

MINING — EMPLOYMENT — SOUTH WEST

85. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, I, too, would like to welcome the parents and friends of John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School, on behalf of the member for Bassendean.

I refer the Premier to the 390 jobs being lost at Worsley and Boddington, on top of the pressure on jobs right across the mining sector. What training opportunities and other assistance will be provided to those south west workers who will be losing their jobs?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

Any job losses are distressing for not only individuals and families, but also the overall economy. We have seen something like a 40 per cent drop in the alumina price in the last six months—a very sharp decline—and when that happens, we are going to see reductions in the workforce, both permanent and contractor employees. Fortunately, I think that there is some better news in other parts of the resources industry. The iron ore price, although it is still very fragile, has recovered quite significantly in the last few weeks and is now I think—still, I hope—above \$50. If it can stay above \$50 for a while, that will restore confidence in that area. We are also seeing a lot of activity in the gold industry, and the gold industry is actually employing people. One of the strengths of our mining industry is that it has diversified within itself. Obviously, job losses are important. I think they represent 15 per cent of the Worsley workforce. That is a large number of people but it is not that large in the context of the whole workforce.

Mr M.P. Murray: It is for the south west.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, it certainly is. I acknowledge that. We are seeing a lot of displacement taking place in the resources industry, but, again, the industry is fundamentally strong across our state. It is incredibly strong. It is a \$100 billion-a-year industry, it is export oriented or export dominated, and I think every other state in Australia would love to have our resources industry.

Mr M. McGowan: Answer the question.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have answered the question, Tintin!

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I make the point that the member for Collie asked one question and it was: what training opportunities and other assistance will be provided to those people losing their jobs?

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Listen in silence, please.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Obviously, the Premier is allowed to have some latitude to talk about the general situation, but we are hoping that we will get an answer to the single question that the member for Collie asked. The Premier has not told us what training opportunities or other assistance will be available to those 390 workers.

The SPEAKER: Is there a supplementary question?

Questions without Notice Resumed