

ABORIGINAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT — REGIONS

886. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's support for the development of jobs and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how measures delivered by this government across regional Western Australia are developing Indigenous business capacity?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how these measures are creating new jobs and training opportunities for Aboriginal people?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

- (1)–(2) I certainly can. But before I do, I acknowledge and thank the member for Kimberley for her fantastic work in supporting the recovery from the Kimberley floods and her engagement of local Aboriginal people in employment opportunities as part of that recovery. That is a textbook piece of work and I acknowledge the member in this place.

Thanks to the financial discipline of the Cook Labor government, we have been able to invest a record amount of infrastructure funding into regional WA—over \$11 billion. But not only that, we are also investing in economic diversification and new opportunities right around the regions in manufacturing, in construction, in services, in health—you name it, we are in there. As part of that, we want to make sure that there are opportunities for Aboriginal people right around the state.

I want to give members a few examples of the work that we are doing. A particularly important one is the support that we are providing to Aboriginal business development in the north through a six-month training program aimed at improving business knowledge and skills through the Aboriginal business leadership initiative. Thirteen graduates of the Gascoyne Aboriginal leadership initiative were recognised last week at a graduation ceremony at Gwoonwardu Mia Gascoyne Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural Centre in Carnarvon. Those graduates were existing or aspiring business owners who were being supported by the Better Heart Aboriginal Corporation to develop business ideas through extensive mentoring and the use of action-planning techniques to make practical progress with their business development. Mentoring sessions were delivered alongside business workshops, and those graduates have now been linked to local, regional and state support networks to keep the momentum going. That program has been a great initiative in giving existing and emerging entrepreneurs the skills they need to have the confidence to take their businesses to the next stage. That program was delivered by a graduate from the wheatbelt program, making it the first time the program was delivered by an Aboriginal business since it started in 2017.

Then there is the sandalwood industry capability program. With the member for Kalgoorlie, I was delighted to announce this month that the government has contributed \$280 000 to implement the sandalwood industry capability program, with \$320 000 from the commonwealth government. It was great to tour the distillery—it was a sandalwood oil distillery, not any other type of distillery—when I was in Kalgoorlie. I saw firsthand the opportunities that that is presenting for Aboriginal people in not only the production of sandalwood oil, but also forest management and forest-harvesting areas.

Then, of course, there is the regional economic development program. It just keeps going. Through the RED program, we have funded 56 projects to a value of almost \$5 million for Aboriginal economic development-related projects that produced total budget projects of over \$17 million. An amount of \$250 000 went to supporting Indigenous-owned renewables rental business Red Dog Renewables to develop electric vehicle maintenance hubs in Karratha. Northern goldfields business Kai Rho Contracting used its \$235 000 to purchase a dual-cab grader for civil projects and provide training opportunities for Aboriginal people. In the member's own electorate, Yawuru Jarndu Aboriginal Corporation was awarded a \$140 000 grant to develop the Kimberley fashion industry development program and build on the successful Skutta Girl Indigenous Fashion Showcase. They are terrific projects.

Then there is the Aboriginal Pastoral Academy. The latest graduates of the pioneering Aboriginal Pastoral Academy will soon be sharing their newly acquired skills. Earlier this year, a further 10 participants completed 10 weeks of pre-appointment training at Roebuck Plains Station in the Kimberley through Nyamba Buru Yawuru Aboriginal Corporation's Warrmijala Murrgurlayi Rise Up to Work program and secured jobs for the 2023 pastoral season. The Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association will coordinate mentoring support and further skills training upon station placement.

These are fabulous projects. They are all about engaging Aboriginal people who had previously not had the opportunities to participate in the economic growth that is coming out of this government through its strong financial discipline and its ability to invest back into our community through infrastructure and economic diversification. I thank the member for the question.