

CORONAVIRUS — STATE ECONOMY

3. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Premier:

Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting the Western Australian economy through the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the Premier outline to the house how this government's efforts to protect and grow the state economy has supported Western Australian businesses and delivered more jobs for Western Australians?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question and congratulate her on her emphatic victory in her electorate on 13 March.

The government's priority during the COVID pandemic has been to keep the health of Western Australians secure but, at the same time, a strong approach to COVID has resulted in strong economic outcomes for Western Australia. If we have a strong response to the pandemic and are able to crush the virus within our state, we will be able to get our economy back and functioning far more quickly and far more effectively. Indeed, that has been our experience. Western Australia has been acknowledged in a range of reports as having one of the strongest economies not just in Australia but also around the world. Deloitte Access Economics stated earlier this month that, I quote —

Successful management of the pandemic meant that the Western Australian economy rolled into 2021 in an enviable position.

A National Australia Bank report found that it is the control of the virus that gives business stability and the ability for economic growth in Western Australia. WA's performance has definitely been one of the best.

Standard and Poor's released a report earlier this year that said that Western Australia had done the best of any subnational jurisdiction in the world in economic and debt management; apparently, member for Wanneroo, the second was North Rhine–Westphalia, in Germany.

We now have a record number of Western Australians in work: 1.4 million people. We have the lowest unemployment rate of all the states, at 4.8 per cent. That is the lowest it has been in eight or nine years. Since we have been in office, our government has created almost 100 000 jobs, despite the pandemic. Western Australia was the only state whose domestic economy grew during 2020; there was a 2.5 per cent contraction nationally, a 3.3 per cent contraction in New South Wales and a 5.2 per cent contraction in Victoria.

CommSec admittedly does not use the best methodology in its reports but, in any event, the other day it indicated that WA exceeds the national average on seven of the eight indicators that it looks at, and Western Australia's rating has lifted significantly compared with other states.

We have put in place a range of measures during the course of the pandemic to ensure good economic outcomes, including our \$7 billion recovery program. Despite that, we are the only state that has an operating surplus and we also have the lowest rate of unemployment. I think we can look forward with optimism to a strong economy, provided that we can continue to crush the virus and have good health outcomes in Western Australia.