

MOWANJUM WATER FOR FOOD PROJECT — CENTRE-PIVOT IRRIGATION

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

Last week the minister officially commissioned the new centre-pivot irrigator at the Mowanjum community outside Derby. Can she please share with the house what this means for that community?

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

I thank the member for the question. It was a really important day last week when, on Tuesday, the Minister for Regional Development, some Mining and Pastoral Region members and I joined the Mowanjum community, along with around a hundred other interested stakeholders, to officially commission the irrigation centre pivot as part of our Water for Food project. A little over 12 months ago, we were there announcing the launch of the first tranche of Water for Food. An absolute power of work has been done within that community on behalf of that community with the Department of Water, the Department of Regional Development, the Department of Agriculture and Food and the leadership of Mowanjum to get the project to this point. We had traditional owners, community members, a large number of very enthusiastic children, pastoralists from the Kimberley and Pilbara and local government representation from both Broome and Derby there to mark this very important day for the community. I understand that on Thursday or Friday of that week, the Premier was also in the Kimberley and visited Mowanjum, and I hope was justifiably proud of what this government is doing in that space.

We are spending \$3.6 million on this project, which is a trial. It is slightly different from a number of the other projects under Water for Food. Since the launch of this project, two production bores have been sunk, and we have six monitoring bores. The land has been cleared and fenced, and the high-tech irrigation infrastructure has been installed, which we are using to monitor and publish the results of the trial. A very healthy rhodes grass fodder crop has been grown. It is quite remarkable when people fly in, because they can see a big dot of green in the middle of the Kimberley landscape. This circle can be split into grazing cells, which will allow at any one point in time 600 wieners to be fattened 12 months of the year. It is shifting from a traditional pastoral enterprise to something that can be run 12 months of the year. It is being used as a demonstration for other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pastoral organisations in both the Pilbara and the Kimberley. Certainly, there is significant interest from across the north west. On a regular basis, people are beating a path to the doorways of both Steve Austin, the CEO of Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation, and the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley. Elsie Archer and the CEO up there are the very proud hosts of that project on their doorstep.

It has been made possible by the dedication of the Mowanjum community. It has backed itself. The reason that we partnered with it is that it had made an investment before we put state government investment on the table, and that showed a commitment to us that it was prepared to back itself. I acknowledge Steve Austin, the CEO, who has done a power of work; Eddie Bear, who is on the board and has been appointed as the project manager within that board leadership; and a number of others in the leadership group. It is delivering real hope and renewal in that part of the world. Just very quickly as I wind up, not very many years ago it was known as the suicide capital of Australia. It was a very, very difficult community. I am not saying that that has been turned around in a matter of 12 months, but there is a renewed sense of hope, and certainly those elders in the community can see a different future for some of their children. That is why I make regular visits to that community to continue to give them confidence that we will continue to help them create a different future for their children.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister for Corrective Services, you are a disruptive influence over here on this group of people. Stop it.