

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT —
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

355. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Premier:

- (1) Can the Premier outline to the house how the McGowan Labor government's \$131 million funding boost for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will support our agriculture industry and help create jobs?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house how this funding will address the cuts inflicted on the department by the former Liberal–National government?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question.

- (1)–(2) Clearly, we want to ensure that agriculture continues to create jobs and support economic development in Western Australia. We want to protect the biosecurity of the agricultural sector and help agricultural businesses to get access to critical export markets. That is why, as part of this budget, we provided the biggest boost towards agriculture in at least a decade. We have strengthened the role of the department of agriculture and arrested the decline in funding that took place under the last Liberal–National government. We have provided \$131.5 million in extra spending for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development so that it has a sustainable footing in which to deliver the services that it provides to the people of Western Australia. Clearly, under the government from 2008 to 2017, funding for the agriculture department was slashed.

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member can keep interjecting, but that is the truth of it—he can ask anyone. Funding was slashed and there was a further —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Funding was slashed and there was a further 37 per cent cut in the forward estimates when we came to office. We have injected \$131.5 million to boost biosecurity defences, support market programs into Asia, grains research and development programs, helping attract and retain staff, keeping scientists and agronomists in Western Australia, supporting R&D, and biosecurity capability.

It is just not me saying that. I heard the snippy interjecting from across the chamber. I have here a press release issued by none other than Mr Trevor Whittington from WAFarmers. Members opposite may know Trevor Whittington. I know Trevor Whittington—he was the chief of staff to a range of ministers for agriculture in the last government! He is now the CEO of WAFarmers. What has he had to say? I will quote from a press release issued last week. He is prepared to comment on the budget, unlike the opposition. Let me read it out. It is not just me saying it. I quote this to the house —

This is a credit to Minister Alannah MacTiernan as it is the first time in 20 years we have seen a Minister stand up to Treasury and not just hold the line, but push back and demand the level of funding support needed to help the industry grow.

...

We have already had announcements this year of new funding support for biosecurity, dog fences, mobile phone black spots, Asian market trade support, and grains research and development.

WAFarmers acknowledges the Minister's focus on these areas and the serious dollars she has put into them.

The concluding quote, from WAFarmers' Mr Rhys Turton, states —

... “credit is needed where credit is due, the Treasurer and Minister for Agriculture have delivered a good budget which will help set up agriculture for the next four years.”

It is clear that the government is on the side of the farmers, the government is on the side of the department of agriculture and the government is on the side of the regions, and is repairing the damage created by the Liberals and Nationals when they were in office. They gutted the department of agriculture when they were in office.