

DEFENCE INDUSTRY - SKILLED LABOUR SHORTAGE

140. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Industry and Enterprise:

What is the state government doing to overcome the shortage of skilled labour in the defence industry?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for his commitment to growing the defence industry in this state. Mr Speaker, as you know and as everybody in the chamber knows, the Carpenter government has certainly been doing all it can over the past years to win a bigger slice of the naval defence industry pie. Our commitment to capital infrastructure in naval shipbuilding is unprecedented, given the announcement late last year of the extra \$174 million that we are committing to the Australian Marine Complex to enhance the nation's premier naval shipbuilding facility. In planning for the future, we are looking to supply the industry with the relevant human capital. On Monday I joined the Minister for Education and Training to announce plans to train 400 additional apprentices and trainees at a new defence industry skills unit. The unit will work closely with industry to identify and provide the training necessary for Western Australia to have an adequate supply of skilled defence workers. The defence industry in this state already employs about 3 000 people directly and about 20 000 people indirectly and generates about \$1.1 billion for the economy.

The establishment of the defence industry skills unit and the fantastic infrastructure at the Australian Marine Complex put us in a very good position to win a major slice of the commonwealth government's 10-year, \$60 billion defence capability plan orders that will be made in the next few years. The first off the shelf is the contract for the air warfare destroyer, which will be built by the Australian Submarine Corporation in South Australia, and, hopefully, some of the modules for the air warfare destroyer will be constructed in Western Australia. Of course, there is also the huge \$5 billion landing ship helicopter-dock - or LHD - amphibious ships project, and we hope to win the whole of that project for Western Australia. This skills unit will certainly help deliver key jobs for boilermakers, welders, electricians, mechanical fitters, draftspersons, marine electronics technicians, machinists, mechanical engineers and project managers. All those skills are needed to fulfil the contracts, and the establishment of the defence industry skills unit will go a long way to achieving that.