

## **INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR**

*Statement by Minister for Innovation and ICT*

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Innovation and ICT)** [12.16 pm]: It is with great pleasure that I stand today to talk about the WA Innovator of the Year program. The WA Innovator of the Year program is the state's flagship innovation program, which was created in 2006 by the Carpenter Labor government. The Innovator of the Year program is part of the McGowan Labor government's plan to support innovators and entrepreneurs while promoting job creation and economic diversification in Western Australia.

The WA Innovator of the Year program has showcased innovative and entrepreneurial individuals, businesses and creative minds for nearly 15 years. The major aim of the program is to acknowledge and reward exceptional innovators in Western Australia who have developed an outstanding innovative product, technology or service that is at the emerging innovation or growth phase of development. The WA Innovator of the Year program is consistently discovering remarkable innovation in our state. The Innovator of the Year program has been funded under the new industries fund since 2017. So far, 17 businesses have received \$480 000 in funding, and 48 businesses have received extensive commercialisation training and networking opportunities.

Since winning three awards in 2019, TENSA Equipment has raised \$5 million from Blackbird Ventures to fund its innovation, Roborigger—a device that improves crane lifting safety and efficiency by keeping personnel away from under the crane load, where they might be injured. The team has grown from five to 15 employees since receiving its awards. Since completing the program in 2018, overall innovator of the year, uDrew, has established new patent agreements for Australia and New Zealand. In addition, it has leveraged \$750 000 from investors, \$508 000 from the accelerating commercialisation grant, \$25 000 from the SPUR location grant, and has created 11 full-time jobs. uDrew provides tools for home owners and contractors to enable them, without any technical skill or experience, to instantly design, engineer, manage and approve their own custom building project from start to finish.

As Minister for Innovation and ICT, I am focused on ensuring that this program and other initiatives of the McGowan state government's new industries fund provide strong, practical help for our homegrown innovators. The jobs of tomorrow are being dreamt up today, and the Innovator of the Year program ensures that those ideas become a reality.