1.5 billion from tourism in 2016, which was up by 27 per cent from the previous year. In fact, three million tourists spent 12 million nights in the region in 2016 and the campsites in the national parks are often fully occupied in holiday periods. There is an increasing demand, the south west being a clean, green area, by people looking for nature and that forest experience. A tourism fact sheet for the south west indicates that 70 per cent of our international tourists to the south west are visiting national parks as one of their activities. Seventy per cent of our international tourists are heading for the forest in the south west, and their average length of stay in the south west is nearly two weeks. This is just another huge area to tap into.

At this point, I want to mention that, after I had prepared what I was going to say, I looked at my emails this morning, as I suspect we all do, and it was interesting to note that the Bankwest–Curtin Economics Centre, a research group that puts out papers quite regularly throughout the year, had just announced the launch of its report “Australia's South West for Asian Markets: Promoting tourism product development”. If anyone is interested in the south west, forests or tourism, I advise them to get hold of that report. It does not come out until later in the month, but I am looking forward to seeing it.

I should also mention another email that came through this morning from the Tourism and Transport Forum—its weekly communication. The CEO had this to say —

Last week the National Visitor Survey showed a clear trend towards activities that involve the great outdoors and national parks, with holidays that include ... bushwalking increasing to 14 per cent.

...

With a clear interest from punters to get out and explore the outdoors, we should start the conversation again about how we best create visitor infrastructure that also supports and maintains our beautiful parks.

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Of course, alongside that are the individual investors who are ready and prepared to get out there and start opening up tourism businesses. We have to work together, through the Tourism Council of WA, development commissions and the tourism bodies in the area, to get more people out there.

The number of Western Australian residents travelling as visitors in the south west increased by 4.4 per cent from 2016–17, with sightseeing listed as one of their top five activities. The other thing we have down there, which I hope those who have bikes have had the chance to travel along, is the 1 000-kilometre Bibbulmun Track, and the 1 000-kilometre Munda Biddi Trail. Both those tracks wind their way through the forests of the south west. The more people we can get out there, the more health benefits and ecotourism opportunities to engage with in the towns they pass through there will be, leading to more and more opportunities. A number of shires down there have been trying to jump on to this by having connecting mountain bike tracks in their areas to draw people from the Munda Biddi Trail to stay a little longer in each of the communities. Plenty of opportunity exists to develop ecotourism throughout the south west. A lot of that is listed in “Forests for Life”, which I would like to table because it has some very interesting comments about how we can develop tourism.

Leave granted. [See paper 2041.]

Hon DIANE EVERS: The south west region generated over \$1.5 billion in 2016—an increase of 27 per cent on the year prior. Tourism is increasing, and I do not want to hold it back. I want to make sure that we have in our minds the many opportunities down there, and when we can, we should to try to encourage people to get down there and make use of the existing businesses. That will lead to more businesses starting up, and people can move down there and do their own thing.

It is interesting to note that times have been changing with the availability of the internet. At the moment, good connections are a bit erratic, but they are coming. The speeds and reliability are increasing, and the benefit of good connections down there means people can open and operate businesses and directly attract customers from overseas. No longer do businesses have to go through a middleman to get people to come to their places; they can go directly to their customers, making it much easier for people to find out about their businesses and book a room or tour, or just come down and see the forest.

The last part of this motion relates to plantations—farm forestry. The “Socio-economic impacts of the forest industry” paper was tabled earlier this year. It was written in 2017 by Forest and Wood Products Australia, and page 20 shows that the number of people employed in the softwood plantation industry is 863; there are 743 in the hardwood plantation industry. This is at a time when our plantations are not sufficient to meet the expected demand for timber. We have been sorely lacking in getting more pine plantations put in place, and there are many reasons for that. The South West Agroforestry Network works with pine and native hardwoods. Its website home page states —

The South West Agroforestry Network supports the growing of trees and forests for the many benefits sought by landowners. Benefits include soil and water protection, wildlife habitat, timber and other tree products, carbon storage and aesthetics.

I spent a day with the South West Agroforestry Network—I have met with it a couple of times—and it sees a very strong future for plantations. It recognises that they are a long-term plan and that they add value to the landscape and need little input to keep them going. Plantations have a lot of positives. I digress to talk about the experience with blue gums. When I arrived in WA in the early 1990s, blue gums were just beginning—there had been a few trial plots—and over the next 10 years about 180 000 hectares were planted throughout the south coast region. While that was happening, we had tax incentives, so a lot of people got into it purely to make a profit on these managed schemes, which highly inflated the expected revenue generated by them. But the important thing is that 180 000 hectares were found to do this. So there is land out there that can be used for plantations, but we of course need to make sure that there is a good return for the landowner. That is what we are lacking right now.

Firstly, the blue gums were just planted everywhere; they did not look at how much rainfall was in the area or how far they would need to be transported. A lot of mistakes were made in this drive to return dollars to people who lived over east or overseas, and it had really nothing to do with the landscape, WA or the future export of timber. We need to make sure that plantations are in the proper place for the amount of rainfall they need and the watertable. They need to be within, say, 100 to 150 kilometres of a mill; otherwise, the transport cost is way too high, and we do not want them to take land away from good crop-growing land. It can be a bit tricky, but there is land out there and we need to address this.

I heard the other day that about 10 or 20 years ago we had over 50 mills; we are now down to about three. I understand the financial side of it—the economies of scale and that—but the other thing that we are not looking at is that a lot more timber can be obtained from a log by smaller mills that are looking at the timber visually to try to extract as much as they can. Just the other day I was talking to a man who owned a mill in Walpole; he said that

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he used to get a 50 to 60 per cent recovery rate from his jarrah logs. They were not the best ones; they were just the ones he would collect off people who were clearing. Mills are now getting more like a 27 per cent recovery rate, which is just abysmal for those beautiful trees that every WA resident values so highly.

We need to fix the current situation with pine. The Forest Products Commission is paying growers around \$80 a tonne, whereas in the eastern states and for export out of Australia, the price is well over \$100 a tonne. The current process keeps the price artificially low. That needs to be addressed so that farmers can get a good return and have an incentive to get involved in the timber industry and start growing more plantations for softwood and native hardwoods. Plantations and farm forestry account for more than 83 per cent of the Australian wood supply.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [10.28 am]: I was going to be polite and let the minister go next, but I will jump in.

I thank Hon Diane Evers for moving her motion. For the most part it is a quite reasonable motion, but the opposition is of course here to help and make things better. In that regard, I suggest that next time around the member might make a minor adjustment. I think this motion reads quite well. It reads —

That this house recognises —

- (a) the important role and enormous potential of our south west forests to increase economic opportunities and job creation in —
 - (i) the production of bees for export and the collection of pure honey; and

That is good.

- (ii) the development of tourism activities, events, and businesses; and

That is also good; I would then add, as a third subparagraph, “the production of timber and timber products”. I think we should add those three together and then move on to —

- (b) the economic opportunities and job creation potential through the expansion and development of plantation forestry in the south west.

I suggest to Hon Diane Evers that we would then have something approaching the perfect motion. I would simply add subparagraph (iii) to ensure that we have covered all those issues that we might want to address. I think that would be a great motion for us to debate. Perhaps we need a bit more time to make sure that that occurs. I thank the honourable member for her contribution. I note that the honourable member referred to the Tasmanian experience in particular. Although I do not want to talk about the economic drag of that southern Australian state, I recognise that Tasmania has done some very interesting things in tourism and it has largely led the way in tourism promotion, particularly environmental tourism. We have to congratulate Tasmania on its environmental tourism and its food and agricultural tourism. It has done a remarkably good job. I have done the treetop walk in Tasmania and I think it is a really great experience, looking over the river and watching the forest. Tasmania has done a remarkably good job and I think it is to be congratulated for that.

My issue with this motion is that the Greens, as they tend to do, have put things in mutually exclusive roles. Environmental tourism is good, and I agree. Plantation forestry, properly and sensitively managed, is good, and I agree. Those things do not happen in mutually exclusive zones. We do not have to end the timber industry for those things to occur. I appreciate the honourable mover of the motion discussing the significant advances that Tasmania has made. I think the year that the honourable member used was 2016, when there was a significant increase in the value of ecotourism in Tasmania. I agree with that. Tasmania has done a wonderful job. It might interest members of the house to know that at the same time in 2016, Tasmanian timber products and production went up by 20 per cent. If we take that as the basis of the conversation—that is, that we do not need to exclude and decimate the timber industry to have ecotourism and environmental and agricultural tourism happening at the same time—I think we can find a reasonably good point of agreement.

The timber industry is in a state of flux. The timber industry has struggled to find its long-term sustainable path. I think that we and governments of all persuasions have not necessarily had the best interests of the timber industry at heart. The timber industry can peaceably coexist with tourism and agriculture, but we have to find a sustainable path for it. I was there during the marches in the early 2000s. We marched for the timber industry during the debates about the old-growth forest policies from 1998 to 2001. The proposals by the federal government to change the regional forest agreements back in 1998 and 1999 effectively resulted in no change. The government at the time did not recognise that a sustainable point in the forest industry had to be reached. As I tend to do, I alienated some of my federal Liberal colleagues and the federal minister at the time by saying that moving from a jarrah harvest, for example, of 420 000 cubic metres to 380 000 or 390 000 cubic metres, or 410 000 cubic metres down to perhaps

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300 000 cubic metres was nonsense when the sustainable level of timber harvest at that point was about 200 000 cubic metres. The current harvest of jarrah in Western Australia is sitting at about 130 000-odd cubic metres.

Right at the moment we have a problem, because every time a conservation movement campaigns to lock up another forest, the demand on the remaining bit of forest increases to the point at which, ultimately, we can never harvest any mature timber. While that campaign goes on, of course, the timber industry will struggle to find sustainability. Honourable members, we need to maintain a maximum area of harvest and harvest it minimally to manage the impact. We can do that whilst maintaining vibrant bee, tourism and agricultural industries. All those things can exist concurrently if we can find a long-term sustainable harvest and end the coupe-by-coupe argument and fight that occurs every time the timber industry tries to move. That will never go away. Anyone who lives next to a coupe does not want their coupe harvested. I understand the “not in my backyard” component of this, but we have to be a bit smarter than that. We have to say that we can have a timber industry that can peacefully coexist—and it can, if it is left to go forward.

Some comments have been made about the economics of the timber industry. Let me say this: although there is always a campaign to undermine the timber industry, the economics of the timber industry will always be tough. It is true that the timber industry in Western Australia is not a big industry. The timber industry in Tasmania is a \$600 million or \$700 million industry in Australia today. That is 20 times the size of the timber industry in Western Australia. We are a small timber industry state. We do not have huge amounts of forest. I make this point every time I talk about the timber industry. Where timber was valued as a product and an asset, guess what—today we have a timber industry. In the south west land division where forests were deemed to be of value, despite the fact that various governments overharvested those forests for many years—I am happy to talk the numbers with anybody who wants to—the timber industry still exists, because timber was given a value and the timber industry saved forests. Where the timber did not have a value, throughout most of the wheatbelt, we put heavy chains between two bulldozers, pulled down all those trees, put them in piles, and burnt them. A lot of those wheatbelt shires have two to three per cent native vegetation remaining because the timber industry did not exist. Where the timber industry existed in a heavy way, the forests still exist. For example, Nannup is 87 per cent state forest. Manjimup is 80-odd per cent state forest. Donnybrook–Balingup is 60 per cent state forest. Augusta–Margaret River has state forest. In the south west land division, I do not remember the number for Collie. Somebody might remember it. Where we have an active and vibrant timber industry, we have forests today, because it had a value.

We do not necessarily need to continue to harvest at an unsustainable level. We need to find that sustainable number and ensure that that is our target. Whilst the conservation groups, the Greens and other areas keep trying to remove, coupe by coupe, the amount of timber that is available to harvest, we increase the pressure. We will reduce that sustainable harvest number by too much. The Greens movement agenda is to end the timber industry. To say that they will transfer that to plantation timber, particularly in valuable hardwoods, is a nonsense. Honourable members, look around the chamber and look at the timber that sits here. We are not surrounded by imported or plantation pine hardwood. Look at this magnificent chamber. People walk in here and go, “This is fantastic”. We are not looking at pine or plantation timber. The timber in the south west has a value. It can be harvested sustainably if we are smart enough to put a sustainable number on there and support that industry. To do anything else and to suggest that it cannot coexist with all those other industries is a nonsense. I hope that next time the member gives us a different motion.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [10.38 am]: The voice of reason. It was very, very good to hear Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I commend the member for talking about, and having that passion for, the south west. But I think the secret of the south west and the thing that makes it a special part of our state, Australia and the world is its diversity. I will not talk too much about the timber products. Hon Dr Steve Thomas mentioned that very well, and I support his comments. The south west is fantastic because of that diversity. We have a food bowl with truffles, vegetables, fruit, wine, orange juice and dairy farms producing milk and cheese, and fantastic microbreweries. The wine is world class. Areas are developing in Mt Barker, and other parts of the great southern are also earning a reputation around the world. It has never been the case that one thing will sustain that area.

There are many regional areas in the south west. There are big towns. The people in these towns need jobs; they need employment. Places such as Kemerton Industrial Park need more manufacturing, and we need more opportunities for the towns of Bunbury, Albany and even Mandurah because they are big centres in the south west that have a lot of people, and those people need employment. Employment is average in some of those areas. We are looking for diversity. People do not understand that the south west is nearly equal to the goldfields in mining. There are lithium, gold, tin and alumina mines in the south west. You name it; we have a big variety. They can all coexist with the agricultural industry, the dairy industry, the forestry industry and the tourism industry. I agree that we have to have a sustainable approach and it has to be done well. Diversity is the answer for us down there.

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When I look at tourism, as Hon Diane Evers mentioned, the reason the south west is second to Perth is because of that diversity. Environmental tourism is a good thing, and I support it 100 per cent. But we should not forget about the wonderful forests. People do not just go to the south west to look at big trees; they want to see the habitat of people and how people live in the forests. The timber industry is part of that. It has a very proud history but at times it is a very sad industry. I admit that mistakes were made in the past, as members have mentioned. We are looking for that sustainability.

The south west has the best beaches. We do not get better beaches in the world than the ones we see along the coastline from Denmark to Walpole. Of course, the area from Margaret River to Yallingup is famous for its surf and beaches.

The south west is a special area. I support the comments of Hon Diane Evers when she said that the building industry and the bee industry can exist in the forests along with the timber industry and all the other industries. At the moment we are under threat down there with a big argument over water. The food bowl of the south west is important. We have shown the French how to grow truffles and we are doing it better than them and we are exporting more than them. There is so much more to the south west than just environmental tourism. I support the member in those two industries. We are supportive of those two industries. They can coexist with other industries.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [10.43 am]: I rise to emphatically support the motion moved by my colleague Hon Diane Evers. The reason for that is very simple. Business as usual in the forestry industry within this state is simply not an option. There are some very key core concerns about the management of our native forests within the state: for starters, the lack of conservation targets in the “Forest management plan 2014–2023”, the lack of conservation targets in the regional nature conservation plans, the desperate need for the high-value conservation reserves to be reviewed and the concerns about the lack of staff even being available to undertake those reviews. We know that the industry as a whole is not meeting the economic and social needs of the communities that rely on the industry.

This is not an argument about whether we need and want to have wood as a resource. Clearly, we want wood as a resource; it is one of the resources that we most require. But quite simply, there is a much better way to get it than chopping down our native forests for what are proving to be largely trivial issues. I remind members that currently only 10 per cent of jarrah logs and 11.5 per cent of karri logs become sawn timber; otherwise, they simply become charcoal logs, sawmill residue or firewood logs. This is absolutely not the best way to use our native forests. We will need to move away from destroying our native forests. We have to make a move to go into truly sustainable plantation and farm timbers. We know that the forests are already under considerable stress. We know that we have already lost far too much of our old-growth native forests. We are not even talking about the needs of habitat and what it means to have forests that have existed for several centuries and how critical that is. We are not even talking about the impact that climate change is having on an already stressed ecosystem. We know that what we have left will need to be managed far better than how we are managing it at the moment.

I think a big question needs to be asked about what we are currently getting out of native logging. A recent study of the socioeconomic impacts of the forest industry clearly demonstrated that the number of jobs in primary production—that is, growing trees, managing forests, harvesting and haulage, and primary processing, and we are talking about milling logs and making sawmill residue—has shrunk substantially over the last 10 years, but at the same time the number of jobs in hardwood plantation timber has grown. As of August 2016, it was estimated that native timber, primary production and processing accounts for about 508 direct jobs and a total of 898 jobs, including flow-on jobs and employment multipliers. Less than one-quarter of current forestry jobs are in the native timber industry. I want to remind members that when we are talking about these jobs, we are talking about real people and real families who have lives and who live in communities. They deserve to have some sort of stability about what the future holds. It is essential that anything that we propose in this space supports the ongoing employment of these people as well as the health of the communities as a whole. These are the sorts of opportunities that the honourable member who has proposed this motion is well and truly turning her mind to. We want to see these south west towns in particular be strong. We want them to be growing communities that are able to offer a wide range of job opportunities, and also job opportunities for younger people, because we are seeing an exodus from the south west because of the lack of opportunities.

Native timber processing almost entirely takes place in the south west. Additionally, the south west has a substantial number of plantations, particularly in areas around Albany, Esperance and the wheatbelt, which are almost entirely plantation timber. However, other than jobs, the native timber industry is not considered to be a driver of what makes the south west a great place to live. In fact, fewer than 25 per cent of residents felt that the forestry industry had a positive impact on a wide range of community liveability markers. The majority of residents felt that the industry had negative impacts on both roads and landscape aesthetics. Interestingly, as well, residents in communities with a high dependence, which is considered to be greater than two per cent of employment,

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believe that the forest industry has fewer positive effects than farming and tourism. This comes from residents of the south west themselves.

Multiple annual reports of the Forest Products Commission make it clear that it is trying to find uses for lower quality logs. Stakeholders in the industry have told me that this is because we have overharvested and that the proportion of low quality logs is increasing. The native timber industry is running at a loss. It is not a genuinely sustainable industry. The native timber industry in particular is also finding it difficult to source employees. This is partially due to uncertainty about the future of the industry because mills are continuing to close or choosing to consolidate. The Forest Products Commission reported that it spent \$94 million in regional WA last year. I want members to imagine the possibilities if a proportion of the money that was spent on native forest logging and contracts was spent on helping those communities grow their tourism and agricultural businesses instead.

There are genuine opportunities for these communities. We have seen communities recover from mill closures and become tourism-based towns. For example, previously I worked with the Jarrahdale community while it was fighting as very much a united voice to protect its young native forest tourism industries from proposed harvesting close to the town site. The value of these regrowth native forests as sites for tourism activities was recognised by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs of the time, and the coupes closest to the town were subsequently removed from consideration for logging.

I note that communities that have traditionally had a high proportion of the population engaged in native forestry, such as Nannup, have been positioning themselves to take advantage of tourism opportunities for the last several years. Examples of the kinds of things that communities such as Nannup are looking at include adventure tourism, with hiking and mountain biking, whether that be on the Bibbulmun Track, the Munda Biddi Trail or local tracks and trails. They are also looking at recreational tourism, and food and wine tourism, including genuine honey, which has been specifically mentioned today. They are also increasingly having seasonal festivals that celebrate the unique flora of the area and the heritage and culture of that town. Taking advantage of our native forests in this way, as opposed to logging, is not a particularly new idea. They are now trying to trade on the unique combination of the heritage charm of these towns and the innovative small business ideas that will utilise the forests in a different way. Frankly, it is practical commonsense that provides more opportunities for communities that are located in our native forests, and it helps those towns to also retain their populations and, in fact, to grow as well.

There are opportunities to grow tourism of all kinds and there is an appetite for clean, green tourism and also for gourmet destinations within this state. There is every reason to support our communities to take advantage of our unique natural heritage to diversify and grow for not only our benefit, but also the benefit of future generations. I also remain concerned about those workers' families in communities that are effectively stuck in an industry that is becoming increasingly unviable and in which the social licence to operate is ever diminishing. We need to look at transition arrangements now.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment) [10.53 am]: It is my pleasure to rise this morning on behalf of the government to make a few comments on Hon Diane Evers' motion. I say from the outset that it is a good motion. We have no issue with any of the things in it and, as it traverses a number of portfolios—forestry, tourism, agriculture and food, environment, and sport and recreation—I may well make a contribution on behalf of a number of ministers to advise the house of some of the things that are happening across the board in the south west forests.

As the member knows, I was down in her electorate on the weekend, albeit it was the Great Southern. It is a very beautiful part of the world. It was in a private capacity, member; hence, he was not given notification. I wanted to say that before he intervened.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I wasn't going to say a word.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It was just in case.

The McGowan government recognises the tremendous value of the south west and the south west forests in particular. They provide enormous economic, environmental and recreational opportunities for a diverse range of regional industries. Multiple-use state forests offer benefits for all forest users and provide a diverse range of jobs in and value to regional areas in the state. Activities such as apiaries and tourism can and already do exist alongside other regional industries that create jobs and contribute to economic growth, such as mining and forestry. The "Forest management plan 2014–2023" will ensure that multiple forest activities can and, indeed, do occur alongside each other in our forests.

The FMP seeks to develop and maintain recreation and tourism opportunities and experiences alongside other forest uses, such as timber production, as Hon Steve Thomas mentioned in his contribution. But honey and related products are already successfully produced in native forest areas covered by the FMP. There is a system of designated apiarist sites registered with my department, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and

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Attractions, which ensures that apiarists are notified of any activities to ensure that there is minimal impact on production. Activities such as the thinning of forests ensure healthy and productive forests for generations to come.

From a science perspective, I acknowledge the work that is happening there. The state government is supporting the growth of the Western Australian honey industry through its involvement in the Cooperative Research Centre for Honey Bee Products. The ChemCentre was a founding partner in the CRCHBP and is working alongside the industry and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to conduct cutting-edge research that will support the development of Western Australia's unique monofloral honeys. The ChemCentre is developing certification processes to ensure the integrity, traceability and quality of WA monofloral honeys from hive to market and is helping to drive market expansion with exports, in particular to South-East Asia. That work is probably timely, given the stories in the media in the past few weeks about "fake" honey. Honey was badged as being Australian—not Western Australian—but when tests were done it was found that a significant proportion of it was in fact from somewhere else. I think that this work is very valuable. That research is supported by over \$2.4 million worth of funding through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. From my own perspective and portfolio, I make the point that old-growth forests in the south west are protected from timber harvesting, with around 334 000 hectares in formal and informal reserves. We know that Western Australian honey is among the best in the world, so our jarrah forests in particular support this honey production. As I alluded to earlier, about 1 500 authorised apiary sites in our south west forests are administered by my department.

We also develop, manage and support a wide range of tourism attractions and assets in our south west forests. I am on record in this place previously as being a supporter of the expansion of the conservation estate in Western Australia, but I do not want to just see us creating more new national parks. I want us to create them, but also get people to use them, get into them, enjoy them and experience them, because they are tremendous. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions—Hon Dr Steve Thomas's favourite name—is supporting a wide range of tourism attractions and assets in our south west forests. We are creating new campgrounds and expanding campgrounds in those forests. We are creating mountain bike trails and walk trails in those forests to get people there so that they can experience them. Obviously, there are issues with dieback in some of our forests in the south west, but by building trails in those parks we can hopefully keep people on track, on the trails, and not off the beaten track and spreading dieback.

Certainly, there are multiple benefits associated with having these trails in our parks. Obviously, we have world-renowned walk trails in this state, including the Munda Biddi trail and the Bibbulmun Track. We are also committed to working with the community and the local industry to expand Wellington National Park. Members in this place will know, having heard me speak on this previously, that we made an election commitment last year about the expansion of Wellington National Park. It is being worked on at the moment. The expansion of that park will certainly provide conservation benefits and increase tourism opportunities in and around the park and the Shire of Collie. As part of our rollout of our Aboriginal ranger program, we are also working to get Aboriginal rangers on the ground in those parks, creating further opportunities. I know from talking to the Minister for Tourism that when people come to Western Australia and go to our parks, they like to engage with Aboriginal people. It is a nicer and more authentic experience so, as part of our Aboriginal ranger program, 12 ranger positions in the first round have been created in the south west, who will work in and around our forests in the south west. We are creating not only jobs for Aboriginal people but also potential tourism opportunities and opportunities for tourists who come to this state to interact with Aboriginal people and to hear about their culture.

In that first round of funding, the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council was successful with its project of training 12 rangers to be employed in conservation and land management across our south west. As an agency, we are very keen to be working with the bee industry. As we know, Western Australian honey is among the best in the world and as a government we support the industry, which is notable for the absence of bee diseases. Unlike some other states and, indeed, other countries, our bees have not been affected by those diseases that have wiped out populations elsewhere. Because of the absence of bee diseases, as a state, we export bees to other countries each year. Jarrah honey has one of the highest levels of antimicrobial activity of any honey, similar to manuka honey from New Zealand. Our jarrah forest supports this honey production and, as I said, there are plenty of sites in our forest. While I am on the bee industry, Madam President, and while you are in the chair today I want to acknowledge the fact that, under the leadership of you and the Speaker, Parliament held a World Bee Day event to note the importance of bees. We have all collectively been part of the acknowledgement that we need bees to exist. Certainly in the south west forest in particular, we are working hard to make sure there are other opportunities to grow the industry.

I am told that from an agriculture and food perspective, the industry we have in Western Australia benefits from the flavours and potential medicinal qualities of jarrah and marri honey, which, as I said, rivals the honey we do not want to talk about from New Zealand. We certainly think ours is better. The local industry aims to double honey production from two million to four million kilograms within three years, increasing the value from about

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\$10 million to \$25 million. I am told that WA has some of the best bees in the world, with hive weights at around 91 kilograms. In comparison, the average weight in New South Wales is 49.7 kilograms and in Europe it is between five and 10 kilograms. The production here is better than it is elsewhere. Statistics on the apiculture sector from the 2017 Agrifood, Fibre, Fisheries and Forest Industries report which gives 2015–16 statistics as reported from the previous year's Australian Bureau of Statistics or Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences data says that about \$11 million of product was produced by the WA apiculture industry in honey, live bees and beeswax. A total of \$4.9 million of honey and bee products was exported, so around 45 per cent of the total production was exported overseas. This comprised \$3.5 million worth of honey, which is 71 per cent of that total, and about \$0.8 million, or 17 per cent of the money, on live bees, and about \$600 000, or 12 per cent, on beeswax. We are also told that most honey exports went to the Philippines and mainland China, with the majority of live bees being exported to Canada. The export value of apicultural products has increased by over 160 per cent since 2010–11 with significant growth across all three subsectors—honey, beeswax and live bees. It is due to our very strict biosecurity measures in this state that we have been able to prevent untreated honey, bees or second-hand hive equipment from entering the state. Therefore, we have an outstanding clean and predominantly disease and pest-free status for our honey bee sector. Therefore there is global demand for the quality and nutritious honey that comes from Western Australia.

I am told also that there are more than 120 commercial honey producers in Western Australia. The total number of hives in Western Australia is estimated at 40 000, so we have 8.2 per cent of the Australian total, and this represents about 7.5 per cent of the total national honey production. There are some issues affecting the industry. Although we obviously want to continue to grow it, active forestry can destroy the pollen and nectar source for bees. Controlled burning is obviously an issue, but as a government we are committed to prescribed burning in this state because we believe that it is beneficial for the environment as well as for the community because it keeps our community safe. It is certainly a challenge to the bee industry. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions works closely with the bee industry in the state to make sure that when we are planning prescribed burning, we let the apiarists know so they can move their hives if they are in the local area.

The other challenges faced by the industry include the fact that WA's closed borders have made it difficult for the WA industry to fight for its fair share of funds allocated for breeding purposes at a national level. But I guess there has to be a balance. Do we have the pristine environment we have or drop our game and try to get more federal funding? That is something we need to continue to work on. It is something I know the Minister for Agriculture and Food has an interest in.

Tourism is one of the issues Hon Diane Evers mentioned in her motion. The southern forest and the Blackwood River valley in particular both have very high quality local food and beverage offerings and pretty spectacular scenery in those surroundings. Those two things combine to bring an extraordinarily unique experience for visitors from outside the area. It is important that these food and beverage offerings throughout the region, from farm fresh produce, to wineries, cideries, restaurants and cafes, continue to offer visitors a wide range of choice when travelling in the region. From the Minister for Tourism's perspective, Tourism WA provides around \$700 000 annually to Australia's south west regional tourism organisation to promote the region down there, including its forest areas. I am told that recently the state government has funded the Tour of Margaret River, the Augusta Adventure Fest Rapid Ascent 2018, the Cape to Cape mountain bike multi-stage race, the Truffle Kerfuffle, Cabin Fever, the WA 100 MTB Classic 2018, the Karri Valley triathlon, X-Adventure Dunsborough, Make Smoking History Forest Rally, Unearthed Pemberton 2018 and the Nannup Flower and Garden Festival, again all activities in and around our forest areas. We are focused on protecting our unique environment and, as I said, getting people in there to enjoy and experience what we have to offer in this great state of ours.

HON TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan) [11.08 am]: I rise today in support of my colleague Hon Diane Evers' motion. I would like to draw attention to the declining bee population in relation to climate change. I have spoken a lot of about climate change in this place. We are very lucky in the south west because we are shielded to some extent from the mass bee population decline that we have seen in Europe and across America. In a lot of respects bees are the canary in the coalmine when it comes to climate change. They are very vulnerable. To put things into perspective, in excess of 336 000 types of plant are pollinated by bees, with bees pollinating more than 75 per cent of our food crops. Without bees, we would not exist. In a recent ABC article, David Attenborough said that if bees were to disappear from the face of the earth, humans would have only four years to live. I can see Hon Dr Steve Thomas nodding in agreement. Given their critical role in our ecosystem, we should be doing what we can to protect bees from the effects of climate change.

Since 2013, bee populations in many parts of the world have fallen by one-third, which is sad. My colleague Hon Diane Evers spoke earlier about the effect of mites on bees. Also driving the decline in bee numbers are the effects of climate change. As I said, although we remain resilient in WA and across Australia, rising temperatures will eventually affect our bee populations. In 2016, the first global assessment of the state of the world's pollinators

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was released by an international team of 77 experts. The findings were drawn from approximately 3 000 scientific papers, and incorporated indigenous and local knowledge from over 60 locations across the globe. The report cited climate change as a driving factor in the decline in bee numbers on more than 200 occasions and it called on governments and jurisdictions across the world to act. This report spurred a lot of other studies. More recently, I looked at a study from Northwestern University in Chicago, which simulated temperatures to see what effect they had on bee populations and how bees reacted to certain temperatures. The study used the same type of bee, the mason bee. The team manipulated the temperatures of hives by painting them different colours. The colours represented temperatures from the past and present, and simulated climate-predicted temperatures between 2040 and 2099, with the cooler temperatures representing the 1950s. The study found that bees nesting in warmer boxes underwent multiple disturbing changes and their mortality rate was really high.

If we think about the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report that called on governments across the world to end the mining, exportation and burning of fossil fuels and we consider the role that bees play in providing our life source on this planet, we should act to reduce emissions and have a hard conversation about our role around the globe. These things are not mutually exclusive; we have to relate them to what we are doing, whether it is emissions from vehicles or heavy industries. We need to look our role in exporting oil and gas. More recently, the New Zealand government announced that it would end the exportation of oil and gas, although it will honour its existing contracts, some of which I think go to the late 2020s. New Zealand said that even though it is a small country, it has a role to play. We need to cast our sights over the north west, which has huge oil and gas deposits. We also have a fracking rally outside Parliament House at 11.30 am to call on the government to ban fracking. A lot of people have been concentrating on the relationship between fracking and groundwater, but we have not had a good conversation about emissions. We can look at what has been going on with emissions at different places across the south west of the United States where there has been fracking but no monitoring—this has been left up to independent universities. There have been reports from Queensland. From my experience of working in Chinchilla, I saw the gas wells and the place reeked of methane. Years later when I saw that report, I was disturbed that we are not monitoring those emissions. We have a role to play. What we do with our industries affects our natural habit and most vulnerable flora and fauna, and that also extends to bees.

I grew up in the south west. I love the south west, and I will do what I can to protect the ecosystems and new industries. We need to ensure that those industries thrive. There is a dark side to this; there is an economic opportunity in the decline of bee numbers. We have a protected habitat in the south west, to some extent. The price of honey might go up because of the decline in bee numbers, which will make honey scarce. In saying that, the inevitable rise in temperature will affect our bee population, so we need to do something about. We need to support the honey industry and look at ecotourism. The south west is a gourmet destination for many people. We have to look at plantation timber as an alternative and we need to protect old-growth forests. It does not make any sense to knock them down. People expect us to protect our natural habitat. I am looking at Dr Steve Thomas' expression.

The PRESIDENT: That would be Hon Steve Thomas.

Hon TIM CLIFFORD: I know that our views on certain things differ, but I will work with the member over the next two and a half years to find some common ground on the climate issue.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You're right on bees and the risk factor is the north west. The south west could be an ark, potentially.

Hon TIM CLIFFORD: Potentially.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You're absolutely right on that, so there's a bit of common ground!

Hon TIM CLIFFORD: It is really sad that we are talking about the south west as an ark. We need to talk about the importance of bees in the south west and the importance of our role in bee populations around the world. There are no bees on a dead planet. Given the catastrophic effects of climate change, we need to act now because if bee populations decline, populations in other ecosystems will also decline. We need to work harder, and together, to make sure that the industry in the south west thrives and that we play our part in reducing emissions and preventing the worst effects of climate change.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [11.17 am]: I will say just a few words on this subject matter because I think my views on it have been well recorded in Parliament over the years. I congratulate Hon Diane Evers for bringing to the Parliament this motion to discuss the value of our south west forests. I think there is general agreement in the chamber about the value of our south west forests and the value that the south west brings to this state in economic development and tourism opportunities. By and large, we have the right balance in the south west in providing for economic development and promoting tourism while protecting our natural habitat. There are always arguments around the periphery about doing more in one area or another but, generally speaking, we have the balance right. We do a lot to support a range of different activities and interests in our state forests.

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Certainly, tourism is a big factor and our south west forests are a significant tourist attraction. But it is always important to keep things in perspective.

We have approximately 2.5 million hectares of native forest in the south west, of which 62 per cent is absolutely protected, in national parks, reserves and other areas that are not available for logging. Of the balance of that land, only one per cent is harvested annually. A very small fraction of our native forests is harvested annually. A very strong forest management plan is in place that seeks to ensure that the harvesting of that one per cent of the native forests takes into consideration the protection of natural habitat and a range of other factors. Although I accept that some people would like to see no logging of native forests, Hon Dr Steve Thomas made the point that we all love timber products, and our timber delivers some beautiful products that are appreciated around the world. I do not think we should be concerned about logging one per cent of our native forest annually, as long as we continue to do it in a sustainable way and ensure that that forest is regenerated. A huge amount of work has been done over the years on the forest management plans, and they are regularly reviewed; they are only 10-year plans. They are there to ensure that we do the regeneration of that one per cent of native forest that is harvested. Looked at in perspective, we have the balance right. We are ensuring that we protect our natural environment in the south west, while also allowing for economic development, and encouraging the growth of the tourist industry, acknowledging that the natural habitat is one of the big attractions in the south west region. We have got that balance right, and we are creating employment. The native timber industry creates employment, as does tourism and a range of other sectors.

I also want to mention that a fair amount of effort has gone into ensuring that we are using more of the log. The reality is that once we stopped logging in old-growth forests, the quality of the timber provided to the mills declined significantly. They were much smaller logs, and it was much more difficult to get a maximum return out of them, because most of the sawmills were older mills that had been set up to process larger size logs. There has definitely been a level of waste, but significant efforts have been put into addressing that issue and establishing smaller log operations, so that smaller logs can be processed and we can maximise the outcome from them. It is important in the discussion today to acknowledge the work being done by Nannup Timber Processing, which has done a fair amount of work that is looking very promising at this stage to do value adding. This will not only create a significant number of additional jobs that are sorely needed in the Nannup community, but also ensure that we are value adding to our timber here in Western Australia, and in the south west. I acknowledge the work being done by Nannup Timber Processing to get that project off the ground, and I hope that both the state and federal governments get behind the proposal, because it will not only generate a number of desperately needed jobs in Nannup, but also ensure that we are doing that value adding of the timber industry here in the south west.

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [11.23 am] — in reply: The question I would like to ask everyone is: why do we harvest? I have heard a number of different reasons. My purpose here today was to introduce and talk about honey and tourism, but we have gone right to timber. Being an outsider to the state, I see the love we all have for jarrah, on these walls and elsewhere. But we are not getting that much out of it. I am not saying that it is the end of the industry. We will still have mining for the next 20 years and then we will probably renew it, so we will still be getting jarrah. If we use that properly, we will still have the timber that we want. Most of the jarrah is going to woodchips, charcoal or biomass and being shipped off to Japan. We are not saying the timber industry should be ended. If the idea is that we do not have any mature timber, why did we get new equipment in the Greenbushes mill to process large logs? It is not uncommon to see a 500 or 600-year-old jarrah log filling a log truck on its own. It is not the end of it, and I am not saying we are going to end the industry. We will still have plantations, farm forestry and mining, as I said. Exotic species can still be harvested. Development and road widening will still involve the felling of trees. We talked about the coexistence of industries. I talked about the introduction of the plantation industry and I quoted from a paper that I want to table. It is titled “Forests for Life — Farm Forestry and Landcare Program”. I seek leave to table it.

Leave granted. [See paper 2042.]

Hon DIANE EVERS: I am a bit disappointed that debate ended up heading towards timber, but that is what we were looking at. Looking at employment, the socioeconomic report tabled earlier this year stated that there are 500 jobs in the native timber industry—I think it was even 508. However, those 508 are not full-time jobs. They include the fellers, the haulers and the nursery staff—people who will still have jobs in a plantation industry. We are not cutting the trees for the jobs either, because we will have other jobs if we continue to cut trees and grow plantations. Why we are doing it? What is the point? According to Hon Stephen Dawson, the forest management plan is working, but it is clearly not working, which is why so many people are putting in submissions to this review stating that it is not working. The forest management plan values the forest for the timber that it can harvest, with very little regard for other activities. It is a forest management plan; it is not a timber harvesting management plan. That is a completely different idea.

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 11 October 2018]

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I appreciate Hon Stephen Dawson mentioning that this issue crosses many different portfolios. This is not just forestry; this is also environment, agriculture, tourism, small business—it goes on and on. We need that collaboration of industries to work together so that we can sort this out, and ask ourselves why we are harvesting these trees—the karri trees that are chipped or pelletised and sent off to Japan. What is the value to us? The value of the forest is greater in the next year, because timber grows. We are getting a growth in value through the forest growing through natural processes, but that just balances the loss, because we have just harvested another area of one per cent of the forest. It is not as if it returns very much. Sure, we may make \$34 million in revenue, but we had \$33.5 million in expenses. We get back, I think, the figure of \$320 000, as I quoted earlier, for the act of destroying this forest, without any regard for the fact that it is disrupting our traffic flows, increasing the road wear and tear, and putting stress on the remaining forest and the biodiversity. There are so many reasons not to be doing this, and yet we still do it. Why are we harvesting? It is not for the people or the jobs, because we can have those jobs through a plantation industry. It is not for the timber, because we can get enough timber to serve our needs for the beauty in this wood through the activities that happen alongside the forest, through the plantations, the farm forestry and the mining. Please, go away and think about it. Why are we killing our jarrah and karri trees?

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.