

COLLINS-CLASS SUBMARINE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

**1088. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Defence Issues:**

On behalf of the member for Mount Lawley, I would first like to acknowledge representatives of the Mount Lawley Primary School Parents and Citizens Association in the gallery today.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's fight to secure more defence maintenance and manufacturing jobs for Western Australians and its commitment to continue to grow our skilled workforce. Can the minister advise the house whether he is aware of anyone who does not have confidence in Western Australia's capability to undertake this work and is seeking to undermine this government's efforts?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I thank the member for the question. Sadly, I can confirm that someone is very obviously engaged in undermining the efforts of Western Australia to bring full-cycle docking to Western Australia. It is sad to reflect on the fact that on Monday, the Leader of the Opposition went on air on 6PR and, on an unrelated matter, chose to raise full-cycle docking. She suggested that somehow Western Australia is incapable of doing the task, that our workers are unskilled and incapable of meeting the demands of that task and that South Australia is and therefore should retain the task. That is the implication when the member makes such ridiculous observations in the public domain. Today she will double-down by moving this outrageous and laughable matter of public interest suggesting that the house condemns the current government for not doing enough to get full-cycle docking, "which threatens Western Australia's chance of being awarded the entire program, compromising economic activity and jobs". That, on its own, represents the most reckless and irresponsible act by a Leader of the Opposition that I have witnessed in my almost 13 years in Parliament. It is extraordinary that someone who purports to represent the interests of the Western Australian public through her role as the leader of the Western Australian opposition would actively engage in a campaign in support of the federal government deciding to allow South Australia to retain a task that should come to WA, obviously in Western Australia's interest and also in the national interest. It is not as though we have just arrived at this at this moment in time. This is a critical point in time, and perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might want to stop tapping on her phone for a moment and consider this.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Right now, the federal government is determining, based on advice from the Australian Defence Force, whether full-cycle docking will move to Western Australia. That process is underway. It is a live consideration by the federal government as we speak and the Leader of the Opposition has engaged in an effort to undermine Western Australia's campaign. She is the only one doing so, with the ignorant, ill-informed observations that she has made on radio and will repeat in Parliament today through her matter of public interest. I can tell members that this is not something we have just arrived at. We commenced the effort to bring full-cycle docking to Western Australia in October last year, when the Premier launched the "Western Australian Defence and Defence Industries Strategic Plan". It is a public document. It was drafted by Major General Jeff Sengelman, former Special Operations Commander to Australia. It was written in full consultation and collaboration with former defence minister Christopher Pyne, who, in my observation, was probably the second best defence minister Australia has ever had after Kim Beazley. We made six strategies to promote the defence industry in Western Australia, and the premier action of one of them states —

Develop and promote a comprehensive case for Western Australia to be the principal location for all submarine maintenance and sustainment.

That is on page 3 of the document that I hope the Leader of the Opposition would have read. I know she is not very good at finding documents, because she could not find one that was given to her office on Friday, but this one is publicly available and I will give her a copy later, if she wants it. Since that time, we have been working with the new defence minister—we saw her in the week after she took office—and we drew to her attention that action. We said that we would be making the case for full-cycle docking in accordance with that strategic plan and we commenced our task. PricewaterhouseCoopers and ACIL Allen Consulting were commissioned to do strategic and economic arguments for why the task should come to WA. Later in the year, Advisian and Oropesa compiled a list of infrastructure necessary for bringing full-cycle docking to Western Australia. We gave the Minister for Defence a business case, committing Western Australia to all the training costs associated with building the blue-collar workforce, and we have undertaken to fund the apprentices who will need to be trained. That is in our business case. If we get the task, we will fund infrastructure identified as being necessary by the Defence Force for full-cycle docking and we have undertaken to commit all necessary planning changes to establish a defence precinct. All those things are underway with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, the Australian Industry and Defence Network of Western Australia, the Henderson Alliance, every public university, major defence businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises and all the state government agencies.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** This is an important matter, Mr Speaker. It is important that we bring to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition that she is jeopardising the interests of Western Australia's defence industry and the Western Australian public, and it is incredible that she would choose to do so in a field of endeavour that she has no experience in, no skill in and no knowledge of. She has not even bothered to apprise herself of our strategy, unlike the shadow minister who sits right next to her, who said that he is fully supportive of the full-cycle docking case.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** We all are.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Why could he not tell his leader to keep her mouth closed at this critical time? It is critical that everyone in Western Australia support this effort. It is extraordinary that the Leader of the Opposition should choose to undermine it. I cannot understand why she would do it.