

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES WORKERS REGIONAL TRAVEL
AND ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT SCHEME

1029. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to correspondence received by me and, no doubt, other members of this place that conveys that without seasonal workers, fruit and vegetable growers and winemakers will struggle to fill hundreds of skilled and unskilled roles within the main picking season beginning from February next year.

- (1) Given that the primary industries workers regional travel and accommodation support scheme is capped at \$3 million and is on a first come, first served basis, will the government allocate additional funding if all scheme funds have been expended by February 2021?
- (2) Will the minister commit to monthly reporting of the uptake in expenditure of this fund so that industry can measure its success and have an understanding of the remaining funding?
- (3) Given that a full-time workload is a requirement to access this support scheme, how will this cater for the sporadic nature of fruit and grape picking, which can sometimes see 60-hour weeks followed by days of no work, depending on the weather?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) I do hope we get through that \$3 million very quickly because that will mean that there has been a great uptake of the program and that thousands of Western Australian seasonal workers will be out picking fruit and vegetables. Of course, if the fund is that successful and more is required to top it up, that will be considered. The government will certainly provide regular updates on the usage of the scheme. We are trying to give some flexibility around that. In terms of hours worked, we were concerned, for example, that someone might go up to Broome and pick asparagus for three hours a week and claim the \$40 a day, so we were trying to put a framework around that. We will absolutely recognise a spread of hours over a two-week period.