

## **BUY LOCAL POLICY, LAUNCH**

*Statement by Minister for Services*

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys - Minister for Services) [2.07 pm]: The Government's new Buy Local policy has been officially launched and will come into effect on 1 November. As part of the policy launch and community information campaign, I have conducted a series of public forums throughout the State to outline to local business people the benefits of the Buy Local policy. I am delighted to inform members that nearly 500 people have so far attended these forums in both metropolitan and regional areas. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response from the business sector, especially small and regional-based businesses. Local media coverage of the forums has also acknowledged the significance of this new government policy. In *The Geraldton Guardian* editorial it was headlined as a good news policy. The article stated that the new mandatory buying policy for state government departments is a welcome move that should boost businesses operating in regional areas. According to the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry has embraced this new policy as a fresh start to boosting employment opportunities throughout the region. The president of the chamber, Tom Cole is quoted as saying that once the regional suppliers realise this policy exists and learn how to lock into it, it will be enormous.

These sentiments are also shared by the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which stated in a letter that it was very pleased with the process of consultation, its timeliness and the resultant policy, which recognises the importance of regional businesses. It further wrote that regional businesses now believe they are being recognised and rewarded for investing in the region.

This really is a good news policy and the level of reception it has received from these communities proves the Government has got it right. It represents a national first - the first time an Australian Government has channelled its purchasing power into a comprehensive policy to assist small business and regional economies. Buy Local will make it easier for small and regional business people to access the \$4.6b market generated annually by government on the purchase of goods, services and works. This policy for the first time imposes on government agencies a minimum local purchasing target. Under Buy Local, all government agencies are required to source at least 70 per cent of their goods and services locally.

The good news does not stop there. Buy Local is a policy that unashamedly supports Western Australian businesses. It tilts the playing field in favour of our local industry to the greatest extent possible under national competition rules. Buy Local introduces the broader concept of value for money. This will involve consideration of whole-of-life costs rather than just the initial cost. It will give businesses in this State, both metropolitan and regional, an advantage in competing against interstate and international rivals. In essence, Buy Local aims to foster a culture of buy local first in government purchasing and contracting. This will, in turn, deliver economic and social benefits to all Western Australians. Without doubt this policy is putting Western Australian communities first.