

MINING — EXPLORATION INCENTIVE SCHEME

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [12.04 pm]: It is with pleasure that I provide an update on the state government's exploration incentive scheme, which continues to create jobs across regional Western Australia and deliver outstanding economic results. I am pleased to announce today the 36 successful applicants for round 28 of the exploration incentive scheme's co-funded drilling program. Of the 36 successful applicants, 21 projects are searching for battery minerals. This includes 13 companies exploring for nickel and a strong contingent targeting lithium and rare-earth elements. Copper was another popular target during this round of funding. The exploration incentive scheme continues to attract a large number of applicants, and this ongoing interest in exploration reflects Western Australia's position as a world-class investment destination for mineral resources. The Cook government will contribute \$7 million to the program this financial year through the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, and this funding will further support greenfields mineral exploration in the state.

In March this year, Western Mines Group announced the discovery of a nickel sulphide mineral system after completing the first of a two-hole exploration incentive scheme drilling program at its Mulga Tank prospect in the eastern goldfields. After completing the second hole, Western Mines announced that both holes show clear evidence for a very extensive magmatic nickel sulphide mineral system. Miramar Resources had success earlier this year in its search for copper in the Ashburton region. The company was awarded exploration incentive scheme funding in April for a campaign to diamond drill its Whaleshark project. The drill program successfully confirmed the presence of bedrock copper sulphide mineralisation within the project for the first time. OD6 Metals Limited delivered encouraging results at its Splinter Rock project north east of Esperance, with early indications of rare-earth element success. The company reported outstanding initial assay results for a number of drill holes as part of an exploration incentive scheme-supported drilling campaign that was awarded funding in April this year. It is pleasing to see that OD6 Metals was quick to acknowledge the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's support and the role the exploration incentive scheme funding played in facilitating the drilling program.

Exploration in the state remains strong and filled with opportunity. Next year, the exploration incentive scheme will take another step towards supporting mineral exploration in Western Australia with the launch and opening for applications of its co-funded geophysics program. The Cook government understands that exploration activity is crucial to our state's future economic success and remains committed to supporting mineral and energy exploration in this state.