

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE NETWORK — REVIEW

673. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Regional Development:

The Western Australian Regional Development Trust recently published its review of the Western Australian community resource centre network. Can the minister please update the house on this review and how the Liberal–National government is continuing to support these important services?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS replied:

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for the question. I also acknowledge the 30 or so community resource centre coordinators from across the length and breadth of the state who are in the gallery today to watch the proceedings of Parliament. I welcome them to Parliament and thank them very much for the role they play in driving the community resource centre network across the state.

For the benefit of those members who are not aware, CRCs are the old telecentre network that was started under a previous Liberal–National government by Hendy Cowan back in the 1990s. That was an important network of government information delivery. It was essentially set up in the beginning to provide access to computers and the Internet for country communities at a time when not many households had a computer. Obviously over time that has changed, and most households now have a computer, and so the telecentre network needed to morph into something new. Upon coming to government, the Liberal–National government decided that it would put a renewed effort and focus into the community resource centre network, with a substantial injection of funds—\$40 million over the last five years—to revitalise that network and help CRCs modernise their service delivery to ensure they continue to be relevant to their local communities. There are now 109 community resource centres across the length and breadth of this state. They are a central location for government information, access to technology, education workshops, meeting rooms and training opportunities. In many of these 109 communities, they are the only government representation and focus.

Mr P.B. Watson: Apart from their local member!

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Yes, apart from their local members, who have all been very supportive of the CRCs.

The Regional Development Trust was tasked with doing a review of the CRC network. The trust received 98 submissions and held 37 meetings with key stakeholders across the state. The trust has now published its report, with recommendations for the future of the CRC network. That report is available online. On the back of these recommendations, the Liberal–National government has given our response to that review, and we will now continue our work to maximise the role that the CRC network plays in the community and will play into the future. The network already provides a very valuable service, and our aim is to further increase the growth, relevance and value of the CRC network to the community. We aim to improve access to all services, especially in remote and regional Western Australia. The review talks about working more collaboratively with local government in those communities, and I know there is a determination to do that. The review talks also about better engagement with Indigenous communities. During the summer break, I visited the Mowanjum CRC, which is just out of Derby, and I was impressed with what it is doing at the local level to deliver services to that community.

The Department of Regional Development will work with the network to get the best outcomes possible. We are getting on with the job, and I would encourage all members to look at that review and come to me if they have any ideas on how we can enhance the service delivery of the community resource network. A network of 109 centres across the length and breadth of regional Western Australia is a unique government service delivery tool. We are looking to make better use of technology to provide services into remote communities in which those services have not existed previously. The community resource network has a very, very strong future under the Liberal–National government.