

ECONOMY — BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

**807. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Premier:**

I refer to the recent announcement by Rio Tinto to invest in its Robe Valley operations in the Pilbara.

- (1) What does this decision mean for WA jobs?
- (2) What does it demonstrate about the prospects for the Western Australian economy?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Prior to answering the member's question, I acknowledge the 21 participants from the Anna Stewart Memorial Project who are in the gallery today. It is a training project for women delegates organised by UnionsWA. I thank them for their work in workplaces across Western Australia.

- (1)–(2) We have seen a return of confidence to Western Australia—a return of business and consumer confidence. Rio Tinto made the announcement earlier this month that it would invest \$2.15 billion in improvement projects in its Robe Valley operations. There are 1 200 jobs in that and it has made commitments to local procurement and supporting Western Australian businesses. It comes on top of BHP's \$5 billion announcement of the South Flank project go-ahead and Fortescue Metals Group's decision to go ahead with the Eliwana mine and railway. I want to make special mention of the project mentioned by the Minister for Fisheries the other day, Huon Aquaculture's announcement of an investment in an aquaculture project off the coast of Geraldton, where yellowtail kingfish will be propagated. It will create a new industry for Western Australia, one the Minister for Fisheries and myself worked very hard to achieve. I would like to thank the great company Huon for its confidence in Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Earlier this week we saw the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia bring down its business confidence survey that shows that business confidence is now at a five-year high in Western Australia. Medium-term business confidence is strong and 54 per cent of businesses expect the economy to improve over the next 12 months. It is very much the case that every indicator is showing that the Western Australian economy is improving under this government. On top of that, today we saw positive job figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It shows that the unemployment rate has fallen. In September, 7 000 new full-time jobs were created in Western Australia.

Since this government has been in office, more than 43 000 additional Western Australians have found work, and nearly half of those additional jobs are full time. I have a range of quotations from the Reserve Bank of Australia, Deloitte Access Economics and even the federal Treasurer, all saying that the Australian economy and the Western Australian economy, in particular, are on the up. I must say that my ministers—my government—have worked very hard to ensure that we attract jobs and investment and get stable government back in place in Western Australia, while at the same time fixing the financial mess that we were left by the Liberals and Nationals WA. Western Australians, in light of today's figures—they bounce around a bit, to be fair—can have confidence that this government is getting our great state back on track.