

AFRICA DOWN UNDER CONFERENCE

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [9.04 am]: I would like to update the house on an international mining conference hosted in Perth recently. For more than 20 years, the Africa Down Under conference has brought together government and businesses from both continents and is the largest African-focused mining event outside Africa. This year, I was delighted to again be involved in the conference and present alongside the President of Botswana, His Excellency Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi. It was the first time a sitting president had participated in Africa Down Under. Western Australia's enduring partnership with Africa was again on show, with more than 1 400 people attending, including nine African ministers and representatives from another nine governments at the three-day conference at Pan Pacific Perth. Also in attendance were the federal Minister for Resources, Hon Madeleine King, and the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Tim Watts, who were joined by seven Australian heads of mission to various parts of Africa and 10 Canberra-based African heads of mission.

As one of the leading mining jurisdictions in the world, Western Australia's regulatory framework is of great interest to our African counterparts, many of whom took the opportunity to engage in information sessions with the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. There are great economic opportunities for African countries to maintain and build on our partnership from investment by Western Australian mining companies, but also through employing the services of the state's mining equipment, technology and services sector. Western Australia's METS companies offer world-class technology and skills that can increase a project's efficiency, manage risk, improve health and safety, reduce maintenance costs and track supply chain activities. Of the top 100 specialist METS companies operating worldwide, 22 are headquartered in Western Australia, with another 55 operating here, creating an internationally significant METS presence. The opportunities for Western Australia and Africa to grow and diversify our resources sectors are immense and I commend the organisers of Africa Down Under, Paydirt Media, for hosting this important meeting.