

PAYROLL TAX EXEMPTION THRESHOLD

918. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

Thank you, Premier. I have a supplementary question. Will the Premier give small business some hope and commit to increasing the payroll tax exemption threshold in the next state budget, if not before?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I repeat, we are listening to the small business community. We meet with its members regularly and we understand the issue. At the same time, we are the only government in Australia that is driving down debt. The Liberal government in New South Wales is driving it through the roof. The Liberal governments in South Australia and Tasmania are both driving it up, but not to the same degree. Other governments across the country are driving up debt. One government in Australia is driving down debt—that is, the Western Australian Labor government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: We inherited forty thousand million dollars of debt from the Liberal–National government, which was clearly an issue that had to be dealt with. As we have shown in the last few weeks, we understand that job creation is important. Hence, we launched our school maintenance program, our hospital maintenance program, our cuts to TAFE fees for specific courses—very much focused on job creation—and our campaign to secure the Collins-class submarine full cycle docking contract for Western Australia. The other week, I announced the Chinatown redevelopment in Broome, and today I announced the construction of a new primary school in Mt Lockyer in Albany. We understand there is an issue. We are doing everything we can to have targeted initiatives to create jobs in Western Australia, and we will continue to do that.