

STATE ECONOMY — JOBS

448. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Premier:

Before I begin, on behalf of the member for Southern River, I welcome the students from Excelsior Primary School.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to driving the state's economic recovery and creating more jobs for Western Australians. Can the Premier update the house on today's Australian Bureau of Statistics job figures and outline what they show about this government's unprecedented investment in creating jobs, supporting business and driving economic growth?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. Just before I answer that, I would like to provide an update to the house on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. First of all, I think I would speak on behalf of all of us when I say how tragic and sad it is what has occurred in recent days in Afghanistan and the human tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes.

We knew on the weekend that there would need to be some evacuation of people out of Afghanistan. We were in contact with the commonwealth government, and the health minister and I advised our bureaucrats that we were very keen to do what Western Australia could do to assist Australians and visa holders coming out of Afghanistan if that was required. The commonwealth has taken up that opportunity. As of the first flight, which is due to arrive within the next 24 hours, up to 100 evacuees will go into hotel quarantine in Perth. These evacuees are a mix of Australians and visa holders—obviously, mainly the interpreters and the like who assisted our defence forces in Afghanistan. We have been working on this arrangement since Saturday. The flight will arrive either tonight or tomorrow morning with these people on board.

Police, Health and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have been working around the clock to make sure that this can be put in place. We have made space available in the Hyatt Regency hotel; some floors have been cleared in order to put these evacuees in that hotel. We will ensure, and I have received every guarantee, that every COVID-19 safety protocol will be adhered to from the airport to quarantine, and beyond. We will do everything we can to ensure that every precaution is put in place to protect those people coming in, and, indeed, to protect the broader Western Australian community and the staff involved from any COVID-19 infections or any other illnesses as part of this. It is obviously a very serious matter. We just want to do our bit as Australians to assist those people impacted and assist the commonwealth government in its time of need.

On to the question from the member, we have been focused on two things over our time in office, in particular the last 18 months. That is the health and safety of Western Australians, and also creating jobs for Western Australians. The two are not mutually exclusive. Today's ABS job figures highlight that fact. The unemployment rate has fallen to 4.6 per cent. That is the lowest unemployment rate in eight years. By contrast, when we arrived in office, the unemployment rate in Western Australia was 6.5 per cent. Under this government, we have seen a massive drop in unemployment. The youth unemployment rate is now the lowest it has been since 2014 and also the lowest of all the states. When it comes to creating jobs, we have a record number of Western Australians in work. There are now 1.41 million Western Australians in work. In terms of the monthly figures, in July we saw 6 500 jobs created in Western Australia. The encouraging thing is that these were full-time jobs. By contrast, there were 2 200 jobs created across the rest of the country. So if it was not for Western Australia, the nation would have gone backwards. Under this government, 106 800 Western Australians are in work above the number who were in work when we came to office. That is 106 800 jobs created under this government, in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and recession.

We will continue to invest and create opportunities to drive our jobs growth, whether it is from investment in training and TAFE; cutting red tape; investing in infrastructure such as Metronet; the Perth City Deal, an initiative by Edith Cowan University; or the WACA redevelopment project, on which I turned the first sod this morning. That goes to show that if we have a government that has the right priorities and is prepared to take action when required, particularly in relation to COVID, we can create good health outcomes and good job outcomes at the same time.