



Regions won't get more from \$2b royalties hike

GAVIN BOX

9956 1041

FORMER State transport minister and National Party MP Murray Criddle has questioned the Government's quarantining of increased mining royalties from Royalties for Regions.

The State Government raised mining royalties in its May Budget, but has indicated the Royalties for Regions agreement will not apply to these funds.

The increase is expected to generate an extra \$2 billion for the Government over three years. Under an agreement struck between the National and Liberal parties to form government, 25 per cent of mining royalties were to go to Royalties for Regions.

Mr Criddle, who served as Transport Minister in the for-

mer Court Liberal Government, yesterday said he believed the agreement was for all royalties — present and future.

"This is something for the party to consider, but I'd be disappointed if there was any change to the agreement," he said.

Mr Criddle is a National Party member and served as Member for the Agricultural Region from 1993 to 2008.

He is retired from politics and is now chairman of the Mid West Development Commission.

Opposition regional development spokesman Mark McGowan said the State Government had broken an election promise on royalty

payments for regional WA.

But National Party Member for Moore, Grant Woodhams, said the Opposition was playing politics.

Mr Woodhams said he was "very comfortable" with the exclusion of the additional royalties and did not believe it would have an adverse impact on regional WA.

He turned instead on Labor, claiming that if elected to government it would strip away Royalties for Regions.

"They would devolve as much as possible Royalties for Regions," he said.

"I believe that is what they would do."

The Liberal Member for Geraldton, Ian Blayney, said the 25 per cent agreement

ought to be considered over the long-term — to better take into account variance in the price of minerals.

"There is wisdom in saying 25 per cent of royalties goes into the Royalties for Regions long-term — and, when fluctuations in price occurs, that some should be taken off for revenue," he said.

The Liberal Member for the Agricultural Region, Brian Ellis, said the State would not need to look at ways to reduce its spending if the Federal Government gave it a fairer share of GST funding.

He said he did not believe the Government's move to garner the royalties increase would be detrimental for regional WA.