

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION — WA LEADERS CONNECT SERIES

Statement by Minister for Small Business

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Small Business) [9.24 am]: I rise to inform the house about a subsidised professional development program being offered to regional businesses by the McGowan government through the Small Business Development Corporation. As part of the WA Leaders Connect Series, the SBDC is providing the opportunity for 90 regional businesses to participate in the program by subsidising half of the cost of the yearlong program. The WA Leaders Connect Series is for businesses that are based more than 100 kilometres from Perth and have been operating for over a year. The small business owners who are accepted into the program can access strategic business advice, expertise, knowledge and support from WA business leaders and a community of peers. With a financial subsidy from the SBDC, these businesses will pay only \$500, plus GST, for the year's series, which is focused on upskilling the business founder or senior management to grow, innovate and uncover opportunities for their business.

Regional businesses, which account for one-quarter of Western Australia's small businesses, face a unique set of challenges. They often miss out on access to professional development opportunities available to metropolitan-based businesses. The SBDC already provides excellent free business advisory services and low-cost business skills development throughout regional Western Australia through its Business Local network. However, the McGowan government recognises that it is important and essential for more established businesses to have access to the support structures, industry expertise and peer-based professional development networks that they need to expand and realise new opportunities. This is what the WA Leaders Connect Series will provide.

I wish to acknowledge the continued excellent work of the Small Business Development Corporation and the Small Business Commissioner, who champion the interests of small businesses in this state wherever they are based.