

**ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE**

**HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan - Minister for Local Government)** [10.00 pm]: I move -  
That the house do now adjourn.

*Corruption and Crime Commission - Adjournment Debate*

**HON SHELLEY ARCHER (Mining and Pastoral)** [10.00 pm]: As mentioned in this house earlier, I have resigned my memberships of both the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation and the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. I have done so at the request of the Premier. The background to this action relates to my recent appearance at the Corruption and Crime Commission, where I was called to assist the CCC in its inquiries relating to a number of matters. While I do not intend to canvass what the CCC might eventually conclude on these matters, I want to make the following points to the house.

The first point is that at no stage have I given to Brian Burke, or anyone else outside government, any documents that could be considered confidential, sensitive or secret to this government. The second point is that in my dealings with the committees I have at all times conducted myself properly and according to parliamentary standing orders. The third point is that, as most members would be aware, I have discussed on two occasions with Brian Burke matters that go to whom he might approach in government in order to take up matters on behalf of clients and people who are constituents in my electorate. The fourth point is that while these were things that I was entitled to do as a member of Parliament, the Premier has since called on all government members to cease having dealings with Brian Burke. I have given my pledge to the Premier that I will cease any contact with Brian Burke. I have honoured, and will continue to honour, that commitment.

Since my appearance at the CCC, a significant amount of media attention has been focused on me, amid speculation that the Premier might seek my resignation from the Labor Party. I have always been of the firm view there are no grounds for such a demand to be made. Some members might accuse me of exercising poor judgement. While I continue to dispute that particular version of events, I make the point that that is all I can be accused of. I am unhappy with the events of the past few weeks. It has been a very difficult time for me and for my family, particularly my daughter and grand-daughter, and my close friends. Probably the most upsetting incident was the revelation of an incident in my past that is now covered by the spent convictions scheme in the Crimes Act 1914. I will not go into the details of that matter. The reason we have spent convictions is so that people who have made terrible mistakes and who have then turned the corner and made something out of their lives are able to do so without the fear that these matters will keep recurring for the rest of their lives. People make serious mistakes. They pay the price, and they accept their punishment. It is of great concern to me that as a result of what has been exposed publicly, people in our community will be living with a heightened fear that they will be vilified for their own spent convictions. It is a matter of human rights that so long as their crime is not at the extreme, people should be able to wipe the slate clean and start their lives again after more than 10 years of not offending. That is why we allow spent convictions.

In closing, I want to say that I am indebted to those closest to me for being so strong and for having such faith in me over the past few weeks. The support of those closest to me, and the constant stream of well-wishers and supporters, has helped me to keep a proper sense of perspective on all issues.

*Parliamentary Intern Program - Adjournment Debate*

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [10.04 pm]: I take this opportunity to draw the attention of the house to two interns who did some work for me at the end of last year. Members would be well aware that the parliamentary internship program has been running very successfully for a number of years. There are obvious benefits, both to the students and to the Parliament, in being involved in such a scheme. I counted myself extremely fortunate to score two participants to work with me for the second semester of last year. The first of these students, Courtney Cutten, undertook a project on the local manufacturing industry and the trend towards offshore manufacturing processes. She named her report "Make it Here or Jobs Disappear". This internship program is available to third-year students, so both the students who worked with me last year have now graduated. Courtney was a student of the School of Business Law at Curtin University. Her academic supervisor was Associate Professor Robert Guthrie. Courtney wrote me a fine paper, which will be a resource for people wanting to take an interest in this very important subject. She argues very lucidly towards three particular conclusions: first, that the Australian government should support the manufacturing industry with an improved industry policy plan; second, that governments should not rely on the current resource boom to support the Australian economy and the employment rate; and, third, that Australia should maintain, develop and support its manufacturing sector. She pulls together a lot of very interesting material to argue that we really need a reversal of the path down which the federal government has been taking us for the past 11 or so years. It has progressively removed government support from the manufacturing sector. Courtney draws on various sources to sustain her argument that we can put together an effective industry support package that consists of - I will go

through these because it is worth getting these ideas on the public record - a \$300 million investment allowance, a \$300 million research and development assistance scheme, a \$225 million increase in the export market development grants scheme, a \$75 million technology diffusion program, a \$50 million incentive program to attract foreign equity into small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses and, finally, a \$50 million strategy to attract and train highly skilled labour for the application of advanced manufacturing technologies. She draws a lot of this material from some work done by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. It is a report about the state of Australian manufacturing that I heartily commend to members of this house.

None of this is rocket science. If we look back to the previous incumbency of the Labor Party at the federal level, we see that a number of very effective industry support schemes had a direct result on employment and productivity in the manufacturing sector. Contained in that report is an oblique reference to a very interesting analysis of the implications of carrying on down the track that the federal government has us on at the moment whereby support is gradually being withdrawn from manufacturing. Using some very sophisticated data analysis techniques, a survey was put together that goes through a number of electorates in Australia. I will draw the attention of the house to two in particular that are of great interest to us in WA. I am referring to Hasluck and Stirling. The net loss in total manufacturing employment if current policies and trends continue until 2020 would be minus 2 578 in Hasluck and minus 2 268 in Stirling. A person has only to think for a moment about the implications of unemployment on that scale to see the sort of problem we are facing unless we are able to reverse current trends.

The second piece of work was prepared for me by Christine Hicks. She was a student at Edith Cowan University in the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences. Her academic supervisor was Associate Professor Quentin Beresford. Christine did some terrific work for me. I should say that both she and Courtney attended at Parliament on several occasions and spent a great deal of time here over the semester observing the house in action and generally getting to know the way things work here. I hope that both of them will reap the benefits of that. I enjoyed introducing them to the practices and processes of this place.

Christine Hicks has focused on an analysis of the way in which section 457 visas have been applied in industry. Many members of the house will know that section 457 visas were conceived in the last days of the federal Labor government at the end of 1995. It is interesting to read some of the debate around that time that she has pulled out for me. She quotes a comment from Senator Nick Bolkus, who had carriage of that measure in the federal Parliament, in her paper. She states -

From the outset the new policy was aimed at allowing businesses to sponsor highly skilled personnel that were considered essential to the key activity of the business enterprise. It was envisaged by Senator Bolkus that: "the business personnel entering under these arrangements will have skills not readily available in Australia, and there will be safeguards in the system to ensure that employment rights of Australians will be protected" . . .

A person would hardly recognise the current operation of section 457 visas from that description, which is just one indication of how greatly they have been modified and adapted to suit purposes other than those they were originally conceived to meet. Christine prepared a quite lengthy paper; it is quite detailed. I take my hat off to her for the extent to which she has been able to tease out some of the intricacies we now find ourselves faced with. She identifies three very significant problems. She does not use the word, but I would call them "corruptions" of the original intent of introducing section 457 visas. The first arises because of the total abandonment by the commonwealth government of labour market testing, which makes a joke of the definition I just read out from Senator Bolkus in 1996. The federal government has walked away from any sort of meaningful regulation of the system. It has allowed virtual self-regulation by employers involved in the schemes. The third point Christine makes is that setting wage rates at minimum levels instead of allowing the market to determine the rates at which wages are paid has set up the deskilling of what started as a skilled migration program. She draws attention to many other problems. I will share one with the house. It is about the fact that the section 457 visa program is promoted as a recruitment program for overseas workers to satisfy skilled labour demand in the Australian market. It is also presented as discouraging employer-sponsors from overlooking potential Australian employees because of the costs involved in bringing in sponsored workers from overseas. However, the majority of section 457 visas in 2000-01, which represented about 60 per cent, have been allocated to foreign nationals already present in Australia under other temporary visas. That is just one of the important points that she makes.

I pay tribute to both these people for the work they have done for me.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.14 pm*

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