

EMPLOYMENT FIGURES, WOMEN

**301. Mrs PARKER to the Minister for Women's Interests:**

What are the implications of the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics employment figures for women in Western Australia?

**Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. It has given me a wonderful opportunity to investigate this situation.

Although we must never be complacent about employment and unemployment figures, it is interesting to note that the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics contain good news for women. The unemployment rate for women fell to 4.7 per cent in September, down 1 per cent from 5.7 per cent in August. It is impressive that this is the lowest rate in the history of women's employment in Western Australia. That is a significant achievement. The figure for WA is also 1 per cent below the national average. This is at a time when more women have been entering the work force. In September, 6 900 women in this State obtained employment. As was said earlier, one of the reasons for that is the State's strong economy, which has given women the choice to go into the work force if they wish to - the jobs are available.

Over seven years of very sound economic management and industrial reform have delivered dividends to families around this State. In 1996, the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, a survey was conducted and, overall, 88 per cent of respondents agreed that the best way to reduce poverty is to create more jobs. That is what the Government has done. The number of women in employment has increased by about one-third since this Government came to office. That is an additional 100 000 jobs for women. When this Government took office from the Labor Party, the unemployment rate for women was at a high of 9.9 per cent. It is now 4.7 per cent - a great result for all Western Australians. The Government has taken one of the most effective measures it possibly could to improve the living standards of families.