

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR NEW ENERGY INDUSTRY

279. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the surge in business confidence during the first year of the McGowan Labor government and the McGowan Labor government's commitment to work with industry to sustain that confidence and create jobs. Can the minister outline to the house how the support provided by the government to the Minerals Research Institute of Western Australia delivers on that commitment?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

What an excellent question, Mr Speaker! I am pleased that on Friday, along with the Premier and the member for Kwinana, I was able to announce the \$5.5 million allocation to fulfil a McGowan government election commitment at the 2017 election to encourage research-intensive programs in renewable energy and battery technology at Western Australian universities, and to work with technology companies, universities, TAFEs and electricity utilities to provide opportunities for emerging battery technologies. The government has allocated \$5.5 million towards attracting to Western Australia the Cooperative Research Centre for New Energy Industry. This is an exciting opportunity. I want to also compliment the Minister for Science, who has found another \$500 000 to add to this. A total of \$6 million has been put on the table by the Western Australian government to show that we are deadly serious about wanting this CRC in Western Australia. The CRC will bring higher skilled jobs, research opportunities and intellectual property to right here in Western Australia. This is an incredible opportunity to change the nature of Western Australia's relationship with the mining and resources sector. For the first time ever, we will be able to have genuine downstream processing, not just for the raw material for the first stage, but eventually, if we handle this correctly, it will transform manufacturing using our base resources in this state. Remember, a lithium-ion battery contains many materials other than lithium. All those materials are available here in Western Australia. But it is going to take research and development, and hard work and effort, to get this to work.

We are very lucky, because we have this unique opportunity now in Western Australia to fill this important niche. This commitment by this government is part of that strategy. We need the federal government to stump up and allocate this CRC to Western Australia. I am very pleased that I have already spoken to one Liberal senator from Western Australia, and I have had another Liberal senator reach out to me to get the details of the work that we are doing in this space. I invite the Liberal opposition in Western Australia to get on board with the McGowan government's campaign.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is ridiculous! There has never before now been such an opportunity. Not one cent was allocated to this CRC by the former government—not a single penny. Now members opposite claim it was their idea. It was so much their idea that they had not thought about it; that is how much of an idea of theirs it was! But I am inviting the opposition, as I have done with those Liberal senators. If the opposition wants to get on board with the McGowan government's campaign to get this cooperative research centre in Western Australia, because it is an important part of transforming this state's economy, then I welcome it getting involved because this is essential. I have already spoken to federal ministers. On behalf of the McGowan government, I am on board to make sure that we get this CRC in Western Australia so that we can harness all the activity in this state to not just mine, but also process and create chemical industries and high-paying jobs. I will let the National Party know that if it gets on board with us on this idea, there could be 1 000 high-paying jobs outside Bunbury at the Kemerton estate. I know that the National Party is a bit confused on this issue. It has a member in the upper house asking why SQM did not place its facility in Kalgoorlie and, at the same time, it has a member for the South West Region saying on radio that he had lobbied to have it in Kemerton. When the National Party decides where it wants to play the game, it can get on board with the visionary leadership of Premier McGowan and help us to get this done. It will only be by supporting the vision of Mark McGowan that we will succeed in Western Australia with this important task. Premier McGowan is the one putting the leadership forward to create jobs in this state and I look forward to the opposition joining with Premier McGowan in that work.