

STATE ECONOMY — EMPLOYMENT — AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

434. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Premier:

Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I advise the house that earlier today I was elected unopposed as the Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and, therefore, as Leader of the Opposition. The member for Nedlands has been elected as the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member for Churchlands remains manager of opposition business.

Before I ask my question, I also take this opportunity, on behalf of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, to thank the member for Riverton, who unfortunately is not able to be with us for question time. I would like to thank him for his outstanding long-term and selfless service to the Liberal Party, and to the opposition in particular since March 2017.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data released today, which highlights that Western Australia's unemployment rate has deteriorated to a very concerning 6.3 per cent seasonally adjusted. When will the Premier accept that his management of the economy is hurting Western Australian jobs, and will he now use some of the billions of dollars of GST revenue received from the Morrison government to stimulate the economy and improve the lives of all Western Australians?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Firstly, I acknowledge the member for Riverton, who is not here at the moment. I acknowledge him for his time as Leader of the Opposition and thank him for his contribution to the Parliament and parliamentary democracy in Western Australia. I congratulate the member for Scarborough on becoming Leader of the Opposition, and the member for Nedlands on becoming Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Well done!

Obviously, the government has been working as hard as it can to create jobs and stimulate economic activity in Western Australia over the two years it has been in office. We understand that many people across our state are looking for employment and would like the opportunity of a job or improved employment prospects in Western Australia. Since we have been in office, 40 000 new jobs have been created in Western Australia—40 000 additional jobs have been created in Western Australia since this government has been in office.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is greater than the population of Kalgoorlie. That number of jobs has been created in our state. We can compare that with the last term of the Liberal–National government, when 29 000 jobs were lost. So, 29 000 jobs were lost during the last term of the Liberal–National government; 40 000 jobs have been created over the first two years of this government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, you asked a question; listen to the answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This government has had to deal with a very difficult situation. Firstly, the Liberals and Nationals left the economy in recession. Secondly, they left us with over \$40 billion of Liberal–National debt. Both those things have not been easy to deal with, but people across the state know that this government has its priorities right. Last week, Moody's lifted our credit rating.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When the Liberals and Nationals were in office, they lost the credit rating. This government has had the credit rating reinstated.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Moody's explained why. It is because under this Labor government, there is a strong fiscal resolve to get this state back on track. That is exactly what Moody's had to say.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, I call you to order for the first time. I can see you and hear you now; you used to hide in the corner.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have the balancing act of ensuring that we get the finances back under control and create jobs, and make sure we keep cost-of-living pressures down for families. The budget that came down the other week showed that our government is getting the state back to surplus and debt heading down. On top of that, it delivered the lowest increase in fees and charges in 13 years.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is what good economic management and good financial management can achieve for the people of Western Australia. Under this government, a whole range of initiatives have been taken, whether in tourism, defence, liquefied natural gas, mining approvals, aquaculture, planning reform, strata reform, liquor reform, or jobs and skills centres at our TAFE colleges. The list goes on.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What people have also seen under this government is a strong focus on keeping relations strong with our traditional trading partners, China and Japan.

Mr D.C. Nalder interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bateman!

Mr M. McGOWAN: If members opposite go and ask the business community what they want to see this government do, it is exactly that.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I want to contrast that with what happened under the previous government. As we know, 29 000 jobs were lost on the watch of the previous government, over the course of its last term.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The now Leader of the Opposition put up TAFE fees by 500 per cent.

Government members: Shame!

Mr M. McGOWAN: If anyone wanted to do a course to get into the labour market, this person put up the fees by 500 per cent.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: For those young Western Australians who wanted to get the skills and qualifications to get into the workforce —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, it is just a wall of noise. I am sure you all want to hear what the Premier is saying.

Mr M. McGOWAN: For those young Western Australians who wanted to get the skills to get into the workforce, they had the now Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party putting up their fees by 500 per cent. If anything was anti-jobs, it was that.