

MCGOWAN GOVERNMENT — DEFENCE INDUSTRY STRATEGY

906. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Defence Issues:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to growing Western Australia's defence industries and creating new jobs in defence manufacturing. Can the minister advise the house how this government's defence industry strategy is already delivering real jobs and new investment for Western Australians?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for his interest in the Western Australia defence industry, in particular the jobs that workers are able to access as a consequence of growth in that sector. In my absence last week, the Governor opened the inaugural Indo-Pacific Defence Conference, and at that conference the Premier launched the first ever Western Australian defence and defence industry strategic plan. A flurry of publications was associated with that conference. A good one from *The West Australian* was the *Western Defence* magazine, which contains some great photos—I commend the photos in the centre spread. There is a picture of a bloke in white in between a couple of blokes in cams that members might want to have a look at. The launch of the *WA Defence Review* took place. I wanted to refer to the release of Serge DeSilva-Ranasinghe's long-awaited magazine. It is a good, august publication on Western Australian defence, giving a view of the defence sector through Western Australian eyes.

The defence and defence industry strategic plan was launched by the Premier at the conference, and that is a significant step up in focus on defence and the defence industry by the state government of Western Australia. I want to place on the *Hansard* record acknowledgement by the state government of the author, predominantly, of the publication, Major General Jeff Sengelman, DSC, CSC, (rtd), whom we engaged to provide strategic advice to the state government around the defence industry and the defence sector in general. The amount of work the major general did was extraordinary, including consulting with everyone across the sector and across the state, working collaboratively as a result of our engagement with the federal government, with Minister Pyne's office, working with the Defence Force itself, and also with civilian defence people in Canberra to ensure that, for the first time anywhere in the country, our strategy is being developed in conjunction with the federal government and the Australian Defence Force to ensure that the Western Australian government strategy on defence meets the needs of the ADF. When we are advocating for infrastructure, pursuing workforce development plans and looking at what Western Australia can contribute in the defence sector, it meets the needs of our people in uniform, with the primary aim of ensuring their safety, and that they get the best equipment and the best support possible around the globe, and that Western Australian industries are part of that. That is a significant contribution. It means that there will be jobs in Western Australia in the defence sector, because we will be world class. We will be meeting the needs of defence. We will not be going out on tangents and arguing the case for things that may not be of interest to the Defence Force.

There are some key elements to the plan. It is focused on supporting a strong and enduring defence presence. We are looking at working with defence on the location of force disposition in Western Australia. We are also making the case for the maintenance and sustainment of submarines and frigates in the long term. It is essential that the full-cycle docking of the Collins-class submarines is shifted from South Australia to Western Australia before about 2024. That is known widely in defence circles. It means that we need to build a skilled workforce here in Western Australia, not currently resident, of 500 or so skilled workers, and expenditure of significant amounts of money on infrastructure will be necessary to support that activity. That is something we are focused on as part of the strategic plan.

The conference itself created jobs, because it put another significant business conference into one of our hotels, providing opportunities for people working in the hospitality sector. The big thing that was announced in conjunction with the strategic plan was the focus of Defence West in the near future on making the business case to the federal government and the ADF to shift the full-cycle docking of the Collins-class submarines to Western Australia in the near term. A lot of work needs to be done in advance of that shift to ensure that we have the workforce and the infrastructure necessary to support that activity. My good friend Christopher Pyne made an announcement when he was here that the next survey vessel for the Royal Australian Navy will be built in Western Australia, a \$200 million commitment made as a consequence of the advocacy by the McGowan government, and only enabled because, for the first time in history, Western Australia has a presence in the defence space. We are now known to Canberra. It respects the Western Australian state government as being knowledgeable and working in the interests of the nation, and Western Australian industry and Western Australian workers are getting the benefit.