

CORONAVIRUS — WA RECOVERY PLAN — REGIONAL LAND BOOSTER PACKAGE

536. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Treasurer:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's \$5.5 billion recovery plan that includes a significant investment in supporting jobs and businesses in our housing construction industry. Can the Treasurer update the house on how this government's regional land booster package is helping create a pipeline of work for businesses, workers and suppliers in regional WA?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for that very good question. If I can, just by way of an aside, before I get into the detail of that question, just note that the question was put by the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier about why the Freedom of Information Act is excluded. It is not unusual when we are dealing with particularly litigious third parties. As the member for Riverton knows, the same clause is in the Bell Group companies legislation that sought to complete the longstanding litigation regarding Bell, so it is not an unusual clause when dealing with particularly litigious third parties.

If I can, there has been a huge amount of effort to ensure that our construction sector is supported during this period of impact of the coronavirus, and members have seen—it has been much talked about around the community—the support that the state and the commonwealth government are providing to people who want to build a new home. One of the issues raised with me, as Minister for Lands, and has been for some time as I move around regional WA, is the price of industrial, commercial and residential land in regional Western Australia. We have to understand that in many of these locations, really, the only land available is held by the government through Development WA. Taking that on, we announced a few weeks ago a \$116 million regional land booster to create jobs in the region, and, importantly, to create a pipeline of work supported by the housing construction building bonus that the state government has provided.

I am very pleased indeed to say that this policy is already delivering results—in fact, much stronger results than I anticipated. In the first three weeks of the initiative, Development WA saw a fourfold increase in regional sale inquiries compared with the same period last year and already 40 lots across regional WA have been sold across residential and industrial space. What has been particularly pleasing is that we are seeing renewed interest in project areas where there have been no sales or inquiries for several years. That includes the first sale of industrial land in Kambalda in 13 years. Indeed, Development WA sold its first industrial land in Broome and Karratha in six years. The member for Kimberley will be delighted to know that in her electorate, land was sold to Broome's Blue Haze, a metal fabrications and manufacturing firm, which employs four locals and is investing \$500 000 in improvements. In the member for Pilbara's local town of Port Hedland, a lot was sold to a developer who is now leasing a new facility to Monadelphous Group mining services with 15 full-time employees.

Indeed, the Pilbara has seen a large residential demand for the regional land booster. In the first week alone, land buyers placed offers on 18 lots in Karratha's Madigan estate at Baynton West. People buying a residential property there are saving \$24 000. We are now releasing another 15 lots in Karratha to meet those demands. I figured that these policies would be successful, but the demand has been much stronger than I ever could have hoped, supported by a construction grant by the state and commonwealth governments and the fact that we as a state want fly in, fly out workers to relocate permanently to regional Western Australia. We are seeing and creating, through these efforts, a pipeline of work that will hopefully keep those people working and building and moving into new homes for the next couple of years.