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Forest industry rejects Greens' bill

THE forestry industry has rejected a push from the Greens to end native forestry and shut down the Forests Products Commission (FPC).

According to Forest Industries Federation of WA (FIFWA) Executive Director Melissa Haslam, the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2020 put forward by Greens South West MLC Diane Evers highlights a disconnect between the party and regional WA and demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the State's forestry industry.

"Shutting down the FPC would shut down a vast majority of the industry and the whole native forest industry, which would have a significant impact on the WA economy, particularly in key regional shires with a workforce that relies heavily on forestry," Mrs Haslam said.

"Forestry contributes \$1.4 billion to the WA economy and creates around 6000 jobs, with more than 90 per cent of those in regional areas.

"With so much uncertainty currently surrounding the economy and job security, I'm unsure why the Greens would choose now to take aim at one of the few industries that remains buoyant."

Mrs Haslam said Ms Evers' comments that honey and bee production could potentially be expanded if native forestry ceased portrayed an unlikely scenario, given the fact that under the plan native forests would become national parks, and it is currently illegal to place hives in WA national parks.

"The beekeeping and forestry industries have coexisted for decades and generally have a solid working relationship," Mrs Haslam said.

"While the call for an increase in plantations to support the industry is an excellent idea and one that we support, we do suggest farmers contact us directly to get advice so they can get more accurate information on profitable species.

"The idea of an increase in plantations of slow-growing hardwood to replace native forest is simply not feasible, for that to work, you would need a plantation area about the same size as the State Forest.

"It is not as simple as cutting out native forests in favour of plantations and suggesting so indicates a real lack of understanding of the industry and supply chain.

"Transitioning out of native forestry is not transitioning to plantations, but rather to imports from countries which do not always have the same high environmental standards as we do."

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About FIFWA

Forest Industries Federation WA (FIFWA) has been representing the interests of the Western Australian timber industry since 1895. The industry is a key driver of economic activity and jobs in Western Australia, contributing \$1.4 billion to the WA economy and creating about 6000 jobs in WA, with more than 90% of those in regional areas. The industry employs careful and comprehensive management policies to ensure WA's forests are sustainably managed. Less than 1% of the total forest area is harvested annually. In 2001 WA became the first state to abolish harvesting old-growth forests.