

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA — GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**182. Mr E.S. RIPPER to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question.

*Point of Order*

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** This is the third time in this question time that I have seen a member of the opposition read a supplementary question.

**Mr E.S. RIPPER:** On that point of order, since I have not even begun my supplementary question, the member for Jandakot is misleading the house.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, I have given you the call to ask the supplementary question and I would like to hear it.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr E.S. RIPPER:** Does the Premier think it acceptable that more than six months after the election his training minister is yet to produce a training policy—no training policy during the election; no training policy yet announced? Is it acceptable?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:**

This government is dealing with a very acute economic situation.

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** That is why you went on holidays.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** How many weeks' holiday did the member for Pilbara have?

Several members interjected.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** It is hard to tell when the member opposite is not on holidays.

Fortunately, unemployment in Western Australia is still very low. However, we have seen several thousand jobs lost in the mining industry and, no doubt, we will see very tough times for many small to medium enterprises across a range of industries. It is my view that Western Australia is in better shape and is better equipped than any of the Australian states to deal with the recession.

We have an acute recession; make no mistake. We are not experiencing normal downswings. I hope and I believe that Western Australia will probably reach the bottom of the cycle around midyear. That is an educated guess, if one is generous. I suspect that this state will hear a lot more bad news in the first half of this year. I have been saying that for over six months. Unfortunately, it is coming to be true.

I am not being flippant, but I am about to deliver an address, which is my second one because of the calling of an early election. Mr Speaker, I will detail in that in great detail, and I will give you a copy, how the government is responding to this environment.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Will you respond to the question on training?

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Training is important. As yet we do not have, and hopefully we will not have, large numbers of displaced workers. We have taken a number of measures relating to capital works, and I will outline them. We will also, when the budget is presented in May, be taking further measures.