

REGIONAL INVESTMENT FUND, FUTURE

**240. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Premier:**

Can the Premier outline the future of the regional investment fund?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

We are very proud of the initiative we took when we came to government to set up a regional investment fund. That fund, of course, has created enormous benefits for people living in rural and regional Western Australia. The original investment fund of \$75 million that we set up has been an outstanding success.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Already \$63 million has been approved for 585 projects throughout rural Western Australia. Let me note the leverage that is involved with this program. This program has levered another \$134 million of investment in our regions, bringing the total expenditure associated with the regional investment fund to \$198 million. Our best estimates indicate that it has contributed to the creation of 3 130 jobs in rural and regional Western Australia. It has been a success, and for that reason we will be extending the fund and making it an \$80 million fund over the next four years. In addition to the regional investment fund, the Government's regional investment tours have involved 84 investment proposals that have resulted in \$58 million flowing into regional Western Australia. The Government's regional cabinet program and the first regional sitting of Parliament in Albany this year have been outstanding successes. The Government is committed to the regions. Obviously, that causes some concern to members opposite. This Government is committed to ensuring that equal opportunities are provided to all Western Australians. I will compare that with the commitment of the previous Government. It abolished the uniform tariff for certain consumers living in rural and regional Western Australia.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How many?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: It is the principle that matters. The Opposition does not believe in a uniform tariff. The Government will tell everyone throughout rural and regional Western Australia to beware of the Liberals on electricity tariffs. For years the coalition Government talked about developments in Geraldton. However, this Government has facilitated development in Geraldton. I was pleased to be in Geraldton with the member for Geraldton on Sunday night. Geraldton is buzzing as a result of investments the Government has made in that city. The people of rural and regional Western Australia have benefited from the Government's commitments. Is there a coalition on the other side?

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Is that a drafting gate?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Is there a coalition yet? All we get from members on the other side is continual infighting. While that infighting occurs, their eyes go off the ball. When in government, the Leader of the Opposition, the then Minister for Energy, snuck under the cover and abolished the uniform tariff. That will not happen under the Labor Government. The privatisation that occurred under the previous Government and the contracting and outsourcing of services worked against rural and regional Western Australians. I say to everyone living in rural and regional Western Australia that Labor will fight for them and will back it up with action, not just words.