

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT —
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS — 2019–20 STATE BUDGET

480. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I refer to comments from the Minister for Regional Development that new funding for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will allow DPIRD to fulfil its critical role in supporting WA's primary industries and regional communities whilst also ensuring the department is able to rebuild capacity and capability. In reference to the nine regional development commissions, can the Premier confirm whether each have been asked to reduce their staffing budgets; and, if the Premier cannot confirm, why not?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I will explain what I do know; that is, as part of the state budget we rebased the funding of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development—from memory, it was around the sum of \$120 million—to ensure that it had a firm base. Had we not done that, the cuts that were built in across the forward estimates, which we inherited, would have meant a loss of another hundred or hundreds of staff across the agency. Members might have seen the Farmers' Federation, or whatever it is now called—WAFarmers—and the Leader of the National Party's ex-chief of staff, Mr Whittington, endorsed —

Ms M.J. Davies: No, not mine.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Someone's chief of staff.

Mr D.T. Redman: Not mine.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whose chief of staff was he?

Mr R.H. Cook: Ken Baston's.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He was the chief of staff to Ken Baston, a former agriculture minister. He endorsed what we did. I think the agricultural and farming sectors of Western Australia have applauded what this government and the Minister for Agriculture and Food have done; otherwise the agency itself would have suffered the cuts that the Liberals and Nationals had booked into its future budget.

In respect to the exact staffing profiles of the regional development commissions, I invite the Leader of the National Party to ask her question of the Minister for Regional Development.