

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

7. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the minister representing the Minister for Indigenous Affairs:

I refer to the “Report on Ngarda Civil & Mining’s Machine Operator Work Readiness Training Strategy” as referred to in General Sanderson’s report on Indigenous employment —

- (1) Does the minister have an employment strategy for Indigenous people?
- (2) If yes to (1), has the government considered the barriers and challenges to Indigenous employment in the Australian mining industry as detailed in the above report, in particular —
 - (a) the initial set-up costs for work readiness mining training;
 - (b) additional resources required to bring students up to certain educational standards;
 - (c) the need to shift the focus of training to real jobs orientation; for example, by paying trainees their full entitlements, such as superannuation, so they learn about the employer-employee relationship;
 - (d) introduce a simplified and fair wage subsidy for all trainees regardless of past individual circumstances;
 - (e) consider a moratorium on welfare benefits to enable long-term unemployed trainees to get on their feet once they gain employment; and
 - (f) consider alternative penalties to jail for fine defaults?
- (3) If no to (1), will the minister consider the recommendations in the Ngarda report and support changes to government policy that enhance employment for Indigenous Australians in the mining industry?

Hon SIMON O’BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(2) Notwithstanding that the commonwealth government has primary responsibility for employment policy, the government of Western Australia is a signatory to the bilateral agreement on Indigenous affairs, which includes an Indigenous economic development framework to improve training and job opportunities for Indigenous Western Australians. The framework addresses a number of the issues listed in part (2) of the honourable member’s question. The government is a signatory to three regional partnership agreements—Port Hedland, Ashburton-Roebourne, and east Kimberley—with the commonwealth government and the members of the Minerals Council of Australia, which have an Indigenous employment and economic development focus.
- (3) The government will consider the recommendations in the Ngarda report and any other suggestions for improving employment for Indigenous people.