

RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING — JOB CREATION

533. Mr T.J. HEALY to the Minister for Science:

I have a question about science for the Minister for Science! Can the minister please update the house on how the \$39 million investment in world-class research infrastructure that the McGowan Labor government has secured will create jobs in the science and research sectors and help drive economic growth in these areas?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for that question. I know his interest in science as a former teacher, and I thank him for a very good question. Before I answer that question, can I also pay my respects to the former member for Eyre, a former Minister for Water, who is in the Speaker's gallery today. Having him here today means that we have here all four Ministers for Water who served under the previous Barnett government. Minister Jacobs, of course, was first. Then there was the member for Nedlands, and look how far he has gone since he was Minister for Water! He was followed by the member for Warren-Blackwood and finally the current Leader of the Nationals WA. All four former Ministers for Water are here, and I do not think anyone will mind me saying that Minister Jacobs was by far the best of all four! It is great to have him here. Maybe we will get a question on water a bit later on and I can talk about him a bit more!

I thank the member very much for the question. Yes, a few weeks ago we announced a \$39 million investment in science infrastructure here in Western Australia. That is a collaboration with the commonwealth and local research institutions. The \$39 million is made up of a \$10.5 million contribution from the state government, and that commitment in the state budget has allowed us to access almost \$20 million from the commonwealth as part of its national collaborative research infrastructure strategy and almost \$9 million from local research institutions. Together that \$39 million package, the first package of this kind since 2011, will really be a great boost to science infrastructure and research in Western Australia. Six projects will be funded, all based at the University of Western Australia, which is the WA node of the national collaborative research infrastructure strategy. Some of those projects that will be funded are really quite amazing. It is about science, but it is also about jobs and boosting the economy in Western Australia. The vice-chancellor of UWA did some media on this and really made the point that unless Western Australia continues to invest in science infrastructure, we will fall behind. Other countries invest in this infrastructure in a way that some states do not. This package will mean that not only will we be able to keep up, but in some areas we will move ahead, and that is what we continue to need to do if we are to create jobs in Western Australia.

One of the projects that will receive funding under this package is the ocean glider program, which produces autonomous ocean gliders. Under this funding they will do research on ocean currents here in Western Australia, particularly around Ningaloo Reef. Those ocean gliders have gone as far as from here to Sri Lanka and back, all recording ocean currents and temperatures—things that tell us how the ocean is performing and enabling us better information about things such as weather forecasting and particularly food security for the fisheries industry in Western Australia. The data that those ocean gliders collect is absolutely important to forewarn the industry about changing ocean conditions. Professor Chari Pattiaratchi, who manages the program, is absolutely over the moon that this package will allow that program to continue. We also visited Professor Martyniuk. He showed us around the Australian National Fabrication Facility, which again is at UWA. It manufactures cutting-edge infrared sensors that have applications not just in defence, but for search and rescue and things such as detecting drug smuggling, weather forecasting and pollution detection. All of those things are possible and they create jobs in Western Australia. The member for Dawesville is rapt with this funding package—I can see the grin on his face—because he understands that this research is not just about science —

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member!

Mr D.J. KELLY: — but it enables our economy to keep pace with other economies that we compete with and to create jobs here in Western Australia.