

ABORIGINAL BUSINESSES — PROCUREMENT

143. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

My question, which is better than the last one, is to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The SPEAKER: No preamble, member.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to creating more job opportunities and improving economic conditions for Aboriginal people. Can the minister update the house on the success of this government's procurement policy and its efforts to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal businesses?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

One of the policies that we took to the election, and I am pleased to say has been very successful, was our Aboriginal procurement policy. It was very much designed around ensuring that Aboriginal businesses across Western Australia—regional and metropolitan—get the opportunity to access a small part of the very significant procurement spend of government each year. Over the years, a range of different policies have tried to promote Aboriginal businesses, but, to be honest, they have not worked. Over the years, we have seen very small and infrequent contracts awarded to Aboriginal-owned businesses. We held our second Aboriginal Business Expo last week, with some 280 Aboriginal businesses being married up with the effort of government spending. That is working. Our target—it is a small target—for the first year of the policy was one per cent of contracts being awarded to Aboriginal-owned businesses. That has come in at 4.77 per cent in year one. We report that by agency. What we see is that some agencies have done very well and some agencies have not done quite so well, but the point is to ensure that those agencies that are not meeting those targets are certainly encouraged to do so. That has resulted in some 179 contracts with a total value exceeding \$167 million. It is around triple the number of contracts awarded before the policy was introduced.

I want to make the point that this is not just small contracts that we are talking about. We have contracts up to \$97 million through the WA Country Health Service, Minister for Health, which is a very, very good contract for the provision of health services across the Kimberley. This is the practical reality of what can happen when one has a policy, puts effort into that policy, develops it in opposition, takes it to an election and implements it. That is why we are now seeing Aboriginal businesses in Western Australia having more opportunity for contracts; as a result, there is more opportunity to bring on Aboriginal people, because we know that Aboriginal-owned businesses are more likely to employ Aboriginal people; as a result, across Western Australia, we are seeing very, very good outcomes. Now that we have moved to two per cent, we want to not only see extra effort from those government agencies that have met the target to continue to do so, but also ensure that those agencies that have not met the targets can learn from other agencies and Aboriginal businesses and learn from those expos so that we get that sort of work flowing into Aboriginal businesses, create jobs, create opportunity and continue the economic growth that this state government has managed to return to our state.