

**Division 20: Wheatbelt Development Commission, \$224 000 —**

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have some questions. I give the call to the member for Wagin.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I refer to the fifth dot point on page 227 that states that the commission will launch and continue implementation of the regional investment blueprint. Can the minister let me know when that launch will take place and whether local groups or people have been involved in the development of that blueprint; and, if so, to what level?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** As the member knows, the blueprints are a guiding light on where to make investment. We have Wendy Newman with us, who is the chief executive officer of the Wheatbelt Development Commission. Wendy has been intimately involved with the aged-care theme that is coming through the blueprints as they apply to the wheatbelt area. I will happily ask Wendy to respond to the member's question about the timing of that response, and she might make some quick bridging comments around the aged-care theme and one or two of those initiatives.

**Ms W. Newman:** Thanks, minister. Yes, the minister will launch the wheatbelt investment blueprint this Thursday, which we are very excited about. It comes to fruition after over 200 consultations with our communities, key agencies and the not-for-profit and private industry sectors. That blueprint has six key pillars for development around our economy. The strength in our economy is traditionally broadacre agriculture, but recently it was overtaken by mining in value for industry. When we look at broadacre agriculture, we are probably looking at a population-decline scenario. If we are about achieving our population growth targets, how do we add value to that agricultural sector? How do we intensify the agricultural sector? There are some exciting opportunities in having a connection of good land with water. We are also focused on clever people. Our education attainment and aspirations, plus participation in training and apprenticeships, are not as high as we would hope if we are to develop and contribute a strong workforce, so that becomes a key theme for us, as does the attraction of a strong workforce. We have, after the mining regions, a very low employment rate and a very high participation rate, so there are issues there. We have nearly 200 communities. To us, that represents multiple exciting liveability options. We need to maximise the great social capital in those communities and continue that strong volunteering that creates our really vibrant and safe communities. Bringing together those communities and 43 local governments remains key to our work. As the member for Wagin noted earlier, some awesome work is being done by our groups of local government delivering on priority projects. As the minister mentioned, the key theme around those projects is aged care. We have seen some exciting developments in terms of age-friendly communities, and we have just rolled out a small grants scheme worth \$1.7 million around a really cool online app that enables communities to audit their age friendliness and then invest in their priority projects arising from that. Local governments are working on housing projects across communities to get that critical mass economies of scale, and with that housing comes a better delivery of home-care services up to high-level level 4 care packages. Of course, not every community can have residential care, but across our communities we can if we consider the not-for-profit sectors that provide good quality care and how we can invest in them to produce a really good outcome so that people are not travelling far from their communities.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Thank you.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

[12.20 pm]