

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT — STAFF SURVEY

764. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA’s survey of staff at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which concluded that DPIRD has become a dysfunctional and unhappy workplace.

- (1) When was the minister first made aware that the survey was being conducted and when was she first made aware of the survey results?
- (2) Has the minister received a report containing the full results of the survey?
- (3) If yes to (2), will the minister table the report; and, if not, why not?
- (4) Has minister met with the union and/or department to discuss the results; and, if so, please list the dates of the meetings and who was in attendance?
- (5) What has the minister done to ensure DPIRD addresses the concerns of staff that were expressed in the survey?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(5) I first became aware that the survey had been undertaken sometime during June 2019; I understand the survey took place over May. Both Minister Kelly and I met with union representatives, union officials and delegates. My meeting on 3 July consisted of union officials and various departmental union delegates, and we have had a number of subsequent meetings with senior staff within the department.

I am not going to paper over the fact that there was a problem. There has been an endemic problem, as the member knows, in this department. The trajectory of cuts that was locked into under the forward estimates under the previous government took that department from 1 640 people down to 1 300 people. To turn that around, we were required to do a full capability review and to go back to the drawing board and identify the capability that was required. We are proud to say that in the last budget we were able to choke the wheels, and instead of going down to 1 300 staff, we have 1 580 in the combined agency. There is no doubt also that there have been challenges, as always, in the machinery-of-government changes. We absolutely are committed to the process to reduce the number of bureaucracies and to get regional development, fisheries and agriculture together in that department. We did not want to just glue the various silos together; we wanted to effect a merger, and that has taken longer than we would have liked.

We have gone through line by line the concerns of staff and union members. We have given a finite time for the end of the process. We have agreed to deal with a number of interim things that were concerning them, such as staff reclassifications—things that previously had been put on hold. Therefore, we have gone through and made a whole series of commitments to departmental staff and the union to deal with these issues. We have made a firm undertaking that this whole process will be completed by Christmas. I think there is a great deal of excitement in many areas of the department that things are rebuilding, but it has been a difficult and challenging time and I would not want to pretend it has been otherwise.