

HARVEY BEEF — JOB LOSSES

189. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to job losses announced today at Harvey Beef.

- (1) When did the government first become aware of these proposed cuts?
- (2) Has the minister met the staff and management of Harvey Beef to determine how the government can assist the state's leading beef abattoir to prevent the loss of jobs in the meat processing industry in WA?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS replied:

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for the question. Obviously, there is great concern about the announcement today from Harvey Beef to cut those worker numbers. It probably would have been more appropriate for the member to ask the question of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the person who is dealing with this issue on a one-on-one basis.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you deal only with good news?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: No. I understand that the Minister for Agriculture and Food spoke with the company just prior to lunch. The minister has been giving regular updates to the government on this issue. He has met the company on multiple occasions and he spoke to its people today. We are currently arranging—if the opposition is happy to make this happen and will provide the minister and me with a pair for tomorrow—to travel to Harvey to talk with the workers affected to make sure we can properly respond. As we did on the Ravensthorpe issue, we will make sure the government adequately responds. The one interesting thing about this government is that it does respond to the issues and listen closely to the local community, unlike the previous government, which ignored regional issues to such an extent that members opposite now find themselves on that side of the Parliament.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I distinctly heard the term “liar” used by several members opposite. I ask that they be asked to withdraw.

Mr V. CATANIA: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. It is nice to know there is some honesty in the house, member for North West.

Questions on Notice Resumed

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Given the opposition's strong concern about this issue, the opposition may wish the next question to also be asked by the member for Collie-Preston so that he can ask the minister who is dealing with this issue to answer the question.