

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN JOBS BILL 2017 — REGIONAL JOBS

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitments to creating and supporting local jobs right across the state—a commitment we have demonstrated through the landmark Western Australian Jobs Bill 2017. How will the Western Australian Jobs Bill support jobs in regional Western Australia, particularly those in Bunbury, and how will the Western Australian Jobs Bill ensure regional businesses have the best chance of securing government contracts?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for the question. Before answering it, on behalf the member for Kalamunda I welcome the year 5 students of Carmel Adventist College, their teachers and accompanying parents who are visiting Parliament this afternoon in the public gallery. There they are—a very happy bunch.

Firstly, I indicate to the house once again that confidence is back in Western Australia. Under this government, confidence is back in the business community, and we are seeing the Western Australian economy continuing to improve. Today we saw the jobs figures come down. We have seen the trend figure for unemployment steady at 5.6 per cent; the seasonally adjusted figure has fallen from 5.9 per cent to 5.7 per cent; 8 000 new jobs have been created in Western Australia; and Western Australia, unlike the situation under the former government, no longer has the worst unemployment rate in Australia.

Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, that under the Liberal–National government, Western Australia had the worst unemployment rate in Australia? We are now ahead of Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Under Labor, our state's economy is continuing to improve. But we have before the Parliament right now the Western Australian Jobs Bill 2017 to ensure that Western Australian businesses have the best opportunities to secure government work. One of the things we want to do is work with regional businesses to give them the best chance of winning government work. Currently, only six per cent of the value of government contracts goes to regional businesses. We have converted our regional development commissions to ensure that they have a dedicated local content officer working with local businesses to win government contracts. We have ensured that the websites of the regional development commissions have government work and contracts on them so that regional businesses can work with the development commission, look on its website to see what is available and have assistance in winning government contracts. We want to make sure that regional businesses are the beneficiaries of government contracts. We heard in the Parliament yesterday—I do not think it was picked up by many people but it is worth mentioning—why the last government failed to support regional businesses. The Minister for Water interjected on the member for Churchlands and said that voters —

threw the Liberal Party out because it had eight years without a jobs plan.

The member for Churchlands responded and said —

Yes, but the people of Western Australia know that. The member is not telling us anything we do not know.

I rest my case.