

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Commercial Ready Program

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (6.52 p.m.)—I rise to express my outrage at the axing of the Commercial Ready program by this financially and small-business illiterate government. The program was originally instituted by the Howard government, with \$707 million over four years and up to \$200 million per year, to provide grants to small companies to assist them to bring new and innovative products to the market. Commercial Ready was a competitive, merit based organisation, supporting innovation and its commercialisation. It offered a single point to competitive grants for early-stage commercialisation activities, research and development of products with high commercial potential and proof-of-concept activities. For companies finding funds hard to come by, and where venture capital firms would not take the risk, Commercial Ready filled the void.

Prior to the election, the current Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Carr, promised only to shave Commercial Ready. However, in an act of what can only be seen as downright and utter dishonesty, he went forward to absolutely abolish it. In Fadden, my electorate, the fastest growing electorate in the nation, the Family Fair Fruit Salad has put in months of effort and time in good faith and spent thousands and thousands of dollars with consultants to help it navigate a bureaucratic process that was fair and rigorous although time consuming. Now, with its application ready to be assessed, the program has been completely wiped out by this Labor government. If this Labor government were even half serious about supporting industry and innovation, it would not have removed this program. (*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr AJ Schultz)—It being approximately 6.55 pm, in accordance with standing order 192A the time for members' statements has concluded.