

LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM BILL 2002, IMPACT

722. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:

Given the proposed complete re-regulation of Western Australia's workplaces under the Government's Labour Relations Reform Bill 2002 -

- (1) Has the Government, or any of its departments or agencies, carried out an economic impact analysis to examine how Labor's reforms will impact on jobs, business operating costs and investment in Western Australia?
- (2) If so, will the minister please table a copy?
- (3) If not, is this not a dereliction of ministerial responsibility?

Mr KOBELKE replied:

- (1)-(3) I will deal first with the economic impact analysis. This Government has done exactly the same level of work on the economic impact of this industrial relations legislation as the last Government did on all its industrial relations legislation; that is, it has done no work on it, because this legislation is about improving economic prospects in this State. As the Leader of the Opposition would have said many times before, this State is the most productive of the Australian States, or is second, depending on which measure is taken over the years. That has been the case for a number of years. Also, this State, more than any other State, is locked into the international marketplace. It must be internationally competitive. It is a dynamic, changing world, with risks but many opportunities. Those opportunities exist for companies that can produce products and services of the highest quality in the world. Western Australia is fortunate to have many industries and enterprises that are world leaders, such as in the resources sector, engineering, the health industry and education. They are world-leading industries because they produce quality products.

The Opposition cannot understand that that wealth is created by the people of Western Australia. Western Australians have the ability to deliver quality products and to do so as efficiently as, or more efficiently than, anywhere else in the world. A requirement is that people value their work force, train and skill them, and make sure that health and safety measures are in place. They do that by ensuring that they have a decent standard in their labour relations. Those opposite are about trying to drag things down to the lowest possible level. They would have Western Australia trying to compete with Bangladesh on wages costs. That is the approach of those opposite. This Government will ensure that Western Australia has the most competitive industries in the world. They will be competitive because Western Australia will have more productive industries with the lower costs associated with quality employment and looking after employees. That creates a much more harmonious and cooperative workplace. Therefore, this State will move forward and build on its strengths. The road set by the last Government, which produced some flexibility initially, is one that goes downhill to low costs and fewer jobs. The world is not moving in that direction. With new developments and new technology, the Government is positioning this State to ensure that it is far more productive than the mess we were left by the last Government in the area of industrial relations.