

STATE ECONOMY

93. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Treasurer:

In recent times the Leader of the Opposition has constantly talked about diversifying the economy. Can the Treasurer tell us how the Liberal–National government has strengthened the Western Australian economy over the past seven years?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

I thank the member for the question; it is a very relevant one. I answered a similar question about this last week, but I will expand on it a bit more. The Leader of the Opposition stood out in mid-January decrying the growth of unemployment. He said we were warned, and that unemployment was rising while employment was declining and that the economy lacked diversification. I answered part of that and, in actuality, during 2014 employment in Western Australia grew by 3.3 per cent, relative to the national average of 1.4 per cent, which is pretty good. I asked Treasury to prepare some figures. These things can be measured in different ways. About 38 000 additional jobs were created in Western Australia during 2014. Yes, there was a sharp reduction of about 7 400 fewer jobs in the mining sector and in related transport and logistics, which is significant. However—this is relevant because many of the areas the Leader of the Opposition decried us investing in were the real drivers of growth last year and now—11 500 additional jobs were created in professional scientific and technical fields. We have heard from the mob opposite that there have been cuts and reductions in education and health, but there was an increase of 11 500 additional jobs. In hospitality and recreation—vibrancy issues—11 300 extra jobs were created. In real estate, which is a real growth area, 7 400 extra jobs were created and 6 700 in retail. This is rather impressive, because it shows the breadth of the economy and it reinforces the policies we put in place in each of those areas to reinforce the private sector to create employment and, I might add, the public sector, because the public sector dominates in education and health. We are doing a beautiful job. However, we are facing headwinds out there. Households are very nervous and are saving like mad. The household saving rate is almost 20 per cent, whereas 10 years ago it was almost zero. The reason for that is that households are nervous because a lot of things that are happening, including the slowing mining sector, lower commodity prices and the Abbott government is trying to overcome the legacy of Gillard and Rudd.

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: When we got hit with a sharp drop in revenue, what did we do? We did not panic. First, we fought for and have continued to fight for a fair share of the goods and services tax. Importantly, that is a tax that we already pay. We want a fair share of the tax we already pay—not a new tax, but a fair share of the GST we already pay. Second, we are driving efficiencies in the public sector. The member for Victoria Park said that we never do it; everybody else decries us when we do it, but that is what we doing. We are keeping taxes and charges to a minimum. We are keeping the pressure off small business and households. Up to now, the opposition has been hiding in the tall grass; it has not been poking up or saying anything. But yesterday the shadow Treasurer came out with a policy initiative.

Dr A.D. Buti: No, he didn't.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He did!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Albany, you are not to shout out like that. I call you to order for the second time. The Treasurer has one minute to wind this up.

Point of Order

Mr P.B. WATSON: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, member for Albany! I apologise. It was the member for Armadale. The Treasurer has one minute to wind this up.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The shadow Treasurer was asked how he would address this. He made it quite clear that he wants to have a dialogue with the Western Australian public to impose a new broad-based land tax—not to replace existing taxes —

Point of Order

Dr A.D. BUTI: I ask for your ruling on a member who is deliberately misleading Parliament. It would be quite obvious to someone who looked at the transcript that he is misleading parliament.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He asked to have a dialogue with the Western Australian public.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I have called you to order twice; do not temp fate.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Importantly, this new broad-based land tax would not replace existing taxes such as stamp duties and others; rather, it would raise more money. If a government wanted to kick the guts out of households and the economy, that is what it would do; it would impose a broad-based land tax on the family home. The member for Victoria Park wants to have a dialogue with the Western Australian public. Have it, mate! Our answer is: no way! I wonder what the Leader of the Opposition thinks about this.