

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, IMPROVEMENT

**78. Mrs PARKER to the Minister for Employment and Training:**

Employment opportunities for young people in my electorate have improved significantly in recent times. Will the minister advise the House what has contributed to this good outcome?

**Mr BOARD replied:**

I thank the member for Ballajura for the question. I know this issue is of particular interest to her because of the large number of young people who reside in her electorate. Last week the unemployment figures for Australia were released. I have previously mentioned that New South Wales and Western Australia are enjoying record low levels of unemployment. In New South Wales, which has the second lowest rate, the employment situation is being driven by the Olympic Games. Although the WA Government will never be complacent about one person, particularly a young person, who may be looking for employment and cannot find it, an unemployment rate of 13 per cent, which is 5.6 per cent below the rate in any other State in Australia, is an incredible outcome for Western Australia. On the basis of population trends, that figure translates to 6.6 per cent youth unemployment. The Government will endeavour to hold that figure.

Unemployment involves many issues, but one contributing factor to the good result in Western Australia is a strongly performing economy. The key to employment, employment growth and the 66.2 per cent participation rate in Western Australia - again, the highest in Australia - is the confidence in the Western Australian economy. This State has strong growth and strong exports. The Premier referred to the trade figures last week. There is confidence throughout Western Australia, and that confidence is growing.

Another factor is the nature of workplace relations and reforms, and the flexibility now available to employers, particularly small employers, to generate jobs, work weekends and nights and hire young people. As a result of the labour relations reforms and workplace agreements, for which my colleagues have fought so hard, WA has the lowest unemployment rate in this country for young people. It is a great return for the Western Australian community.

Capital works in Western Australia are at a record level of \$3.3b, and have led to a large number of people finding jobs.

Mr Kobelke: You are wasting time.

Mr BOARD: The member does not want to hear this because it is a very strong and positive story. Every capital works project generates thousands of jobs. In fact, the proposed convention centre alone will generate 5 000 jobs, many of which will be for young people.

Mr Thomas: Have a colouring-in competition.

Mr BOARD: Members opposite do not like this. It is all positive. They do not want to hear about the lowest unemployment rate in the country, with WA leading the country in every respect. They will hear it more and more. As Minister for Employment and Training, I recognise that a record number of young people are participating in the vocational education and training system. That has grown significantly over the past four or five years.

Mr Kobelke: There are fewer apprentices.

Mr BOARD: There are 20 000 apprenticeships and traineeships. When the Labor Party was in government in 1992 there were 1 000 traineeships, and today there are 20 000. The record speaks for itself. As a result of that partnership, more and more young people are entering the work force with confidence.

I place on the record that although the Government has achieved this record level of unemployment, it is not complacent and it will continue to work hard to maintain those figures.