

QUESTION_REGIONAL GROWTH FUND

Mr BROCK (Frome) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. Can the minister advise the house when regional businesses will be able to apply for any eligible grants through the government's regional growth fund, which was part of your party's election campaign? Also, can the minister advise whether there has been any communication with regional development associations, which are the government's representatives in the regions, as to the progress and where this grant funding is?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE (Chaffey—Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development) (15:08): Thank you to the member for that question. What I can say is that this government proudly went to the election with a raft of regional policies to support the regions of South Australia that had been forgotten for 16 long years. What I can say to you, sir, is that this government will establish a regional growth fund that will provide long-term security for job creation—\$150 million over 10 years to support the growth in our regions of South Australia.

Establishing the regional growth fund was a 100-day commitment. That commitment will be upheld. What I can say is the government is working hard towards achieving that 100-day commitment. Again, unlike the former government, South Australian regions were a forgotten species. Sadly, the regions generating 50 per cent of this state's merchandise export economy were sadly left out in the cold. Way too often we heard that there weren't the votes in the regions and it wasn't relevant that we gave them the support that they needed. But this government will be different: we will be supporting the regions of South Australia.

To the member for Frome, I can assure you that the regional growth fund will be rolled out—\$15 million a year for 10 years. That is critical job growth economy. The \$15 million will be administered in due course. That raft of funding will be brought out for the regional sector. It will not be issued to individual businesses. The previous regional fund was always there for company assistance. I want to make sure that this money is there for regional assistance.