

SENSIS BUSINESS INDEX

1314. Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN to the Minister for Small Business:

I refer the minister to the latest Sensis business index of small and medium-size enterprises and also to his highly selective account of its findings during a ministerial statement earlier today.

- (1) Can the minister explain why, in the view of small and medium-size businesses, the Gallop Labor Government is one of the two least popular of all State Governments?
- (2) Is it possibly because a staggering 40 per cent of small businesses now believe that the policies of the Gallop Labor Government work against them?
- (3) Could this help explain why small businesses in Western Australia have the second lowest rate of business confidence of those in any State?
- (4) What positive steps will the minister take to address the fact that one in four small businesses in Western Australia say that they will reduce capital expenditure over the next 12 months?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (1) They were obviously coming off a very low base given the state in which the previous Government left them.
- (2) The simple answer is no.
- (3)-(4) I refer to the Sensis business index because the member for Mitchell said that I was being selective. I will read some of the issues, and I am happy to provide this document to the House. The Sensis index says that business confidence in Western Australia improved strongly during the quarter, sales continued to record very strong performance, employment grew during the quarter and support for the Western Australian Government improved strongly. I do not need to answer the member's fourth question. In the last quarter, the largest improvement in business confidence nationally was recorded in Western Australia. With regard to State and Territory trends, the strongest improvements in perceptions of the economy were recorded in Victoria and Western Australia with both recording a net increase of 22 per cent - 22 per cent! Queensland and Western Australia were the only States to record an improvement in the approval rating of state government policies. Seventy-four per cent of Western Australian small and medium-size businesses were positive about their business prospects, which is well above the national average. Western Australia was the State that was most critical of the federal Government's small business policies with a net balance of negative 20 per cent. I notice that we never hear anything about that from the member for Mitchell; we never hear anything about it in the member's own area around Bunbury either. The Sensis business index speaks for itself.