

INDUSTRY FACILITATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Commerce

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Commerce) [3.06 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house of the state government's industry facilitation and support program, through which more than \$920 000 has been awarded to 41 Western Australian companies to innovate and improve their business competitiveness. The industry facilitation and support program offers dollar-for-dollar financial assistance of up to \$25 000 to eligible small to medium-sized enterprises looking to supply to major resource projects underway in the state.

This initiative is an important component of this government's local industry participation framework, which was introduced in July 2011. This is only part of our strategy to increase local content and thus create more jobs for Western Australians. Our strategies are working, with more than \$16 billion of contracts being awarded to Western Australian companies since July last year. The level of interest from regional businesses in the program was encouraging, with 44 per cent of applications coming from outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Since the introduction of this program, there has been a steady stream of applications. Funding requests included support for marketing activities to increase exposure in local national and international supply chains; company accreditation; and acquisition of equipment to increase capability. The scope and diversity of the applications received clearly demonstrated the range of issues facing WA-based small to medium enterprises in servicing the resources industry. There is no doubt that market conditions have changed and companies confront more challenges to win work. It is through consultation with project proponents and funds like the industry facilitation and support program that the state government can help businesses improve their productivity and competitiveness.