

SINO IRON — CLIVE PALMER

369. MR S.J. PRICE to the Premier:

I refer to the 3 000 workers who are currently employed on the Sino Iron project in the Pilbara and the repeated claims made by Clive Palmer in relation to this project. Can the Premier advise the house how these workers' livelihoods are being put at risk by Clive Palmer and why the claims by Clive Palmer are both misleading and dangerous?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

It is no understatement to say that Mr Clive Palmer is running one of the most disgraceful and deceitful campaigns in Australian political history. He should be rightly condemned by every Australian. He is spending tens of millions of dollars, made off the backs of workers he has not paid, in deceiving the public of this country. Mr Palmer's campaign is a barrage of lies. Although he attacks Chinese investment, he does not point out that the Chinese investor Citic paid Clive Palmer \$415 million to acquire the mining rights to the project on which it built its iron ore mine. Clive Palmer brought Citic to Western Australia and took \$415 million from it, and now he vilifies it. Clive Palmer makes more than \$200 million a year in royalties from the Chinese company Citic. Although he takes the cash, he does not provide any jobs for Western Australians. He does not employ any workers, and he does not support any families. It is Citic—Sino Iron—that has invested \$15 billion in Western Australia. It has built the infrastructure, employs more than 3 000 Western Australian workers and contributes to the Western Australian economy. All Mr Palmer does is take the money and spend it on shameless, misleading advertisements. He is currently threatening the livelihoods of those workers by blocking Citic Pacific—Sino Iron—from expanding its operations and playing down its waste.

One of the most bizarre claims that Mr Palmer is running is that an airstrip in Karratha poses a national security risk. That airstrip is part of the mining project deal that he negotiated. It supports the fly in, fly out workforce that operates on that project and helps to deliver him the hundreds of millions of dollars a year in royalties that he takes from Western Australia. His other claim is even more absurd—that a Chinese-owned company bought Merredin airport from the Labor government. The truth is that in the mid-1990s, China Southern Airlines purchased the Merredin airport freehold from the Shire of Merredin. The state government, at the time, was the Court Liberal government, but the deal was made between the company and the Shire of Merredin. China Southern operated a flying school at the airport until 2016. It is still a public airport and is regularly used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service to save lives in the wheatbelt and, therefore, provides an ongoing benefit to the community. He is now attacking a piece of infrastructure that was sold by a local council to a Chinese firm to create jobs and now supports the Royal Flying Doctor Service to save lives in the wheatbelt.

The government is considering its options in protecting more than 3 000 Western Australia jobs on the Sino Iron project. It would be devastating if those jobs were lost to our state. I thank and acknowledge the supportive and positive comments already made by the state Leader of the Opposition. However, I am disappointed that the Liberal Party nationally has done a preference deal with Mr Palmer. The federal Attorney-General, Christian Porter, told me personally that he supports state legislation to deal with this issue and protect jobs, but then the Liberal Party did a deal with Mr Palmer to get his preferences. This is a shameless anti-WA jobs deal.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, you are on three calls. Do you understand what that means? One more, and you are on your bike.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is a shameless anti-WA jobs deal, done by the Liberal Party with Mr Palmer, that will hurt our country. My advice to all Western Australians is to not reward the Liberal Party with their votes, and do not vote for Mr Palmer.