

CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

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

I refer to the Premier's media statement dated 3 September 2020 announcing an advertising campaign to encourage young people to work in regional Western Australia.

- (1) Why did the Premier dismiss the Nationals WA suggestion for housing and travel incentives when answering a question in this house on 11 August 2020, only to announce that exactly three weeks later?
- (2) When will details of the regional worker incentive scheme be released and how much is the government contributing to it?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)–(2) We understand that there is a significant issue with getting enough labour out to deal with the agricultural sector and, indeed, some of the tourism sector across Western Australia, particularly in the north of the state. Therefore, as I indicated some weeks ago, we launched a major advertising campaign on the weekend to get Western Australians out there to do this work. This is very important. I feel for those agricultural communities that will have difficulty sourcing enough people to undertake some of the seasonal work, particularly the harvest, over this period. The Work and Wander out Yonder campaign is in full flight now. That is designed to point out the appealing aspects of doing this sort of work in regional Western Australia in those two industries in particular, and hospitality.

We will announce shortly the details of our support measures for people who go into agricultural work in particular. We, of course, want to see the industries themselves, and in particular the industry organisations, work cooperatively to come up with additional arrangements to attract people out there. It cannot all be the role of government. That is what I was saying to the member the last time. It cannot all be the role of government. You cannot take a 1950s view of the world that somehow the government has to do all of this. It has to be also the farming communities, the farmers and the industry associations. They also need to promote the advantages of going out there and working and seeking to attract people. They have to do that. You cannot just say that only government can do this. I do not know why you always fall back on the view that the government should do everything. I do not know what it is about the National Party. That seems to be its way of thinking. We are saying that industry needs to assist.

The other point I make is this: on Friday, I raised with the Prime Minister that the recipients of JobSeeker in particular, but also, potentially, JobKeeper—but especially JobSeeker—should be able to receive their payment and also go out and work in agriculture during the seasonal period and receive their pay on top of the JobSeeker payment. That is a departure from the normal welfare system, if you like, in Australia, but because of the unusual situation of not having backpackers coming in and seasonal labour sourced from the Pacific Islands or wherever it might be, we need to look at these alternative measures. The Prime Minister said that he would go away and look at that issue again. Obviously, it has been talked about before. I think that the situation we face means that the commonwealth also needs to join the state, industry, local governments and the like, and join the farmers and the agricultural industry itself in coming up with solutions to the extraordinary problem that we face.