

IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

**988. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Water:**

The Liberal–National government is undertaking a significant investment into irrigated agriculture across the state, which is an area of potential growth. Can the minister please update the house on this program?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I know that irrigated agriculture is very important to the member in his part of the world. We are currently working as a government on expanding irrigated agriculture across the state as part of our \$40 million investment to increase productivity across the state and deliver new jobs. It was very exciting on Friday to go back to Mowanjum as part of the Water for Food program, which is a \$40 million investment. The first initiative of the program is a research agreement and partnership with Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation to undertake a centre-pivot irrigated trial on country. About 60 people attended the event. There is a high level of excitement and anticipation in that community about the jobs and sustainable future we can create for not only Mowanjum, but also members of the community in Derby, right along the Gibb River Road, through the Kimberley and into the Pilbara. This project is showing exactly how long-sighted this government is in seizing the opportunity in agricultural investment of \$350 million, the biggest investment in agriculture ever made in WA. I think Mowanjum in particular is hugely appreciative of the effort that we have put in.

The \$2.7 million we are investing as part of this program will go into putting in the centre pivot, looking at the types of fodders we will grow, fencing, roads, clearing, site development, field preparation, pumps and bores. Mowanjum has developed its own business case and is also investing its own money into this program, which is one of the reasons we have selected to partner with Mowanjum.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I understand that the member would have been impressed at the level of anticipation about this project. They are excited.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** One of the main aims the member might be very interested in is the training component of this project. The Minister for Training and Workforce Development will be involved. Young people; Jason Russ; and Steve Austin, the chief executive officer and manager of the pastoral station, are working very closely with young Mowanjum men and women and men and women from Derby to ensure that they have training pathways. Jason and Steve are very reluctant to say no to anyone who picks up the phone and wants to be involved in this project. Can I say that this government is changing the future for that community and those in the Kimberley and the Pilbara through this project and I will be very excited to go back there next year to mark the installation of the irrigation centre pivot. I am sure there will be many more updates for the house as we progress this project as a matter of priority.