

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE — LOCAL CONTENT UNIT

80. Hon JON FORD to the Minister for Commerce:

My question without notice —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have called Hon Jon Ford to ask a question. Let him ask the question.

Hon JON FORD: My question without notice is as follows —

- (1) Does the WA local content unit exist within the Department of Commerce?
- (2) If yes to (1), what is its role and what are its objectives?
- (3) If yes to (1), how does anyone contact the LCU?
- (4) If no to (1), does the LCU exist at all; and, if so, where?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(4) The question of local content is a matter of some moment, and the government is doing a lot of work to improve the situation. We realise that there is a problem, and there will be some more substantial announcements made in due course. I also notice that the member will be raising an item in non-government business tomorrow morning on this matter. The local content unit is part of the Department of Commerce and can be contacted by telephone, electronically, or by mail at the department's address. If the member is having any trouble contacting that unit, he should feel free to come to me for assistance.

Hon Jon Ford: The CCI has a problem with contacting it.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I assure the member that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia does not have a problem. When I have been discussing the unit with the CCI, there has not been any indication given to me that there is any communication problem. One of the things, of course, that the Department of Commerce does do, through the excellent staff involved in the local content unit, is fund the industry capability network, which of course is housed in and part of the CCI. To return to the member's question, the role of the Department of Commerce is to encourage local content in all ways possible. It does that through a number of mechanisms. It does that, firstly, by supporting the ICN WA. It also maintains a website, which is geared to provide information not only to contractors that wish to tender, but also to those who are seeking the provision of goods or services for their projects. I have forgotten the remainder of the member's question, which was given without notice. But the short answer is that there is a local content unit, and I think the member is aware of that. The local content unit is doing a lot of work at the moment, under my supervision, on the question of local content. We are doing that in consultation with the Department of State Development, which of course is responsible for administering state agreement acts. I am looking forward to providing details publicly of an action plan that the government intends to prosecute in the weeks and months ahead—shortly. I know that the member will be very interested to hear about that. My local content people obviously are actively involved in that as the lead agency in developing that plan.