

FEDERAL AND STATE SMALL BUSINESS MINISTERS — MEETING

818. Mr P.T. MILES to the Minister for Small Business:

I understand that last week the minister hosted in Perth the meeting of federal and state small business ministers. Can the minister please update the house on the results of this meeting?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

As members will be aware, there are some 210 000 registered small businesses across Western Australia. They make up 97 per cent of all registered businesses in Western Australia and play a significant part in the economic productivity of our state. As you know, Mr Speaker, ever since Sir Robert Menzies' "The Forgotten People" speech and his reference to those who generate that wealth, the Liberal Party has tried to be the party for small business; it is critical to our philosophy.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Upon becoming the minister, I was disappointed to learn in 2011 that the former Gillard government cancelled the regular get-together of national small business ministers, so I took it upon myself to invite to Perth last week Hon Bruce Billson, the federal Minister for Small Business, and every other minister or parliamentary secretary from around the country so that we could see whether we were in concert when it comes to small business.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the third time. Member for West Swan, you were on three calls. You are now on 3.5 calls.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It was a great get-together. Ministers and parliamentary secretaries came from New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania—from all over the commonwealth. Unfortunately, one Labor state refused to send a minister or representative, but that is its problem; no-one from South Australia came. However, the rest of us were in absolute orchestra. We had a great get-together. We heard from the Under Treasurer of Western Australia. We are trying to ensure that we are doing everything we can in symphony with each other to do as much as possible to help small businesses not just in our own jurisdictions, but also across the entire country. We want to be in absolute harmony. Interestingly enough, Professor Ian Harper came along and gave us a great brief on his root-and-branch review of competition policy laws and institutions, and I welcome the Harper review that will be released in its final form shortly. That report contains 52 draft recommendations that will go a long way if they can be adopted at not just a state level but also a national level to help small business do what it does best, which is to get on and create wealth, jobs and opportunities for the people of Western Australia