

STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION

802. Ms H.M. BEAZLEY to the Minister for Innovation and ICT:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's investment in diversifying the state's economy, including its efforts in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship within WA.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the investment attraction and new industries fund is supporting the diversification of the WA economy and helping to create new jobs?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the Extend program is assisting small to medium-sized enterprises scale up to compete nationally and globally?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

- (1)–(2) I certainly can advise the house, and I thank the member for the question. I can confirm the investment attraction and new industries fund's contribution, as part of a suite of measures of the McGowan Labor government, has been put in place to foster job creation, economic diversification and promotion of our state's world-class innovation agenda, and it is achieving results. Unemployment is at 3.9 per cent. There are an additional 3 300 full-time jobs. Since 2017, 120 000 jobs have been created. We have overcome the loss of jobs due to COVID-19 and created an additional 40 000 jobs. They are a consequence of the entire approach of the McGowan government to keeping our communities safe and the economy strong. What outstanding figures! It is no wonder the opposition wants to continually undermine the efforts of this government when confronted with those sorts of outcomes. The numbers speak for themselves.

Forming part of our \$100 million election commitment, the investment attraction and new industries fund, or IANIF, supports the acceleration of new and emerging industries in WA. Launched in 2017 under the excellent stewardship of my predecessor, Hon Dave Kelly, the IANIF has so far directly contributed approximately \$20 million to the innovation ecosystem, with some incredible results. In fact, a recent evaluation of the program found that for every dollar spent, there was a return of \$5. That is a great return from a modest amount of money. This is one of the many reasons I was pleased to announce a continuation of these key programs at our flagship Innovator of the Year program, just a few weeks ago. In doing so, I am pleased to say that business feedback has been extraordinary regarding the desire for consistency and continuity of support that the government is providing in this sector.

One of those key initiatives within the IANIF is the Extend program, which builds up local capability and capacity for small businesses with good ideas to take their products nationally or internationally. The Extend program funds the delivery of innovation and investor educational programs, and helps foster entrepreneurs, linking them with private capital to stimulate business investment in Western Australian projects. Members, it is a fantastic program that is delivering real results, which is why we were very pleased to recently announce the third round of funding for the Extend program, totalling another \$500 000.

There are fantastic success stories to this program and one of them is Atomic Sky. It was awarded \$100 000 in July 2019 as a co-contribution to implement its quantum technology exchange program—an investor-ready program for companies in the space supply chain. Ninety per cent of program participants reported that the program had a positive impact on their business. Two companies were able to leverage new funding from participation in the quantum program, whilst a third was able to secure venture capital funding a year after completing the program. All attributed that to the knowledge they gained through the program. The accelerator program facilitates the exchange of knowledge, innovation, capability and technology from the mining, energy, agriculture and defence sectors to develop global companies in the space sector. This is an example of this government not only building a foundation, but also looking to the future for how we can build innovation and scale it up in commercially viable ways. We are seeing excellent capability here in Western Australia.

I encourage all WA innovators and entrepreneurs to apply for funding. I look forward to announcing successful applicants in the near future and being able to share more homegrown WA success stories. IANIF is just one of the many initiatives this government has put in place to diversify our economy and build a WA for the future.