

MARTUMILLI ARTISTS

**814. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Commerce:**

I refer to the government's decision to axe the Aboriginal economic development division of the Department of Commerce and its current funding agreement with the various successful arts commercialisation projects under the banner of Martumilli artists. Given that this project provides Martu artists from six Western Desert communities with access to funding and expertise to deliver a sustainable art business and income, and is responsible for creating a centre of excellence in Indigenous art within the Aboriginal arts sector and for establishing some of Australia's leading remote area Aboriginal businesses, will the minister honour the agreements entered into by the Department of Commerce to fund this vital business development project for both the 2009 and 2010 financial years?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. Aboriginal economic development remains a priority for the government. It is the view of the government that, through state and federal government agencies as well as the private sector, enormous efforts are being made to improve the economic circumstances of the Aboriginal people in WA. It was announced in the 2009-10 state budget that funds would be provided to both the Small Business Development Corporation and the Department of Agriculture and Food to supplement existing funding for Aboriginal economic development projects. The government looks forward to the Martumilli artists working with these agencies to further Aboriginal economic development in WA. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Martumilli in providing economic opportunities to Indigenous artists in the Pilbara.