

JOBS — RAILCAR MANUFACTURING

595. Dr J. KRISHNAN to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the members for Southern River and Thornlie, I acknowledge the teachers and student leaders from St Munchin's Catholic School. Also, on behalf of the member for Joondalup, I acknowledge the student leaders from St Simon Peter Catholic Primary School in Joondalup.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to diversifying the state's economy and to bringing local manufacturing back to Western Australia.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on this government's commitment to reviving local engineering and steel fabrication in WA?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house how this will help to support the state in the face of global economic uncertainty?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Riverton for the question.

- (1)–(2) I reiterate that the government has worked very hard to create the strongest economy in Australia and probably the world. With concerns about a global recession, it is very important that a safe pair of hands is in charge of Western Australia. We have worked very hard to diversify the economy. Part of that is about bringing manufacturing back to Western Australia.

As members will know, there is manufacturing of railcars in Midland. The new Metronet cars and *Australind* cars are being manufactured here in Western Australia for the first time in over 30 years. We have also worked with industry to bring back iron ore railcar manufacturing to Western Australia. Today, the member for Bassendean and I joined BHP at UGL in Bassendean where it announced that 149 iron ore railcars would be manufactured here in Western Australia over the next four years. BHP has listened to our calls for the manufacturing of iron ore railcars to be reinstated in Western Australia, which will provide enormous opportunities for our local workforce, apprenticeships in steel fabrication, local engineering and the like. The member for Bassendean and I inspected some of these railcars today that are now being manufactured here in Western Australia for the first time in many, many years. This follows Rio Tinto's commitment last year that it would build railcars in Western Australia, again for the first time in many years, with 50 railcars being manufactured by Rio Tinto.

The government has commissioned an independent study into this. There is a strong case for further manufacturing of railcars, including for other parts of the mining industry and the grain industry in Western Australia. We have therefore established a \$15 million local manufacturing investment fund to promote this. It is a very exciting day. Some people, particularly opposition members, said that it could not be done. Before the last election, they said that railcar manufacturing could not occur in Western Australia. In fact, the Liberal Party said that it was an industry from a bygone era. They should tell that to the people in Midland and Bassendean who are working on manufacturing railcars here in Western Australia for the first time in many years.