

JOBS — PROJECTS

287. Ms C.M. COLLINS to the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to create more jobs, diversify our economy and further lift our manufacturing capability. Can the minister advise the house how this government is achieving these measures by facilitating major job-creating projects such as the Perdaman urea project and the Kemerton lithium hydroxide plant?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is a very important one.

Shortly, the Treasurer will present another budget by a Labor government that will continue to grow the number of high-value jobs in a sustainable economy. Since we have come to government, more than 218 000 jobs have been created in Western Australia. We now have the lowest rates of unemployment in the country, at or under four per cent unemployment since October 2021, a record run not seen for a decade, despite the pandemic, and despite the fact that it was over six per cent when we came to government. As a result, we have one of the strongest economies in the world. But this has not come by accident. It has happened because of the hard work put into deeply considered planning and advocacy for the right conditions to make these groundbreaking projects like the Perdaman urea plant and the Kemerton lithium hydroxide plant come to fruition. The recent announcement of Albemarle's planned expansion of its lithium hydroxide plant in Kemerton to four processing trains with the assistance of the WA government via allocation of strategic industrial land and case management services is not only significant in terms of expanding our advanced manufacturing capability here in Western Australia, but will mean that Western Australia is home to the biggest and most advanced lithium hydroxide plant in the world outside China with a peak construction workforce of around 1 000 and an expanded operational workforce of up to 850, up from 480 in its current form. We continue to be committed to the capitalisation of these important projects to continue to ensure that Western Australia remains the economic powerhouse of this country.

I also recently went to the Pilbara with the Premier and of course the king of the Pilbara, the local member, who is so active that he is not even here today. He is working hard locally making sure that we continue to create jobs in the Pilbara. We attended the sod turning for the Perdaman urea plant in a major milestone reaching its final investment decision for that project. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of Murujuga land—namely, the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Yaburara, Mardudhunera and Woong-Goo-Tt-Oo people—on which this project will be located. The urea project is one of the state's most significant projects because it is the first new manufacturing project in the Pilbara for more than a decade. It is estimated to create more than 2 500 jobs during construction and 150 operational jobs—a significant increase into the economic output of that region.

At its peak, the Perdaman project will produce 2.3 million tonnes of urea a year. To put that into context, the total consumption of urea in Australia is 2.5 million tonnes. Not only is this important in securing our sovereign supply in relation to important fertilisers, but also this is about addressing the world security issues right across the globe. It is an important project. The WA government has executed agreements that will deliver more than \$300 million in funding for the development of this project. This includes the landmark \$255 million in Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility loans secured for the Pilbara Ports Authority and the Water Corporation. Additionally, more than \$50 million in funding has been committed by the WA government to support early design works and upgrades to public infrastructure. In addition, through our work to develop our strategic industrial areas, we have allocated land to Perdaman so that in stage 2 of its project, it will be a carbon neutral fertilised production facility. That is significant progress towards decarbonising our economy.

I will quote from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA chief economist, Aaron Morey, in a recent article, when he said —

... Western Australia's economic fundamentals remain as solid as ever.

“Our domestic economy is now 12 per cent bigger than it was pre-COVID and the number of West Australians in full-time work continues to grow.

“It's a testament to the opportunities that are building here, particularly in and around critical minerals and decarbonisation,” ...

“We've also seen in our own consumer confidence data that, overall, confidence has really held up because of the strong labour market.”

We are about creating high-value jobs in a sustainable economy. We are decarbonising our economy, we are creating the jobs of the future, and we will continue to make sure Western Australia remains the economic powerhouse of this country.