

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT —
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS — 2019–20 STATE BUDGET

481. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. The government has regularly been on record saying that it has the strongest regional development credentials in the history of the state and it has more regional members than any other party. Is that just a paper-thin facade? Why can the Premier not answer whether the nine regional development commissions have been asked to reduce their staffing budgets?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I was incorrect when I said the rebasing was \$120 million. It turns out that it was \$131.5 million that was provided to support the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. Over the period 2009 to 2017, we saw agriculture funding, frankly, slashed. That is a matter of fact.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, listen!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The former Department of Regional Development and the development commissions were funded from the royalties for regions program. Those two things are matters of fact. Across the forward estimates we saw a further slashing, particularly of the research capacity of the Department of Agriculture and Food. It always struck me as unusual that when the Nationals and the Liberal Party in government tried to make savings, they gutted agriculture. That always struck me as a bit unusual. Although we all know that their financial management was not good, when they tried to make savings, they attacked farmers and research in agriculture. We put in place a range of programs to provide research support for the grains industry, and a range of programs to support various research initiatives —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: — and staffing levels in the department across the state and the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I answered the Leader of the Nationals' question about the development commissions in the first part of the question. If she wants to direct her question to the Minister for Regional Development, please feel free. I note that many of her questions are based upon falsehoods and half-truths.