

RESOURCE SECTOR — ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS BILATERAL AGREEMENT

**1085. Ms J. FARRER to the Premier:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to giving the resource sector the certainty it needs to create jobs and help drive the Western Australian economy. Can the Premier outline to the house how the environmental approvals bilateral agreement he has proposed to the Prime Minister would help get major job-creating projects underway sooner and ensure that billions of dollars' worth of investment is not held up by unnecessary bureaucracy?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank member for Kimberley for the question. Yesterday and today, I attended the Resources Technology Showcase at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre and saw some of the displays and activities being undertaken there. I would like to congratulate the organisers of that event. It is a great showcase for Western Australian industry. Over the next few years, we are potentially going to see tens of billions of dollars of additional investment in resources projects in Western Australia. We are working hard with the relevant players on the Scarborough and Browse projects to bring them to fruition and onshore at the Burrup Hub. Between them, they are worth around \$45 billion. Our major iron ore producers, such as Rio Tinto, FMG and BHP, have significant expansions either underway or planned that will create thousands of jobs. We are doing everything we can to ensure that that work occurs here and as much manufacturing work related to those projects as possible occurs here in Western Australia.

One of the things I wrote to the Prime Minister about was trying to ensure that we remove redundant and replicated approval processes between the commonwealth and the state. We are very strong supporters, and I am personally a very strong supporter, of high environmental standards, but I would like to see that if approval processes are fit to be undertaken, the same approval processes not be undertaken at the federal and state level that result in additional costs and delays for major resources projects in Western Australia. I have written to the Prime Minister urging that processes be undertaken by the state Environmental Protection Authority that we expect would reduce time frames on project approvals or otherwise by six months. That would not involve any additional legislative change, but would ensure a speed-up of job opportunities and projects here in Western Australia. As I said, I do not want to see any reduction in environmental protections or standards. I just want to see a removal of duplication at the state and federal level. I hope to receive a positive outcome on that from the Prime Minister.

On top of that, last year we provided an additional \$3 million to the EPA to fund additional staff because of the increasing workload with new opportunities coming onstream. We just announced today an additional \$1.7 million for additional staff at the EPA to deal with the backlog of work. We are very keen, particularly in light of the Resources Technology Showcase that was on yesterday and today. My ministers and I were very happy to attend an event last night. I saw the member for Dawesville wandering around unable to find his seat.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was like musical chairs. He did not have a seat. I wonder why that was.

We expect that the bilateral agreement we are proposing with the commonwealth would ensure high environmental standards, but slash approval times and result in thousands of jobs for our state.