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Critical boost for softwood plantation industry

THE forestry industry has welcomed the State Government's announcement that it is seeking private investment to expand the softwood plantation industry.

The project seeks private investment to support a 50,000-hectare expansion, which will see over 60 million trees planted in a 10-year period.

Forest Industries Federation of WA (FIFWA) Executive Director Melissa Haslam said the Market-led Proposal initiative would go a long way in assisting industry with the looming shortfall in softwood timber resources.

"We are very keen to see this initiative come into fruition and we applaud the State Government for supporting the industry and recognising what a valuable resource our local timber is," Mrs Haslam said.

"This will provide security to existing processors and those 2000 people currently employed in the sector, as well as generating new job opportunities; boosting an industry that already makes a significant economic contribution."

The trees planted in the initiative will sequester seven million tonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide and provide habitat for the Carnaby's black cockatoo.

Mrs Haslam said WA's softwood plantation industry generates \$617 million annually, with locally supplied and manufactured timber continuing to be a popular choice for construction in WA, for house frames, roofs, cabinetry, doors, timber floors and decks.

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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.