

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY — EMPLOYMENT

573. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Disability Services:

I refer to WA's nation-leading job figures and the McGowan Labor government's commitment to creating more employment opportunities for Western Australians. Can the minister outline to the house how the government is helping people with a disability connect with employers and employment opportunities?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I thank the member for the question. Before I answer, I would like to acknowledge Mrs Gwen Bott, who celebrated her 100th birthday in the parliamentary dining room today as a guest of the member for Hillarys.

The SPEAKER: Congratulations!

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Congratulations to Mrs Bott, who also received a card from the Queen, which I suspect is one of the last cards that the Queen signed.

As Minister for Disability Services, I am so pleased with the outline of Western Australia's economy that the Deputy Premier provided earlier, because it provides opportunities for people with disability who want a chance to work. For too long, too many people with disability have not been able to access the employment market.

Unfortunately, it is a truism that people with disability are twice as likely to be unemployed as people without disability. As the Minister for Small Business, I have met with many small businesses who talk about the skills and worker shortage and who want to employ people with disability but are not certain about the pathways forward. To help address this, the McGowan government is supporting the Disability Jobs Connect initiative. Disability Jobs Connect is a new online platform that was launched on 10 August 2022 and is funded by Lotterywest. It links people with disability to employment pathways of their choosing. The platform facilitates a process whereby employers from across Western Australia can source talent and benefit from the expertise and skills that many people with disability have, but may not have been able to connect up with employers appropriately in the past. It brings the opportunity for people with disability to join the workforce and have the opportunity to not only obtain a living wage to lift themselves out of poverty, but also engage in connection and have meaningful employment relationships, which is such an important part of the disability journey. Simplifying that process through this online platform will increase employment opportunities for this very under-utilised pool of talent, and these opportunities will benefit employers and employees alike. Disability Jobs Connect was developed by National Disability Services WA, a great organisation, in partnership with WA technology company Studium. It is based in Western Australia. That is the kind of problem-solving that the McGowan government looks to pursue. We are facilitating solutions such as these, as well as supporting local Western Australian businesses like Studium. A critical part of the development was co-design sessions with people with disability, and I met many of the people who participated in that co-design process. That in itself was an incredibly engaging process for both Studium and the people with lived experience.

Expanding employment opportunities for people with disability is one of the 13 actions in Western Australia's state disability strategy for 2020–30. Whether it be through open employment or supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises, this government is committed to facilitating employment opportunities for people with disability in our state. I encourage all members to have a look at Disability Jobs Connect and to use their own networks, particularly the small businesses in their electorates, and encourage constituents, both people with disability seeking employment and businesses looking for employees, to sign up to the platform. I congratulate everyone involved in this incredibly innovative solution.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition with the last question.