

URANIUM MINING

197. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

Can the minister please advise the house how Western Australia will benefit from poor decisions by the new Labor government in Queensland?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for the question. I was surprised to hear that the new Labor government in Queensland has banned the mining of uranium. It means that about 166 million tonnes of uranium ore will not be mined in Queensland, and that means jobs. For Western Australia, Queensland's loss is our gain. It means less competition. We have four mines ready to press the button to move into production.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn!

Mr W.R. MARMION: When we won the 2008 election, we made it clear that we support the mining of resources and in particular uranium mining. Since 2008, \$300 million has been spent by industry on uranium exploration. That is \$300 million that translates into jobs for Western Australians. We now have four major uranium mines ready to go into production when the price of uranium goes up. Queensland deciding that it will not be in the game is terrific for us. There is a possible export of \$1 billion worth of uranium per annum out of Western Australia. Think of the royalties. Members can work out for themselves what is five per cent of \$1 billion a year. If those four mines go into operation, 1 500 jobs in construction —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, you have nothing to do with this question.

Mr W.R. MARMION: It is a very easy calculation. If these mines go into operation, there will be 1 500 jobs and also indirect employment for all the service industries. The future is very bright for uranium, with China, India and the United Arab Emirates all looking to develop further nuclear reactors. I will not give the figures, but it is very prospective and we will be well placed.

This issue emphasises a very clear distinction in Western Australia between the Liberal–National government and the Labor Party. The policy of the Labor Party is very clear. At the last election, Mark McGowan outlined Labor Party policy as follows —

“I ... want to assure the public that if no mines are under construction or no mines have received approval to commence construction at the time of the next election, then there will be no uranium mines in WA under any government I lead.”

That is the opposite of the Liberal–National government's policy. We support uranium mining.