

Media release | **15/12/2021**

Industry refutes Forestry Minister's false claims

THE WA forestry industry has refuted claims made by Forestry Minister Dave Kelly after yesterday's Native Forestry Transition Group meeting in Bunbury.

The meeting was the group's last for 2021, with little progress made since the [announcement](#) that native forestry would cease from 2024.

Mr Kelly told media after yesterday's meeting that support packages were waiting on industry information on the exact number of businesses and workers needing assistance, before they could be finalised.

Forest Industries Federation WA (FIFWA) Chief Executive Officer Adele Farina said those claims were incorrect, with the information already provided to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) in mid-November.

"The Minister's attack on industry is disgraceful and refuted," Ms Farina said.

"Throughout this process, industry requests for information and assistance have fallen on deaf ears. The Minister's swipe at industry not only lacks foundation but does nothing to assist in providing impacted businesses and workers with the clarity and assistance they have been waiting on for three long months.

"This decision was made by the State Government without regard to the science and it is time the Minister took responsibility and stopped seeking to lay the blame for the uncertainty faced by impacted businesses and workers on industry."

Ms Farina said Minister Kelly's comments also highlighted the fact the State Government did not undertake any impact assessment prior to the announcement.

"I welcome the Minister's admission to the media that government did not undertake an assessment of the economic and social impact of its announcement to cease native forest harvesting," Ms Farina said.

"I believe most in the community would be shocked to learn that the government made this announcement, impacting timber workers, businesses and communities, without any knowledge of the economic and social impact on those impacted, regional economies or the state economy.

"Despite all the resources in the public service at the government's disposal it failed to undertake this critical assessment.

"With its limited resources, FIFWA has gone above and beyond to assist the government to finalise assistance packages for impacted timber workers and businesses."

Industry has repeatedly voiced its frustration at the lack of clarity since the announcement, including staging a peaceful protest in Bunbury last month.

Ms Farina said given the slow pace of the process to date, the early January timeline for support packages seemed unlikely.

“If the government expected support packages to be finalised by early January, perhaps Minister Kelly could explain why the government took so long to establish the Business Transition Subgroup and why a subgroup meeting expected to have been held last Friday or Monday was cancelled?” she said.

“Despite repeated requests, no meeting of either the Business or Worker subgroup has been scheduled for the remainder of this year or for January. It is impossible to progress work on the support packages with the government dragging its feet in scheduling subgroup meetings.”

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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, with the area harvested then replanted. In 2001 WA became the first state to abolish harvesting old-growth forests.