

SCIENCE INITIATIVES

**924. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Premier:**

Will the Premier advise the House of what new science initiatives are being undertaken in Western Australia?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

I am very pleased that I will be launching National Science Week here in Western Australia tonight. Science Week will run from 16 to 24 August. It is aimed at encouraging awareness of science in the community and, most importantly, encouraging dialogue between our science organisations and the broader society. Last year Science Week was an outstanding success. This year's events include exhibitions, displays, open days, bush trips, hypotheticals, lectures, workshops, competitions, quizzes, media shows and science broadcasts. Over the past few months the Government has made a number of outstanding announcements in the science area.

Two weeks ago I launched the new Western Australian major research facilities program. This \$21 million program is designed to lure major research projects and build a number of high-impact scientific research facilities in Western Australia. The total budget for each of these centres will be a minimum of \$60 million, with the State Government providing 20 to 30 per cent of the funding. It will seek support from the business, research and public sectors for the rest. There are six categories for consideration: oil, gas and minerals; health; agriculture and fisheries; information and communications technologies; environment, with an emphasis on water and salinity; and marine.

I also announced in recent weeks a major boost to the Scitech Discovery Centre in West Perth. Under the new agreement, Scitech will receive \$10.2 million for a capital works upgrade, which includes the establishment of a new state-of-the-art planetarium. This will be in addition to \$14.2 million in operational funding over the next five years. Scitech has played an outstanding role in science education. Many youngsters have visited Scitech. It participates in the community not only in the metropolitan area but also throughout Western Australia. Yesterday it celebrated its fifteenth birthday. Three and a half million people have visited the centre since it was opened. It was a great Labor initiative. I take this opportunity in the House today to congratulate Hon Malcolm Bryce, the original supporter of the foundation of Scitech along with some great Western Australian business people, including Mr John Stokes, the initial chairperson of Scitech, who came together to create a wonderful institution. The future of our State will be determined by our creativity. Western Australia is a huge State and it has a tremendous number of resources. However, it suffers from what the great Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey once described as the tyranny of distance. In order to make sure that the resources that we have are utilised for the benefit of the world and to create jobs and opportunities for Western Australians we will need to be creative. We have been creative in the past, but the pace of change has increased, and the need for scientific innovation has become essential and not just an afterthought. In order for us to make sure that we are up there, we need to have a strong emphasis on science.

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I know the Leader of the Opposition is not interested in these major issues that affect jobs and opportunities for Western Australians. However, every member on this side of the House is committed to a future based on creativity and education. Can we say the same thing about the Liberal Party?