

AUSTRALIAN REMOTE OPERATIONS FOR SPACE AND EARTH

64. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Science:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to diversifying the WA economy, demonstrated by its success in securing Perth as the headquarters for the Australian Remote Operations for Space and Earth.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how this will ensure that WA is a global leader when it comes to remote operations in space?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this —

The SPEAKER: Member for Moore!

Ms J.J. SHAW: — will help further drive the WA economy and create more local jobs?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Swan Hills for her keen interest in space and for that question. Members may not be aware but the Americans have set themselves a timetable of putting a person back on the moon by 2024. That is not very far away. The Americans intend to establish a permanent base on the moon and to use that base as a staging point to then go on to Mars. In order to achieve that project, the Americans intend to spend hundreds of billions of dollars—hundreds of billions of dollars. We have an opportunity in Western Australia to be part of the Australian–NASA Moon to Mars partnership. We are world leaders in remote operations. Through our activities in the mining industry in the Pilbara and off the coast of Western Australia in the oil and gas industry, we are recognised as world leaders in remote operations. It goes without saying, and people understand, that if we are going to operate machinery and the like on Mars or the moon, remote operations are crucial to what we are going to do. We have an opportunity to have Western Australian industry people, who are experts in remote operations, participate in that moon to Mars project.

The Australian Space Agency has recognised Western Australian expertise in this area and has supported our efforts to establish an industry consortium called Australian Remote Operations for Space and Earth—AROSE. Yesterday, we announced that the headquarters of that national entity would be here in Western Australia. The foundation partners, along with the state government, are Woodside, Rio Tinto, Curtin University, the University of Western Australia, Fugro Ltd and Nova Systems. As foundation partners, the purpose of AROSE is to really bring the expertise that we have on remote operations and allow Western Australian businesses to engage with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's moon to Mars project. The state government has committed \$1.5 million to that project over the next two years. The modelling that has been done by PwC Australia indicates that that project alone can deliver over 1 500 jobs to Western Australia over the next five years.

It was great yesterday to meet Colonel Pam Melroy. She is one of the few women to have had the honour of piloting one of the space shuttles. She did that on a number of occasions. She has also visited the International Space Station on a number of occasions. To have her there as part of the launch really just shows what is possible. It is great to have someone like her, obviously a well-known female astronaut, to be an example to the young women in Western Australia as to what is possible.

What people do not know is that Western Australia played a key role in the Apollo missions. Last year was the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. At Carnarvon, we had the largest tracking station outside the United States. Over 200 staff were employed at Carnarvon. They were television technicians and telephonists, who all retrained to be part of the space race. We were an essential part of the Apollo mission. As Western Australians, we can now play a significant role in NASA's project to the moon and then on to Mars, and in doing so we can deliver a significant boost to the Western Australian economy.