

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES WORKERS
REGIONAL TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT SCHEME

1304. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to Legislative Council questions without notice 1029, 972, 812 and 750.

- (1) How many individuals have applied to the primary industries workers regional travel and accommodation support scheme to date, and how many individuals have been successful in receiving funding to date regardless of the number of applications made?
- (2) What is the total spend of this program to date?
- (3) Have any complaints or issues been raised specifically about the program; and, if yes, and in the interests of transparency, would the minister please provide details?
- (4) Given the impending changes to WA's border, has the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development considered tapping into interstate workforces; and, if no, will the minister commit to doing so?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) Between 5 October 2020 and 11 November 2020, there were 293 applications to the scheme. Of these, 75 applications totalling \$92 450 have been paid, nine applications have been approved with payment pending, 147 are awaiting assessment and/or employment verification, 55 have been declined and seven have been withdrawn.
- (2) The total spend is \$95 450 as at 11 November 2020.
- (3) There have been no complaints about the scheme. However, there has been four requests received from individuals to review the decision to decline their application, with two upheld and two rejected. I must say that some people are having a bit of a lend. I am advised that farmers with kids who are coming back to the family farm from boarding school are seeking to utilise the scheme. I urge people to deal fairly on these matters.
- (4) Interstate workers have always been able to apply through the G2G process to enter the state, and we have been facilitating that movement when possible. It is important to note that seasonal workers are in short supply right around Australia.

We published new guidelines to extend some eligibility criteria following some representations by growers. We are extending eligibility to applicants relocating from interstate. We are allowing working holiday visa holders to claim the travel allowance component only. Previously, they were not able to access the scheme at all, but Carnarvon growers in particular were very keen that they be able to offer that to people relocating from Perth. We are also allowing approved employers of visa holders already in Australia to claim the travel allowance component only if these workers are required to change work assignments with the approval of the commonwealth, so if someone is going from mangoes in the Northern Territory to mangoes in Kununurra, they will be eligible. In addition, location-based social media marketing to interstate workers will commence from 16 November 2020.