

FOREST POLICY, IMPACT ON SOUTH WEST

**624. Mr OMODEI to the Premier:**

I refer to an answer to a question in the estimates committee hearing in the other place, in which the Government conceded that 82 businesses in the State's lower south west had applied for business exit assistance, of which 42 were sawmills and 40 were other businesses that may be forced to close their doors because of the Government's forest policy.

- (1) How many job losses are expected in the lower south west of Western Australia?
- (2) What will be the economic impact of Labor's forest policy on the State's lower south west?
- (3) What will be the social impact on the timber towns of the lower south west resulting from these massive job losses?

**Dr GALLOP replied:**

(1)-(3) I urge the member for Warren-Blackwood to take a broader view of this question. There are two parts to the story that relate to the Government's policy on old-growth forests. One part of the story is the conservation of our old-growth forests, and a historical act by this Government will preserve those forests for future generations of Western Australians. The other part of the story deals with the consequences of that policy and, in the process, the creation of new jobs in that area. It is estimated that approximately 1 000 jobs will be affected by the Government's policy. We intend to create new jobs that will be available for people in the south west. How will we do that? First, we are giving major investment support to the upgrading of the mills in the south west. We have already made decisions on that matter. Under this Government, a very important decision was made to secure the future of the community of Nannup.

Mr Omodei: That was done under the previous Government.

Dr GALLOP: No, Nannup was our decision. Those investment supports will continue for the upgrade of the mills. Secondly, we have important initiatives to promote new tourism opportunities in that area. As part of our budget, we are putting in infrastructure support. Thirdly, and importantly, the State's expanded national parks will have to be managed, so new jobs will be created, because it is one thing to conserve forests and another to put them into the framework of reserves and parks. Fourthly, and very importantly, the plantation industry will play an increasingly important role in the south west of the State. The estimates indicate that a very significant number of new jobs will be created in the plantation industry. The figure does not immediately come to mind, but I will find it out for the member. The Government is more than confident that, as a result of the initiatives it will take, new jobs will be created in the south west of the State, which will more than compensate for the jobs lost as a result of the important strategic decision not to log old-growth forests. I urge all members of the Opposition to cross the threshold; it is not difficult. We are in a new Western Australia now. We are not logging old-growth forests.

Mr Barnett: Think about the families, the kids and the thousand people out of work.

Dr GALLOP: We do. What is the Opposition's policy? Will it allow the logging of old-growth forest?

Mr Barnett: What about the 1 000 jobs?

Dr GALLOP: There is no answer. The Opposition should cross the threshold and join the Government in building a better Western Australia based upon the conservation of the old-growth forest. I remind the House of what happened when the Regional Forest Agreement was entered into by the previous Government. It increased the number of reserves, but did not stop the logging of old-growth forest. Who in this Parliament raised the issues of worker support, transitional arrangements and industry policy and put them onto the agenda? The member for Maylands, when on the opposition benches, got those issues into the debate. I am confident that I can say to the member for Warren-Blackwood's community that we are taking initiatives that will create sustainable new jobs in the south west, based upon the conservation of old-growth forests rather than their destruction.