

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT — STAFF SURVEY

**559. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

On behalf of the Nationals WA, I, too, acknowledge the challenge that Hon Alannah MacTiernan is facing and wish her all the best as she recovers.

I refer to a survey conducted by the Community and Public Sector Union–Civil Service Association of WA of the staff of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development that reveals that 69 per cent of respondents felt that organisational change was having a negative impact on their mental health and that 80 per cent were concerned about the welfare of their colleagues.

- (1) Has the Premier received a briefing on the results of this survey; if so, when; and, if not, why not?
- (2) What is the government doing to respond to these damning findings?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

- (1)–(2) Just to put a bit of context around this, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, in particular the agriculture component of the department, had continual cuts when the Liberals and Nationals were in office. If I can speak frankly, whilst they blew state spend each and every year by an average of six and a half per cent, they managed to cut agriculture. It was an odd thing to do for a party that professes to be the party of agriculture. When I was a boy, the National Party was known as the Country Party and then the National Country Party and then the National Party. It was a party that was predominantly made up of farmers.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The truth of it is that it was predominantly made up of farmers when I was growing up. I mainly grew up in Country Party electorates, and MPs for those areas were predominantly farmers. These days it is a different matter.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** These days it has some city dwellers, some of whom do not like the leadership and are here now, after missing the last week of Parliament.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That was the make-up of the National Party historically. What we saw over the eight and a half years of the Liberal–National government was that department being cut, cut, cut, cut. We have put in a floor. The Leader of the National Party might have seen—because I read it out in this Parliament, so, if she remembers—that the Western Australian Farmers Federation, and, from memory, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, both applauded what we did in reinstating funding and putting in a floor, particularly around research. So, no doubt, if there are morale issues, they are based upon things that occurred during the course of the last government.