

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS ACT 1993, REVIEW

787. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development:

My question relates to the ministerial statement the minister made earlier today and the accompanying report on the review of the Regional Development Commissions Act 1993.

- (1) In relation to the statement that claims that the review was conducted through open, public consultation including commission board members, staff and a range of government agencies, as this appears to be a well-kept secret from the community, will the minister tell us what public consultation was entered into?
- (2) Why is the Labor Government entertaining the prospect of returning Western Australia to the inglorious days of WA Inc by providing the commissions with the capacity to undertake property development or hold an interest in property?
- (3) What remuneration is envisaged for the chairpersons of the regional development councils, as recommended in the report?

The PRESIDENT: The minister would be aware that the first and third parts of the question are in order and the second part is out of order, and she will not answer the second part.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

- (1)-(3) This Government is committed to regional development commissions. I also note that although we are committed to regional development commissions, Hon Colin Barnett has put on notice publicly his intent to diminish the role of regional development commissions.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is absolutely correct. Members know it is correct.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, I am not. It is absolutely correct and members know it. He intends to take any economic influence or role out of the development commissions. That is the Opposition's policy on development commissions. Our approach is to say that development commissions have a very important economic role to play in the regions. They have been hamstrung by legislation, particularly by section 24 of the current Act. I hope that, following this review - the Act required that it be reviewed at the end of a five-year period - amendments to the Act will be made. Our intention is that the development commissions will be given a role in the coordination of development issues as they arise in the regions. The member would be more than aware that occasions arise when regional communities do have good projects but, because of the workload of LandCorp, it is sometimes very difficult to deal with them. Regional priorities somehow do not get support and approval to the extent that they should and drop off the bottom of the priorities list. I as the minister with responsibility for this portfolio area, together with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, intend to ensure that when the situation arises, depending on the project and the circumstances, development commissions will have the capacity to play a key economic role in facilitating land development projects.