

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — JOB CREATION

Motion

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan) [11.29 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council acknowledge the McGowan Labor government's achievements of creating tens of thousands of jobs between 2017 and 2021 and the government's new commitment to create more Western Australian jobs, including manufacturing jobs, for Western Australians.

Members will remember that I sought to move this motion a couple of months ago. I am very glad that I have the opportunity to do it today, especially because new evidence and new data has come out over past two months that supports and strengthens the theme of my motion that the government is on the right track, looking after the Western Australian economy and creating more decent jobs for the good people of Western Australia.

I would like to go back in history a little bit. In 2017, WA had the highest unemployment rate in the nation. Nationally the unemployment rate was 6.25 per cent; we had a higher rate. In February 2016, there were 85 900 unemployed Western Australians. In October 2008, the number of unemployed Western Australians was only 57 200. In the meantime, in 2013, Western Australia lost its Aaa credit rating. Our great state has a strong economy and diverse range of industries, with the mining and resource sector providing a foundation. The Barnett government mismanaged the economy and made the state a laughing-stock around the nation, with skyrocketing debt and a financial crisis. While the rest of the country was marching ahead with its own economic growth, we were going backwards with our domestic product.

A few years later, in March 2017, the McGowan Labor government came to office. If members look at this government's track record since that time, they will be amazed. Over 100 000 jobs have been created since the government took office. The state's credit rating has been restored gradually. In June 2019, it was upgraded by Moody's from Aa2 to Aa1. It was reassessed in October 2020, and the Aa1 was reaffirmed and the outlook for the state was rated stable. We are one step behind an Aaa credit rating. I am sure the state will attain that status in the very near future. Let us not forget that that economic management was done during the COVID pandemic. COVID threw a huge spanner in the works, with a lot of people losing their jobs and industries unable to go ahead. I found erroneous and frankly unbelievable the opposition's contribution during non-government business criticising us for the government's great management of the COVID-19 and health situation in this state. It is truly unfortunate for the people of New South Wales to have a government that was not willing to lock down and then had a soft lockdown and did not go in with the full measures. Let us not forget that the federal and New South Wales governments claimed that they had the right way to do it. Unfortunately, the newest variant has shown that the McGowan Labor government has the right way to handle a COVID outbreak—you go in hard and deal with it quickly.

In 2021, WA has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. We also have the lowest underemployment rate in this nation. The state's economy has been marching ahead under this government and we have a great set of policies to create more jobs for Western Australians that will ensure that the people of Western Australia will get the benefit of this economic growth. In 2019–20, the state's economy grew by 1.4 per cent, while the nation's economy contracted by 0.3 per cent. We expect it to continue to grow strongly in this financial year. All the jobs lost during COVID lockdowns in the last calendar year have been now recovered, more jobs are being created and businesses are making more profit. The state government under the leadership of Mark McGowan has the right recipe.

According to the old adage, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. I am very pleased to say that the McGowan Labor government came to power in 2017 with a great plan encapsulated in the *WA Labor plan for jobs*. It had many good policies and aimed to create more Western Australian local jobs with local content, and had a strong focus on encouraging local Western Australian small to medium-sized enterprises to get involved in government tenders. I think it was a great initiative for the Labor Party to take a set of great economic policies to the people of Western Australia at 2017 election. We let the people know what we wanted to do. I have read the 138 pages of *WA Labor plan for jobs* a few times because I had the pleasure of translating the document into Mandarin Chinese. I have here an executive summary of that document. I thought it was important that people of all cultural heritages should have the opportunity to read some of the Labor Party's policies so that they would know what this government wanted to do for them. I will go into many of the policies in a few minutes. Before the 2021 election, the McGowan Labor government put out a new set of commitments and policies known as the *Mark McGowan and WA Labor WA jobs plan*. It is another great document. It is a renewed commitment to the good people of Western Australia. It presented our policies for them to decide on at the last election. I am pleased that the people have given a resounding yes vote to the McGowan Labor government and team. I am proud to be part of that team.

I want to touch briefly on a few policies in *WA Labor plan for jobs*. Part of the McGowan Labor government's initiatives was to enact the Western Australian Jobs Act 2017 and put in place the Western Australian industry

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participation strategy. The strategy required that all government expenditure would encourage procurement and spending that would attract and support more Western Australian businesses and jobs and encourage their participation. Between October 2018 and March 2021, 407 participation plans with a contract value of \$3.8 billion were submitted. Those plans contained a commitment for the creation of over 36 000 Western Australian jobs. The outcome from that was that Western Australian content averaged around 91 per cent of the value of all contracts that were reported on.

We did not stop there. The McGowan Labor government put in its Buy Local policy in 2020, which is strongly focused on supporting regional small to medium-sized business enterprises through a range of measures such as stronger regional preferencing, training for small to medium-sized enterprises and increased information on future opportunities and intended processes. There was a target to create 3 000 jobs in the regions. That was exceeded a couple of months ago with the creation of more than 4 000 jobs. Then the government put in the local capability fund, which is designed to contribute to SMEs that are realising greater participation and competitiveness. Between March 2017 and March 2020, there were 19 rounds of local capability funds which have achieved great results. New commitments contained in *WA Labor plan for jobs* will encourage more participation by Western Australian businesses and support the creation of decent Western Australian jobs with better conditions, and support businesses to achieve greater outcomes.

I want to talk about the manufacturing industry, which part of the motion refers to. Let us not forget that back in 1994 the Court Liberal government closed down the Midland railway workshops. That was a great tragedy. It was almost a criminal act, because when we lose the technology, people and know-how of an industry, it is very hard to get them back. But after almost 30 years, this government put in place policies so that we could finally build railcars in Western Australia. This is only a snapshot of a whole suite of policies that this government has to encourage more local capability and more manufacturing jobs not just in Perth, but across the state. It is important that we retain and retrain Western Australians so that there is the manufacturing capability for the people of Western Australia. I congratulate the government for its policies not only in relation to what it has achieved, but also its other commitments and desire to ensure that Western Australians benefit from the ability to have decent jobs and to create more jobs for our fellow Western Australians. The training that we have put in place and the slashing and freezing of TAFE fees have also strongly and positively encouraged young people to seek training in TAFE institutions. Who could forget Metronet—a great initiative that is creating more and more jobs for Western Australians with a great future to come. I commend the motion to the house.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [11.44 am]: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to talk to this motion on jobs. What an outstanding motion that has been brought by Hon Pierre Yang. We on this side love to talk about jobs and manufacturing.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Don't forget you're on our side.

Hon DAN CADDY: Not quite.

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: We also love to talk about the achievements of the McGowan Labor government and the creation of jobs over the last four years.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Your own jobs.

Hon DAN CADDY: That took some work, too, honourable member!

Members may recall that in my inaugural speech not so very long ago I talked about the 89 000 jobs, as the figure was then, that had been created by the McGowan Labor government since being elected in 2017. This motion is more than just about those jobs; its words specifically are about manufacturing jobs and what this government has done for the manufacturing capacity of this state. The fact is that this government has done more for jobs and the economy of this state in its first four years than the previous mob managed in over eight and a half years. That cannot be disputed; it is backed up by the figures. When I gave my inaugural speech, we had created 89 000 jobs and were working towards re-establishing long forgotten industries. This is in stark contrast to the \$40 billion of debt that was left in March 2016.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It wasn't \$40 billion of debt.

Hon DAN CADDY: I am happy to argue over a few billion. If the member wants to claim \$30 billion —

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: Whether it was \$30 billion or \$40 billion—would tens of billions of dollars of debt work for the honourable member?

Hon Martin Aldridge: How much have you added?

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Hon DAN CADDY: I am unsure. We were left with tens of billions of dollars of debt.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Let us make it easier for Hansard.

Hon DAN CADDY: Let us take a quick look at this. I am happy to delve into the record of members opposite when they were in government, if that is where they want to go with this—if they want to talk about hasty decisions. We heard about the bulldozing of wetlands, but I will not go into that because that was discussed yesterday.

Why do we not take a look at the Matagarup Bridge. That was an outstanding project, but the previous government sent all its manufacturing and associated jobs offshore. Not many people realise that that project was running horribly behind time because there was a hospital happening somewhere else in the background that no-one seemed to be able to get open even though it was fully staffed. The construction of the Matagarup Bridge was running horribly behind time and, from my memory, in the end the overseas contractors did not send anything—did not even get the steel here. The former government dropped the ball horribly on that one, but, in fairness, there were other issues like those to do with a hospital. Let us examine this.

Hon Martin Aldridge: How is the hospital going?

Hon DAN CADDY: The hospital is going well. Thanks for asking. It is going a whole lot better now that it can actually have patients in it and not just staff! I do not know whether the member remembers that.

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: Come on! This is the same opposition that sent the bridge offshore to Malaysia. It is the same party, the LNP —

Hon Darren West: Coalition.

Hon DAN CADDY: Coalition or alliance, the terminology changes all the time.

Hon Martin Aldridge: “Next government” will do.

Hon DAN CADDY: This is turning into a comedy show!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Is Basil coming up?

Hon DAN CADDY: Has Basil got a seat yet?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: I look forward to that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon DAN CADDY: If I remember correctly, at the time, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition endlessly criticised the work that was undertaken by WA workers on that bridge. In August 2018 in the other place—Hon Dr Steve Thomas refers to it as the place that shall not be named—the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, when referring to Western Australian workers and what had been produced in WA, that Western Australians had been delivered a compromised piece of infrastructure. What a shameful way to talk about something that we brought back to Western Australia and that was manufactured by Western Australian workers.

Hon Pierre Yang touched briefly on the closure of the Midland railyards during the Court government. If my memory serves me right, it was the first Court government. The Liberal Party opposed us when we wanted to bring back local railcar manufacturing and that important local industry to Western Australia. As recently as March last year, once again the then Leader of the Opposition degraded WA workers. As well as calling railcar manufacturing a failed manufacturing industry and an industry from a bygone era, she made the point that in her mind to reinvigorate that important manufacturing industry was just a waste of money. Members, the Liberal Party is no supporter of the manufacturing industry in Western Australia and has a proven record of opposing everything we have done to bring WA jobs back for WA workers. Let us be clear on this.

What have we done? This government has a 15-year railcar strategy and an aim to achieve more than 50 per cent local manufacturing in this industry. We have increased the order to somewhere in the region of 256 railcars. This railcar contract is the largest rolling stock order ever placed by this state and the construction will span about 10 years. However, it is not just the construction. Hon Pierre Yang may have touched on this: we have created new streams at TAFE for people to be specifically employed in this industry. Everyone, including those who are on JobSeeker, can gain the knowledge they require to work in this industry. Why have we done that? It is because we are not doing just an eight to nine-year construction phase. The state will service and carry out the maintenance on all railcars in Western Australia. That is critically important. It is something members opposite might want to speak

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to their federal colleagues about when it comes to servicing submarines, because that would be of great benefit to Western Australia. The cost per railcar is interesting. The B-series trains are roughly four million bucks each. The C-series are somewhere around \$3 million each. As I said before, over 250 of those are to be manufactured. If we do the maths on that, that is a whole lot of money going to Western Australian workers, a whole lot of money going back into the Western Australian economy, and a whole lot of money that no doubt those opposite, if they were still in government, would have sent offshore. This is not just a manufacturing plant. This has decades of training, decades of building our knowledge base in this state and decades of maintenance jobs and jobs for Western Australians.

I remember sitting at a *Business News* breakfast in 2016 and listening to the then Leader of the Opposition give the keynote speech. She claimed that high-tech manufacturing should not be a focus for Western Australia. If we are not going to build our knowledge base in these industries, if we are not going to promote Western Australian workers and put money into these industries, what are we doing? The fact that she would say that tells us all we need to know, all everyone in this chamber needs to know, all everyone in this Parliament needs to know and all any Western Australian needs to know about exactly where the Liberal–National Party sits on manufacturing, jobs and WA jobs.

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [11.54 am]: I commend Hon Pierre Yang for his motion on jobs for Western Australians. It is very well brought and very appropriate. What I find perhaps lacking in this is that we have heard the contribution from Hon Dan Caddy about industry, which was very appropriate, but there is past industry as well. Australia has many active minds. We have the potential for innovation, do we not? Was it not in Australia that wi-fi was discovered? Is it not here that the great researchers in medicine, even now, are contributing to developments in treating cancer? There is an element of industry here that needs to be mentioned. Honourable members will know exactly where I am going with this: it is the hemp industry. Twenty thousand various products can be created from one single plant. I mentioned yesterday that there could be a \$1.2 billion industry alone in creating bedding for pets such as hamsters and guinea pigs. An amount of \$1.2 billion is not small change. What about other industries as well? What about making the plastics for boats—maybe even plastics to make boats for the Royal Australian Navy? I do not know about that as I am not a technician, but it is available. It is something that we could grow and innovate. This is an area that has a lot of potential and we need to free up this industry. Western Australia can lead the nation and, in fact, perhaps lead the world in developing this industry to our great personal benefit in this state as well as assisting the world.

I invite Hon Pierre Yang when he is able to come from his region in North Metropolitan and I would be very happy to introduce him to some of the hemp growers —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: We introduced you to them. Why would he have to go to you to be introduced to them? You know that we have been leading this industry and we put you in touch with them. I find this extraordinary. Oh my God. I mean, seriously!

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: I am sure Hon Alannah MacTiernan is completely correct, but it is simply the polite thing to do to invite a colleague to see the industry from a different perspective.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: But you are pretending that we haven't actually—I mean, seriously!

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: Let me reinforce my sincere thanks to the minister because I appreciate what is being done by this government and I think it could go even faster, so I am very happy for that. With that short contribution, I commend the motion to the house.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.57 am]: I rise today to contribute to debate on Hon Pierre Yang's motion on jobs for Western Australians. I congratulate the McGowan Labor government's achievement of creating tens of thousands of jobs for Western Australians. Our state has come out of this difficult time stronger than ever. I want to highlight some of the great projects and plans that have made this the case. It is important to note that the McGowan Labor government has created 100 300 jobs. I know that Hon Dan Caddy mentioned 89 000 jobs in his inaugural speech.

Hon Dan Caddy: It just keeps going up!

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: The numbers just keep growing and growing, which is a great achievement. This is despite the biggest global economic crisis to face our state since 1945. The *WA Labor plan for jobs* in 2017 focused on the generation of employment opportunities and continued skilling of our workforce. Over the course of this past year Western Australia's job performance has been incredible. One hundred per cent of jobs lost during the pandemic have now been recovered, plus another 8 000 jobs—a truly incredible achievement. I hope members opposite are listening. I am sure some recall the previous government's record in this area during its second term.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

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Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I can quote it for the honourable member. Metronet is one of the McGowan government's key commitments to help support Western Australia jobs. It is the single largest investment in public transport that Perth has seen. Metronet is a job-creating program that will connect Perth with more transport, housing and employment choices. Laying approximately 72 kilometres of new train lines and building 22 new stations, Metronet is the cornerstone of our economic recovery. The largest investment in public transport that WA has ever seen, Metronet, will create thousands of jobs across the state through both direct employment and the purchasing of materials.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Thank you, honourable member.

The McGowan Labor government has nine Metronet projects currently under construction, with one, the Bellevue railcar manufacturing facility, recently completed. The recently opened Bellevue Metronet railcar facility is a great example of this government's commitment to local jobs, with the first of the new trains to be delivered in 2022, with a 50 per cent local content target for the manufacturing of new trains bolstering our local manufacturing industry and maximising WA jobs. Bringing rail manufacturing back to Midland after the Midland railway workshops were closed in 1994 by the then Liberal government shows the McGowan government's genuine commitment to local jobs. The railcar program has been identified as a strategic project under the Western Australian Jobs Act 2017. More than 200 long-term jobs and hundreds of indirect jobs will be created at the facility, with tonnes of locally fabricated steel being used there—a clear commitment to local manufacturing.

We are not creating just railcar facilities under the Metronet project. New stations are being built and older ones are being renovated across WA. The Lakelands station south of the South Metropolitan Region, for example, will provide much-needed public transport infrastructure, and around 200 jobs and upgrades at the Mandurah station will also create jobs. The Metronet Thornlie–Cockburn Link is currently under construction. Connecting the Cockburn and Mandurah lines will open up new opportunities for integrated, liveable communities by supporting accessibility across the southern suburbs and providing direct employment.

We have also recently announced the first major elevated rail project in Perth's history as part of Metronet, the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal program. This project will see five level crossings removed at Mint Street, Oats Street, Welshpool Road, Hamilton Street and Wharf Street. New elevated stations will also be built at Carlisle, Oats Street, Queens Park and Cannington, which will support local WA jobs and businesses.

The Metronet project is not the only commitment the McGowan government has made to Western Australian jobs and businesses. Our recovery and jobs plan has seen great success. This government is providing support to businesses across WA and giving them much-needed breathing room and space to grow. Financial counselling and rental relief services from the McGowan government give small businesses real help to get back on their feet so that they can continue to support the Western Australian economy. WA would not be as strong as it is without our local businesses, and this government recognises that. One-off grants of \$17 500 will be provided to around 7 400 Western Australian businesses to help manage the impacts of the pandemic to ensure that the pressures of these difficult times do not weigh too heavily on local businesses' shoulders.

The McGowan government recognises the role that good education plays in job growth for this state, so we have invested in many different areas of education. TAFE plays a major role in educating and preparing people for specialised roles in the workplace, and this government recognises that. The McGowan government is also committed to investing even earlier in education to ensure future jobs. In the South Metro Region and in an electorate that is close to my heart, Jandakot, a \$60 million state-of-the-art secondary school will be built in the growing suburb of Piara Waters. This incredible new school will not only inspire young people to be the leaders of tomorrow, but also create local jobs through its construction and opening.

Despite the many recent setbacks that have rocked this state, the McGowan government has remained strong in its efforts to protect and support Western Australian job growth. I therefore wish to commend the Premier for the incredible work he has done and continues to do for the future of our state.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon James Hayward): Thank you, honourable member. Can I just apologise for not giving you a bit of a hand with all those interjections. I was pressing all the wrong buttons and did not quite get there, but I thought you managed them quite well.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [12.03 pm]: I thank Hon Pierre Yang for this fabulous motion that gives us the opportunity to talk about and celebrate the veritable renaissance of manufacturing that we are seeing in this state with the active support of the government.

When Hon Dan Caddy spoke of former Liberal leader Liza Harvey getting stuck into the local manufacturing of the Matagarup Bridge, it reminded me of another Liberal. People may remember former federal defence minister

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David Johnston, who refused to consider that we could be manufacturing submarines in Australia because he would not trust Australian manufacturers to even make a canoe. We have seen real ideological form by the conservative forces whereby they have become, shall we say, surrender monkeys on the notion of manufacturing. We do not accept that. We look at the skills, innovation and drive of the Western Australian population and ask, “Why can’t we, too?” We believe that with the right support and encouragement from government, we can indeed be a great manufacturing state.

Hon Klara Andric talked extensively about railcar manufacturing. That is an incredibly important and exciting project, but I want to list some of the other innovations and government support that we are bringing in to get manufacturing re-established in Western Australia. Having said that, I acknowledge that there are extraordinary manufacturing companies right across Western Australia, including Hofmann Engineering, which has a culture of continuous improvement. It started as a mining services business and became a premier manufacturer that exports giant gearboxes to China, Argentina and Africa. It is an extraordinary story. There is a similar style of company in Bunbury, Geographe Underground Services, which also started as a mining services company. I am sure that the Acting President will be familiar with this company. It started off servicing the mining industry and has become a fully-fledged manufacturer. We recognise that we have that capability and we just have to believe enough to do that procurement and drive that change.

In addition to the railcar manufacturer, we have a new \$40 million diesel railcar maintenance facility. We have invested \$13.2 million in an incentive process to make cathode-active materials for lithium-ion batteries. This is an incredibly important development. We are one of the largest miners of not only lithium—we will have the world’s two biggest lithium refineries—but also a range of other materials, including cobalt and nickel, which will enable us to enter the value chain of battery manufacturing. We are investing \$13.2 million to drive new investment into that sector. We have invested \$35.6 million in local concrete manufacturing, waste processing and a whole plethora of schemes to encourage manufacturing in the areas of waste and food. Perhaps less well known is the work that is underway for the south west advanced manufacturing hub. We are putting together a very detailed feasibility study on how we can use that great capability. At least 12 firms in the Bunbury area have advanced manufacturing capabilities. The South West Development Commission is carrying out a multimillion-dollar investigation into how we can create a south west advanced manufacturing hub.

As we move forward to develop the hydrogen sector, we are looking at upstream and downstream processing. We want to be involved in the manufacture of electrolyzers, membranes and wind turbines. A \$10 million project is driving turbine manufacturing. At the other end, we want to use hydrogen for the downstream processing of our minerals. Thanks to these massive projects that are being developed in the Pilbara and the south west, we will have the capability to produce cheap energy that will underpin the possibility of manufacturing steel or, certainly, doing downstream processing of our iron ore. A \$1 million feasibility study is looking at that in great detail. We have also been working on a green aluminium project in the south west, where we produce world-class alumina. We are driving all of these opportunities.

I would like to talk about a couple of smaller projects. Two weeks ago we were in Collie to announce two projects. The first was a co-investment of \$2 million to establish the Collie graphite hub. Graphite has extraordinary manufacturing potential in the use of fire retardants and mobile phones and in a whole raft of technology that requires electricity conduction. It is an important product used in mobile phones and computers. We have large graphite deposits in Western Australia but we do not process it. We did not process it until now, but we are pleased to say that in Collie last week we announced that we will be establishing our first graphite processing facility with a Western Australian company, International Graphite. At the same time, we raced down the road and turned the first sod for a new medicinal cannabis facility that will be developed in Collie. Again, it was facilitated from a \$2 million grant from the Collie Futures industry development fund. Cannaponics is a great emerging Western Australian company. This grant will help construct a 100 square metre greenhouse laboratory and warehouse, which will be used to grow and produce medicinal cannabis, and be used for a range of related programs. It will be very focused on research. We are doing lots of good work on manufacturing here in Western Australia.

HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan) [12.15 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Pierre Yang for bringing this motion to the house. It is a relatively easy one for us newbies to speak to because the McGowan government is doing so much in this space. It is clear that the McGowan government has a strong focus on jobs. We have a plan for jobs. We have been working on the diversification of the workforce, investing in local manufacturing and making training more accessible and affordable for Western Australians.

A major employment hub down in Henderson in the South Metropolitan Region is the Australian Marine Complex. We need to see more contracts from the commonwealth government for shipbuilding here in Western Australia. Our Plan for Jobs aims to support the creation of jobs for the future. Some members have touched on this, with the building of Metronet railcars locally and the manufacture of railway parts from iron ore.

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Another exciting project, which is not necessarily manufacturing of a physical product, is the \$100 million investment by the McGowan government for a state-of-the-art film studio in Fremantle, which will produce quality films and other arts and culture products in the future.

I feel obliged to respond to some comments made around health during non-government business. The opposition failed to touch on the legislation that was introduced during the last term, which I am sure many members in this place are aware of, to establish the future health research and innovation fund. That legislation aimed to foster innovation and medical research in this state. The opportunities out of that fund that will grow year on year are endless.

Hon Martin Aldridge mentioned, somewhat cynically, that we inherited rolled gold health projects. When we came into government, Perth Children's Hospital was a debacle. Lead was found in the water. It would probably still not be open today if not for the hard work of Hon Roger Cook in his role as Minister for Health.

Another great project that we delivered during our last term was the family birthing centre at Fiona Stanley Hospital. Many families are enjoying using that service now.

Other things are also noteworthy. For example, Anthony Albanese has pledged to commit \$15 billion to boost local manufacturing through the establishment of a national reconstruction fund. That is one commitment that I look forward to if we see a change of government at a federal level.

I am glad that Hon Alannah MacTiernan touched on some more examples of diversification of the workforce and manufacturing industries, including Cannaponics in Collie. I note that it includes a 2 000 square metre manufacturing facility that is due for completion in mid-2022. The member for Collie—Preston, Jodie Hanns, MLA, is excited about the opportunities that this facility will bring to people in her electorate. The other item that Hon Alannah MacTiernan touched on was the \$2 million co-contribution to establish a graphite hub in Collie. These are just a couple of examples of industries down in Collie that the government has contributed to.

It is also noteworthy that Hon Dr Steve Thomas agrees with the government's approach to this matter. In response to the solid financial position we find ourselves in, he was quoted in May as stating —

... the critical thing here is that we need to see industry in Western Australia diversified.

“We are ... too focused on the boom-and-bust economy of iron ore, and if we don't invest in diversifying that economy into other industries, we're doomed to do this boom-and-bust cycle forever.”

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Wise words.

Hon STEPHEN PRATT: Yes. It is good to see that they have learned something from the Nahan years, and they are looking to diversify the economy, too, and they agree with us. I am not sure how much longer I have—five minutes; that is good. I can touch on a few of the other things that we are doing across the state and have done in the previous term. This government achieved a whole range of things during its last term, including establishing the WA jobs task force and identifying a whole bunch of job-creation opportunities in manufacturing across the state. Touching on my own experience during the early days of COVID last year, it was apparent that there is a lot going on across the state. People were able to pivot and come to the floor to help out. Distilleries were producing hand sanitiser. Different manufacturers of different parts got together and were able to produce products to accommodate isolation rooms and a whole range of things such as PPE manufacture. This reminded us all of the heavy reliance we have on importing these types of product, and that we can actually do it here. I look forward to seeing what comes out of that now that a lot of these companies have had to pivot and work together to manufacture different products.

I touched on creative industry, which is an area that I have an interest in. It extends to the investment in regional arts programs. We have invested \$5 million in the regional arts and cultural investment program and \$3 million in the contemporary music fund, which supports local musicians. This McGowan government is allocating funds in a wise manner to diversify industries across the board.

Another area of interest for me is startup and innovation. There has been investment in that area. There are Aboriginal startups. I touched on the Centre for Entrepreneurial Research and Innovation over in Nedlands, which is fostering education programs and really assisting people with ideas to turn them into a commercial product. There is a lot going on in this space, and I look forward to the McGowan government continuing this work to diversify the economy into the future. I thank Hon Pierre Yang for bringing this motion to the house.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [12.22 pm]: I was not going to speak on this motion, because we have had so many good contributions from members who have talked about the jobs that the McGowan government has created during its last term and is continuing to create in this term. But, during the debate, through a number of interjections, members of the opposition seemed to bring it back again to the economy. I always wonder about that, because, to be honest, they were so bad during their last term in government. I always wonder why they ever want to talk about the economy. They always try to simplify it by saying how much debt we inherited, and how much debt has grown since we came into power. I have always tried to bring it back to the fact that,

Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Brian Walker; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Stephen Pratt; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Neil Thomson

individually, my concern with the last Barnett government was not so much that it kept going on a spending spree, because during much of that term, it had the money to do it. It is for a government to decide whether it invests in infrastructure for the future, or whether it spends that money; that is just a difference of opinion. The problem with the Barnett government was not so much that it went on a spending spree; it is that it built continual spend into the financial future. It is the recurrent spend that blew out, not so much the money that it got as a windfall for the period of time that it was in government and had the boom. That was not the problem. The problem was that it spent money into the future, and that was going to be inherited by future governments.

Everybody knew that the debt was going to grow. It was amazing to me how effective Hon Ben Wyatt was in bringing some discipline back into Treasury so that the budget did not blow out even further, as it was predicted to do under the Barnett government. I think, universally, everybody accepts that. The problem was not necessarily that Colin Barnett had it in his DNA to spend; it was that the recurrent spend blew out. There were many interjections during this debate about how much the debt was and how much it had grown. Of course it grew! I do not know much in this area, but I knew that it was going to grow. Everybody knew that it was going to grow. To keep saying how much it has grown since the last election is just juvenile. Everybody knew it was going to grow. The fact that the last Treasurer managed to rein in the recurrent spend is remarkable, and the current Treasurer, the Premier, is continuing to keep those reins on Treasury so that we do not go off the deep end and use the money that we have unwisely and allow the recurrent spend to get back out of hand. I think that is a remarkable job.

As I said, I was not going to get up and speak on this motion. There are lots and lots of projects that are generating jobs. I agree with all the previous speakers that we can look at a number of projects. Hon Dan Caddy raised one with regard to the bridge. We can look at all those projects; we can look at the railway workshops. These are all good things. I had not prepared to speak on those. But, as I said, the continual interjections about the economy is not worthy of any opposition when it considers where we were and where we are now.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [12.27 pm]: I think that on both sides of this house we would acknowledge any job that was created by the government, because jobs are so important. I think it is important to see the growth of employment. It is a fundamental aspect of our future, and certainly, as a father and grandfather of many children, I like to see them get into employment because of the opportunities that produces. Certainly, in my region, I have seen both the challenges and opportunities that come from employment. Many of my own family are now working in the Mining and Pastoral Region, which is one of the great things about a mining sector that is currently in a boom. I think, though, to be fair-minded, we have heard the speakers opposite talking about some of the initiatives that have been undertaken, and I acknowledge the jobs and individual projects that have been put forward and supported by the government, but when we think about the real hero of employment in Western Australia, it would be unfair not to mention Scott Morrison. Scott Morrison and his JobSeeker and JobKeeper programs—come on, let us be fair here—recognised the ability to keep people together during the crisis.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon James Hayward): Order, members! We have just 45 seconds left.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We talked about juvenile interjections—seriously! Let us be honest here. Keeping employees and employers together during that absolute crisis was the game changer for Australia. I know there are a few secessionists over the other side now, but the reality is that we are in a Federation, and there has been so much achieved by the federal government, including, may I say, the incredible investment in infrastructure in the state, so let us acknowledge that as well. Let us stand here and be bipartisan and acknowledge all parties that have played their part.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.