

ALBANY PORT AUTHORITY, WORK FORCE

**92. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

Under the coalition Government many of the jobs of the Albany Port Authority were contracted out. Can the minister please advise what the Government is doing to reinstate permanent jobs at Albany port?

**Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for Collie for that question. I know that the member for Collie is passionately interested in ensuring that there are decent wages and conditions for people who deliver, on behalf of the Government, services for the people of Western Australia. This is an interesting story, and I will quickly summarise it. Albany had a fantastic system, because it had an integrated port labour force. That was one of the great success stories of the waterfront reform that had started in the early 1990s. The integrated work force performed tasks ranging from stevedoring to maintenance. The staff had the capacity to move around a range of areas. However, in December 2000 the then coalition Government initiated a policy that, where possible, port services were to be contracted out. Therefore, the Albany Port Authority got rid of not only its stevedoring and maintenance staff and the integrated port labour force, but also many of the office staff, and it then contracted those services back from a labour hire firm. When we came to government and put in place some new structures at the port, I asked the chief executive officer and the board of the Albany Port Authority to conduct a review of the impact of this change, because not only was it obvious that a lot of permanent jobs had been lost, but also we wanted to find out the financial impact and whether that ideological position of contracting out had produced a positive result. The findings were that there had been an excessive labour cost; constantly changing, poorly trained and expensive casual staff were being provided for maintenance work; there was a loss of management control over maintenance and a constant interruption of maintenance services; there was a barrier to building a strong, collective work culture at the port; and significant concerns were being expressed by port users. As a result, we started to reverse the process. We have brought all the administrative jobs back in-house. We have also brought back into the port a permanent maintenance crew. Interestingly, this is providing substantial economic benefits. We have had a 25 per cent reduction in costs as a result of bringing this labour back in. I had the pleasure of talking to these blokes yesterday, and there has also been an incredible change of culture in the workplace and in the commitment to the port. They want to work in a collective and collaborative fashion to deliver a positive outcome. I am very pleased to say that we have delivered not only permanent jobs but also a far more effective and efficient port in the process.