

STATE BIOTECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

496. Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO to the Minister for Science and Innovation:

Can the minister inform the house what the state government is doing to grow the biotechnology industry in Western Australia?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for Ballajura for his question and, of course, for his interest in the biotechnology sector. Last week the Premier and I were at Murdoch University for the launch of the biotechnology strategy. It is the state's first-ever biotechnology strategy. It is a fabulous strategy. Basically, the strategy aims to accelerate the growth of the biotechnology sector in Western Australia. The biotechnology sector generally is the world's fastest growing industry and because of the skills, knowledge and capability we have in this state, we are going to be a world player - not as big as China or India - in the biotechnology sector. The strategy provides a pathway for the future development of this industry in Western Australia. It highlights in particular the much-needed infrastructure. We have the skills, knowledge and capability, but we need the matching infrastructure. This strategy basically sets out a pathway and highlights things such as the need for phase 1 and 2A clinical trial beds, incubator facilities for spin-off companies and laboratories, and technology parks around hospitals. It will create an environment for the growth of this industry and comes on top of the \$82 million that the state government has committed to this industry over the past 12 months.

It is a very impressive strategy, but, of course, I am biased and I would say that. Other people have very clear views about our approach to growing the biotechnology industry in Western Australia and about the biotechnology strategy. The 2003 Australian of the Year, Professor Fiona Stanley, said that the strategy would enable Western Australia to be more competitive and to attract national and international funding for research. The 2005 Australian of the Year, Professor Fiona Wood, said that the state government had clearly listened to the needs of the community to ensure that biotechnology makes a big difference in delivering health care and finding solutions in agriculture. Western Australia's Nobel prize winner, Professor Barry Marshall, said that the strategy would support all forms of scientific research in Western Australia. Murdoch University vice-chancellor, Professor John Yovich, said that the strategy was the best document ever produced by a state government. They are fabulous statements about the state government.

The biotechnology sector in Western Australia is composed of about 56 companies, employing 550 people, and that is 11 per cent of Australia's total biotechnology industry. We have 17 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, with a market capitalisation of \$550 million, and we have a couple of Nobel prize winners. It is only going to get bigger. It is part of the Carpenter government's building on the boom and looking beyond, and of building industries that can grow the economy beyond the boom strategy.