

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — REDUNDANCIES

162. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the 141 redundancies paid out by the Department of Agriculture and Food since 2008 at a cost of \$10.7 million.

- (1) Why has this department blown out its redundancy budget from \$7 million, as stated in June 2010, to \$10.1 million?
- (2) Where has the additional \$3.1 million for these redundancy payouts come from?
- (3) Why has the minister allowed 63 jobs across regional Western Australia to be slashed from this department?
- (4) Given that the minister supported 141 redundancies, why is the department now advertising for economists, policy developers, communications staff, business analysts and market analysts with salaries of up to \$128 000 a year?

Mr P.B. Watson: Get your graph out on that!

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

Absolutely! I thank the member for Collie–Preston very much for the question.

- (1)–(4) In respect to the budget figure, I suggest that the member has a closer look at the budget because, from my recollection, the figure for redundancies was in fact \$15 million, not \$7 million, which means we made a saving, if the member wants to put it that way as opposed to the coarse way that the member put the figures.

The member referred to 63 jobs in the regions, but he was selective in the number he picked out, because of course those redundancies relate to jobs right across Western Australia. It was a voluntary redundancy process, so people had the choice. It was a targeted voluntary redundancy, and I have no regrets about the path that we took in an endeavour to modernise the Department of Agriculture and Food so that it actually delivers something to industry.

The last point the member made was about advertising. The member must not have been listening on the day I talked about this in this house, because I talked about a number of things, one of which was the high loading of full-time equivalent staff that the department had. If we are to respond to the needs of industry, we need a cash component that is able to respond to that. Also, we need to put in place the skill set that modern agriculture needs in Western Australia. In eight years of a Labor government it took no steps to turn the Department of Agriculture and Food into a contemporary organisation so that it could deliver to the agriculture and food industry in this state and deliver to the great economy of Western Australia.