

WA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

245. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to the minister's 16-page glossy picture book entitled *WA regional development framework*, 10 pages of which are merely pictures. After nearly eight years of Labor, this is the best the government can do for Western Australia's regions.

When will the minister release a fully costed, detailed and comprehensive plan for regional development in Western Australia?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

There are some days in this place when we know that it is going to be a very good day. When the Leader of the Opposition stands up and asks a question like that, it is an especially good day. The Leader of the Opposition has just criticised the nine chairs of our development commissions—people who live, work and have an investment in regional Western Australia. He has criticised the Regional Development Council, the body set up to look after the interests of regional Western Australia. For the first time, we have described a framework for how regional development can progress in this state. I contrast that with the attempt by the National Party to grapple with the notion of suddenly finding itself in office in 2008 and working out how to spend royalties for regions funds in the interests of Western Australia. It looked at opportunities for restructuring a number of times. I cannot think of the number of consultancies that members opposite undertook to try to find a framework for the future of regional Western Australia. Most of the time, Nationals members could not agree with their alliance colleagues on regional issues and walked out of cabinet meetings. I contrast that with the approach of this side of the house. Every cabinet minister has a responsibility to regional Western Australia. They work with the development commissions. Our whole budget framework clearly outlines our costed approach to regional Western Australia, with a record regional spend that members opposite could never match when they were in office and choose not to examine now in this place because they know how good it is, whether it is our investment in roads, our investment in tourism, our investment in communities or our investment in new industries. I have been to many businesses that have benefited from our regional economic development grants. I have stood alongside small and medium-sized enterprises that are taking the next step to grow their businesses in their regions.

The regional development framework sets out a uniting set of principles about what is important. You tell me that community liveability is not important in regional Western Australia. You tell me that Aboriginal participation is not important in regional Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: You tell me that economic diversification is not important. You have no idea about regional development. You have no idea!

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Heritage and Leader of the House, I would hate to have to ask you to leave, but that incessant and repetitive interjection is unacceptable. Minister, continue your answer.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: The great contribution of members opposite to regional Western Australia when they were in government was to privatise the rail freight network. That is what they did. They privatised Main Roads Western Australia. That is what they did. They took out the very core of jobs in regional Western Australia. We will stand up for jobs. We will stand up for regional communities. Every one of our ministers works hard every day and takes on board the information that comes from those nine regional development chairs about what is important in regional Western Australia. We will continue to work in the best interests of regional Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: Just before the Leader of the Opposition asks a supplementary question, I remind members to please not interject on the supplementary. I would like for us all to be able to hear it and get the response.