

WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY — ROUNDTABLE EVENT

941. Mr I.C. BLAYNEY to the Minister for Fisheries:

I have a supplementary question. When will the minister start working constructively with an industry that is worth more than half a billion dollars to Western Australia's economy and is particularly important in the regions?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

Just a fortnight ago, we announced some changes to the charter sector and got rid of some of the red tape in the industry that prevents it from capitalising on the available tourist market, or the potential tourist market that would be available if it could better access western rock lobster. As a result of those changes, the Tourism Council Western Australia estimates that hundreds of additional jobs will be created in that sector, many in regional Western Australia. We are always looking for initiatives to better capitalise on the potential from western rock lobster. As the member knows, over 95 per cent of the catch currently goes to China. That is a good thing—it is a great export product—but people in the regions tell me that if more domestic lobster were available here in Western Australia, it would create more jobs in the regions. That is why local governments almost unanimously between here and Geraldton want to see more local lobsters. If the member for Geraldton wants more local jobs here in WA from this resource, he should start to look at this issue with an open mind.