

Wheatbelt Development Commission —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr D.T. Punch, Minister for Regional Development.

Mr R. Cossart, Chief Executive Officer, Wheatbelt Development Commission.

Ms H. Brayford, Director General, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Mr P. Isaachsen, Deputy Director General, Industry and Economic Development.

Ms M. Carbon, Deputy Director General, Sustainability and Biosecurity.

Mr P. Gregson, Manager, Funds Management.

Ms C. McConnell, Deputy Director General, Primary Industries Development.

Ms L. Williamson, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr B. Mezzatesta, Executive Director, Operations and Compliance.

Ms M. Teede, Chief Executive Officer, South West Development Commission.

Mr J. Gardner, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Great Southern Development Commission.

Mr C. Syers, Principal Fisheries Management Officer.

Mr P. Spalding, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mid West Development Commission.

Mr R. Cossart, Chief Executive Officer, Wheatbelt Development Commission.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff, Minister for Regional Development.

Mr G. Grounds, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr A. Skinner, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr A. Buck, Senior Policy Adviser.

The CHAIR: I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I ask a similar question for the Wheatbelt Development Commission regarding the FTE.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Is the member requesting the total number of FTE and vacancies?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, the total FTE and current vacancies.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I will ask Mr Cossart to provide that information.

Mr R. Cossart: Thank you, minister. We have 13.4 FTE. All those positions are currently filled. We also have some additional contract staff on a short-term nature on top of that.

Mr R.S. LOVE: In what locations does the Wheatbelt Development Commission still maintain offices and have staff?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I ask Mr Cossart to provide that information.

Mr R. Cossart: We co-locate with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development across the region. We have offices in Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin, and we have staff located in each of those places.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What measures are in place to evaluate the long-term impact of the commission's support on small businesses across the wheatbelt?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I will ask Mr Cossart in a moment whether he has any additional specific information, but the commissions work across a broad range of areas. As we have discussed previously, small business support directly relates to the Small Business Development Corporation. The commission provides a whole range of supports for economic diversification. That includes things like the regional economic development grants, which have provided some really good outcomes, helping businesses to grow and diversify and build employment within regional WA and supporting supply chain development. It is very difficult to answer a question about specific components to small business when the commission has a broad regional development function, but I will ask Mr Cossart to provide any additional information to assist.

Mr R. Cossart: Thank you, minister. Just to provide some context, there are more than 9 500 small businesses across the wheatbelt. Per capita, that is a very large number compared with any other part of the state. We have a key role in working with the private sector to ensure that we identify opportunities within our private sector contracts to maximise the opportunities for those small businesses, and also working in line with the chambers of commerce and local governments on how we can maximise the regional investment opportunities for those 9 500 businesses across the wheatbelt.

The CHAIR: That completes the examination of the Wheatbelt Development Commission.