

PLANTATION TIMBER INDUSTRIES, COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT FUNDING

55. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for State Development:

I refer the minister to an advertisement in *The West Australian* of Saturday, 15 September 2001, in which the Commonwealth Government offered \$15 million of funding to hardwood, softwood and plantation timber industries in the south west.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the advertisement?
- (2) Does the minister know whether the Commonwealth has approved any funding applications to date?
- (3) How does this compare with the State's investment in industry development in south west communities?

Mr C.M. BROWN replied:

- (1) Yes, I am certainly aware that the Commonwealth Government advertised the \$15 million forest industry development assistance package for the south west in *The West Australian* on Saturday, 15 September 2001, with expressions of interest closing on 19 October 2001 - just a few weeks before the last federal election.
- (2) No, I am not aware of any allocation of funding under that scheme, despite the fact that nine months have elapsed. Senator McDonald, representing the Commonwealth Government, claims that none of the money has been allocated because the State Government's potential yield rate is too low. However, when the advertisement was placed, the Commonwealth was well aware of the indicative figures provided by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage - that is, 140 000 cubic metres of indicative yield for jarrah. There is no excuse for the non-release of that money. This was a hoax perpetrated against the people of the south west.
- (3) I am disappointed that a very large advertisement was placed indicating to the people and industries of the south west that they would have the opportunity to get funding but not one cent has been allocated.

Mr P.D. Omodei: They don't know the volume.

Mr C.M. BROWN: The Commonwealth Government knew the indicative volume. The State Government has pursued industry development by allocating \$2.5 million to the Pemberton Karri Mill; \$1.5 million to the Manjimup horticultural scheme; \$1.4 million to Nannup timber processors; \$1 million to the sky jetty tourism icon project; and \$700 000 to the Pemberton Sports Club. This Government has spent nearly \$22 million assisting businesses that have left the industry, and more than \$7 million to assist timber workers undergoing retraining and so on.

Members opposite have been bleating, but they comprise the same group that developed the Regional Forest Agreement once and then had to do it again because it was wrong. That same group provided an inadequate amount of money to assist the timber industry and timber workers. The Labor Government has spent a significant amount to assist that industry and its workers. In the interests of fairness, I hope that Liberal Party members will at least urge their federal colleagues to honour the promise made in the advertisement; that is, to allocate the \$15 million.