

STATE ECONOMY — EMPLOYMENT

945. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Premier:

Can the Premier update the house on how the McGowan Labor government's comprehensive job-creating agenda is growing business confidence, attracting more investment and delivering more jobs for Western Australians?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury—an outstanding advocate for the south west. On behalf of the Minister for Health, I acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery members of the Women Leaders in Public Health, who have come along this afternoon; I thank you for your attendance.

It is the case that unemployment figures move around, month to month, but there is no doubt that there is now a trend in place and that we are seeing clear employment growth and jobs being created in Western Australia. We now have a record number of Western Australians in work—that is 1 350 000 of our citizens in jobs, and that is 47 000 more Western Australians in work than at the time of the last state election in March last year. Of those, 34 000 have found full-time employment—that is the highest figure since May 2015—and the number of underemployed is lower than it was when we came to government. We have the highest participation rate in the country. If our participation rate reflected those of other states, we would have one of the lowest employment rates in the nation.

Businesses in Western Australia are now more confident about hiring workers in our state, and I would like to run members through a couple of projects. Firstly, we cleared the way for the Albemarle Kemerton Lithium Plant for the south west. I look forward to that generating jobs for people in Harvey, Australind, Bunbury, Collie and those sorts of communities down there. There will be 500 jobs during construction and 500 permanent operational jobs. We have seen the \$800 million expansion of Karrinyup Shopping Centre, which is expected to create 2 500 jobs during construction and another 2 500 jobs in retail and management once underway. There is also the Belmont Park redevelopment. The first stage —

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Golden Group's \$3.8 million Belmont Park redevelopment is underway and I note that the opposition is saying that that is nothing to do with us, but I want to quote Golden Group's managing director, Andrew Sugiaputra, who said —

“The signing of this tender is a testament to the Government's commitment to rebuilding WA's economy,”

That is what he had to say.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is what he said last week, and we are in government; he was not talking about you. I doubt you are ever going to see government again, Leader of the Opposition.

Last week I opened the RAC Monkey Mia Dolphin Resort—a \$20 million investment in the Shire of Shark Bay. Today we see more signs of confidence in the office buildings at King's Square and Perth City Link. One, which has sat nearly empty since 2015, is now almost fully leased. We are also seeing new projects in the mining sector all over the state.

Other people are acknowledging the success of the economy these days, and I want to quote the Leader of the Opposition, who has recognised that there are more jobs.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Please, Leader of the Opposition; you can ask your question, and I will speak now.

He told the Urban Development Institute of Australia's National Congress on Friday last week, according to my notes —

“I want to emphasise this: the mining sector growth now is the best I've ever seen in 30 years of watching the economy.”

Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. I am pleased to see him acknowledging what an excellent job this government is doing in getting the economy back on track after his disastrous period in government.