

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES TRADE

Motion

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [11.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house congratulates the Cook government on its continued investment in developing a more sustainable and diversified economy, in particular supporting and boosting primary industries trade.

I rise today to note and acknowledge the Cook government and its continued investment in developing a more sustainable and diversified economy and in particular supporting and boosting primary industries. WA is, as we are all aware, an economy that is export orientated, with around half of Australia's export goods originating from WA each year, including minerals, petroleum, agrifood and specialised manufactured goods. As a result, we also attract many international visitors and students, and these export industries support employment across Western Australia. The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation each year publishes profiles on WA's economy and international trade in our major industries. These are available for all to see and they speak to the great success and the work that the Cook government has done in supporting export and those primary industries.

We are the leading exporter of all the states in Australia. In 2022 we accounted for 44 per cent of the value of Australia's export goods. Our main exports include minerals and agrifood. I will focus my discussion in this debate on agriculture and some of my colleagues will talk about other industries. Being a regional member, as I am and as many of my colleagues on this side of the floor are, I would like to focus on agriculture because it is what I am surrounded by and grew up surrounded by. When I taught in regional areas over the years, many students spoke to me about their experience in agriculture culture as well.

The Cook government is committed to supporting the growth and development of agriculture, fisheries and food industries for the benefit of the state. It is a nonsensical discussion to suggest that any government would want to dismantle agriculture when it is one of our most significant exports. It does not make sense. Why would a government dismantle one of its most significant export businesses? The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's agribusiness, food and trade area works in partnership with government, industry and business to develop and enable growth and to increase competitiveness and diversification of WA's agrifood sector through the facilitation of value-adding in investment and exports. We are committed to keeping Western Australia's economy and finances strong and stable, so we can invest in what matters.

The Diversify WA framework supports the WA government's Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity, Stronger Economy target of an extra 150 000 jobs by mid-2024, with 30 000 of those, as an approximate figure, to be regional jobs. Diversify WA identifies six priority sectors in which Western Australia has a competitive advantage and where there are significant growth and diversification opportunities, including for primary industries. The framework provides a vision for WA's economy, and outlines the initiatives, actions and strategies that will contribute to achieving this vision. We are an evolving and growing economy that does not forget who our main supporters and exporters are, but we are also here to embrace new opportunities and sustainable practices that ensure the ongoing prosperity and success of those industries.

Biosecurity is a priority for our government and we have contributed some significant investment to protect WA's horticulture industry from pests and disease. The Cook government has taken a proactive approach to biosecurity threats in our primary industries, and has opened up international trade opportunities for WA that no other state or territory in Australia has access to. This speaks to our support and absolute commitment to enhancing, protecting and developing our agriculture and horticultural industries. They are significant industries that the government is committing to in all manner of ways. I will discuss some of those now.

One example is the value-add investment grants. The Cook government has committed \$17.56 million through three grant rounds, with 66 value-adding food and beverage businesses having been awarded some of those grants. The government is investing in new projects and the expansion of opportunities to build competitiveness and grow business opportunities in Western Australia. We are building capacity in the market. Round 2 of the value-add investment grants enabled WA food and beverage processors to overcome supply chain challenges, attracting more than \$60 million through business expansion, diversification and resilience. This has also unlocked another \$152 million in private sector investment and created almost 100 new jobs. Some examples of businesses that have been awarded grants under the value-add investment grants include Good Drinks Australia, which received \$750 000; Stella Bella Wines—it rolls off the tongue very nicely and I am sure the drink does too—another \$750 000; Dardanup Butchering Unit Trust, \$750 000; DCB Australia, \$750 000 to upgrade solar power systems technology to amalgamate its smallgoods factories; NewCo Mills, \$750 000 to develop some stockfeed grain mills; Milne Agrigroup, \$525 000 for dedicated production lines for poultry and port processing; Magnum Essence, received funding for packing rooms and solar panels to expand its food supplies; Homestyle Vegetable Processors,

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just over \$600 000 to automate its processing; and the British Sausage, Ham and Bacon Company, \$750 000 for a new production facility.

I am struggling to see evidence of a government that is not supporting agriculture and our food and trade industries. Anyone who has a close look will see that the government is absolutely committed to supporting and developing our agriculture and food industries.

Another example is the agrifood and beverage voucher program that supports small businesses across regional and metropolitan WA. Pitting those two groups against each other is another nonsensical argument. Those two things are like the right hand hating the left. We work together with unity and collaboration, a point that Hon Colin de Grussa made when he acknowledged the Matildas at the start of debate on his motion. He said what a great team the Matildas are. That is an example of something that unifies the nation. When we collaborate and work together, we do better. Instead of operating on a process of division, upsetting groups, causing disharmony and hurting groups to achieve political points, we can all work together. Opposition members can work with their group and advocate instead of hurting their own voters and other groups in the process. I will say across the floor that the hurt they caused to our Indigenous population is unforgivable.

Fifty-seven businesses have been successful in the agrifood and beverage voucher program and will share in nearly \$432 000, with each business matching its voucher dollar for dollar. They have skin in the game; we have skin in the game. That is called partnership and working together.

The international competitiveness co-investment fund supports WA businesses to adopt new business models and supply chain scenarios using digital tools and marketing strategies to connect with export customers. There are lots of initiatives to support those potential export markets and help to facilitate our primary producers and understand them and enhance the best possible opportunity for success as they access those markets.

The Cook government has invested \$8.47 million in the Fresh and Secure Trade Alliance and is working in conjunction with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. It is all about helping to improve production, reduce cost and develop a more robust and evidence-based system to ensure we maintain and secure access to key export markets.

The Asia access business grants are delivered through the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. Since its inception in 2019—note that date; that is when we came to government—the AABG program has awarded around \$1.4 million to 80 Western Australian small and medium-sized enterprises and organisations, assisting them to gain access to key Asian markets. Asian markets are significant for us in Western Australia. We provide a lot of export products and they are our key export markets. Every opportunity we have to harness and develop those trade opportunities is particularly significant. Some of the recipients of that grant are Food, Fibre and Land International Group, Clandestine Vineyards and Delroy Orchards. There is definitely strong evidence of the government supporting export markets and helping our primary food producers and regional communities develop, grow and have sustainable and ongoing industry and trade opportunities. I could mention many more. I cannot believe how quickly the time has passed.

I will mention an opportunity I had recently to represent the minister and speak to a delegation from Japan—another way we are supporting some of our grain industry market. For those who are not aware, WA provides high quality wheat for the Japanese udon noodle. They love our wheat for their udon noodle. We are their provider for that wheat and it is a really important market that we protect, including the farmers and the research and development around it. It works in collaboration to ensure that market is sustainable, that the quality of the grain that the Japanese market is looking for is protected and that the relationship with the Japanese is healthy, robust and strong and that we always work together to ensure that market is ongoing and sustainable for our farmers.

I will talk briefly about barley as WA also supplies barley to Japan. That is a significant part of the WA export industry but it is also a great piece of evidence around how Labor governments are better for farmers. China recently lifted the tariffs it had imposed on Australian barley, although not for the CBH Group and one of our other exporters. However, it is the calm and consistent approach of the Albanese Labor government in its negotiations that enabled those tariffs to be lifted and WA now has the opportunity to export to China again. That is an example of the rock solid calm and consistent approach, the collaborative and diplomatic approach, that a Labor government takes to protect agriculture and industry, unlike the previous federal government that took an inflammatory approach that destroyed many agricultural and primary producer industries. It is not the opposite of humbleness, as Hon Martin Aldridge suggested, to congratulate and give credit where credit is due because we deserve significant credit for that. The Cook Labor government is incredibly supportive of the Albanese government and looks forward to working in a positive relationship with China, rather than taking the Liberal–National approach that is inflammatory and negatively impacts our export markets. I am really pleased the government has achieved that development. It is one that Premier Cook has acknowledged and continues to work on in a diplomatic and progressive way.

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I also acknowledge the securing of \$32 million in the most recent state budget for biosecurity. That is something Hon Jackie Jarvis has given significant focus to since she became Minister for Agriculture and Food. Biosecurity is incredibly important. We do that particularly well in Western Australia. In the absence of things such as research and development—again, something that members across the chamber do not seem to think is very important—we cannot protect and look after our agriculture industry. Recently at the Mingenew Midwest Expo I talked to scientists about the work they are doing to protect grain. They are looking at the way grain reacts to pests and the range of different issues they are experiencing. The absence of good quality research and development in the agriculture industry results in the potential destruction of the industry, yet the previous government was quite happy to cut research and development facilities, to pretend that they do not matter. I congratulate Minister Jarvis for protecting biosecurity and recognising its great significance in agriculture.

The Buy West Eat Best Plating Up WA: Singapore Edition was held recently. That is another way that we use opportunities to build relationships to further develop export relationships with countries and the Asian market. That was a particularly successful event. A lot of people were in attendance and each country showcased their food and cuisine to develop and improve export opportunities and trade markets—another fantastic event. Another one is coming up in February next year, evokeAG 2024. That is a really exciting opportunity hosted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, all about making sure that we promote and develop our food and agriculture export opportunities.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [11.40 am]: I thank Hon Sandra Carr for bringing this important motion forward today. I am glad that we can continue the debate this morning on the importance of our regions and their contribution to our economy, as well as all the great work that the Cook government is doing to help diversify our economy. I would like to mention the Diversify WA framework and how we have identified the six priority sectors in which we have a competitive advantage and that have significant growth and diversity opportunities, including primary industries, which I want to mainly focus on today, as well as the manufacturing industries in the regions that support our agriculture industry.

Diversification has been a high priority for our government. More than \$3.8 billion has been invested in economic diversification initiatives, with over \$460 million invested in this budget alone. The data is showing that labour forces are growing in our non-mining sectors, as well as our mining sectors. Hon Sandra Carr talked quite a bit about our different grant programs; for example, the agrifood and beverage voucher program. We have also talked a lot in this place about the regional economic development grants and last month we announced the investment attraction fund, which is a huge grant program of \$150 million. Today, I will talk about the opportunities that we have given to some of these businesses with the different grant programs, and how we have been able to see them grow and develop.

One of the great examples, which we have seen be successful recently with the investment attraction fund, is Wide Open Agriculture. It has done a lot of work with lupins, which is usually used as a stock feed. Last year, it opened a pilot facility for lupins. Its view is that if we processed all the lupins in Western Australia into protein, the value would be \$1 billion to our export or local markets. Wide Open Agriculture has done a great job setting up this pilot plant and it has a lot of ideas about adding lupin protein into oat milk, as well as some other lupin products that it is working on. It has a lot of buyers for its protein products and it is also moving into oat milk. Wide Open Agriculture is really passionate about supporting regenerative farming practices. In 2021, we gave it a grant through the value add agribusiness investment attraction fund. That was a relatively small \$20 000 grant to help it do a feasibility study of oat milk processing.

All this work has led to the company last month being announced as receiving \$5 million through the investment attraction fund for an oat processing facility. Oat milk has become quite popular; even this place now has oat milk that is made in WA. The Asian market is also really growing with regard to oat milk. There is a lot of potential for this. I do not know whether members have heard, but this company's products run under the name of Dirty Clean Food, and last year it made a deal with Coles to sell its Dirty Clean Food range. Its range of Dirty Clean Food oat milk is Oat UP, supporting our WA farmers, our Western Australian oats and regenerative farming practices. That is one great example.

Another example is UniGrain, which is based in the eastern states. The only plant UniGrain has in WA is its oat processing facility in Wagin. It just started processing oat flour as well, which will go into the growing oat milk market. It employs about 50 people in Wagin, which is really fantastic. It wants to expand its facilities so that it can process more Western Australian oats, with a \$10 million expansion. It was recently successful with \$1 million from the investment attraction fund. That is really fantastic news for Wagin, as we help to diversify WA for a stronger economy, trying to get more jobs into the regions as well.

I want to mention another small business that we have really helped, particularly because Hon Martin Aldridge talked about our minister not knowing he was the Minister for Regional Development. Last month, I had a chance

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to go on a regional road trip with Minister Punch. We went to Williams, Narrogin and Pingelly and ended up in Brookton at Stumpy's Gateway Roadhouse. That business received \$5 000 through round 2 of our agrifood and beverage voucher program to help it transition to manufacturing. After that, it received a bigger grant of \$50 000 through our RED grant program for food drying. It had the great idea of freeze-drying a lot of vegetables and putting them into bread. It has a patent for it. When we visited, they gave us all some great pumpkin bread and beetroot bread and that kind of stuff. It is a really great idea. It has been great to see how through these different grant programs we can help companies go through thinking about how they can build their business and then help support them when they get their business ideas and want to get things growing.

Whinbin Rock Farms is another one. We do not have any malting facilities in Western Australia. I met a great couple, Kelly and Justin from Whinbin Rock Farms. Justin grew up on a farm just east of Narrogin. He left to do his engineering degree and decided to go back to the farm. He saw all these breweries around the state, with most of them getting their malt from either the eastern states or overseas. His idea is to set up a malting facility. Through a couple of rounds of the agrifood and beverage program, he got a \$2 000 planning and investment grant, and then in the next round, he received \$1 900 for a sales and marketing grant and then \$1 960 for a voucher for manufacturing and business growth. These vouchers are fantastic. Over 150 of them have been given to businesses across Western Australia. It allows them to get professional advice about how to grow their business and start it up. It was fantastic. I went to visit Justin and Kelly recently because they were awarded a RED grant for \$190 000 to help them build their malting facility. They had all their malting equipment delivered and I got a tour of the brand new shed facility they have built. They have some good customers who will buy the malt they produce. It will be the only malting facility of its type in Australia. It will be a really great thing for Western Australia. There are heaps of breweries around that can benefit from this.

Three Farmers is another innovative farming company that has benefited from some of our voucher programs. It was first looking at quinoa, but has moved on to oat milk. It recently received a \$95 000 RED grant to look at the processing of low-gluten oats. That is another great thing that our grant programs have helped.

Mainly, when we talk about primary industries it is about forestry, fishing and agriculture, but the mining industry is also part of our primary industries. I want to talk a little about it because of some of the great grant programs that we have for our mining industry, particularly around supporting rare earths. OD6 Metals is looking at the rare earth around Esperance and it recently received \$180 000 to conduct more drilling around Esperance through our exploration incentive scheme. With graphite in short supply, International Graphite is looking to set up in Hopetoun, near Esperance. It received \$2 million from the state government through the Collie Futures industry development fund to set up a pilot scale processing plant in Collie.

That is part of the government's \$600 million program to attract new industries to Collie. We heard criticism today about the lack of housing in Collie, but the growth that is happening in Collie, particularly with new industries, is fantastic. I commend the government on all the work it is doing to support regional businesses. It is great to see how we have grown these businesses.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [11.50 am]: I thank Hon Sandra Carr for moving this excellent motion in the house today. I acknowledge the contributions of Hon Sandra Carr and Hon Shelley Payne in which they outlined the hundreds of millions of dollars that the Cook government is investing to build export markets and support our primary industries.

As Hon Sandra Carr mentioned, she very kindly represented me at a dinner with a Japanese delegation. She did so at very short notice; I think I gave her about one hour's notice after I became unwell. She is indeed correct in that WA is the main supplier of the specialist wheat that is used to make udon noodles for the Japanese market. Indeed, the udon noodles that are imported into Australia are generally from Western Australian wheat. The dinner that Hon Sandra Carr attended on my behalf was supported by the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre. AEGIC is a fantastic organisation that supports the export of grain, which is Western Australia's biggest export. Last year, grains industry exports contributed about \$10 billion to the Western Australian economy. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who secured for AEGIC \$3 million a year from the Western Australian government and ensured that the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the federal body that takes grower levies, contributed the same. AEGIC has received a total of \$24 million to ensure that it can keep going through to 2026.

In addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars in funding and grants for individual businesses and programs that my two colleagues mentioned, we also heard about biosecurity, which is the linchpin of our exports. When I am in Perth, I stay near Canning Highway in Victoria Park. Anyone who has stood on Canning Highway in the morning over the last few months would have seen, quite literally, dozens and dozens of DPIRD cars going down Berwick Street towards Canning Highway in their mission to fight Qfly. For those members who are not aware, Queensland fruit fly is not an endemic pest in Western Australia, which means that we have access to horticultural

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markets that other states do not. A small incursion of Qfly has been detected in Bayswater, near the airport, and as a result, for several months on a daily basis, DPIRD has been sending hundreds and hundreds of staff to knock on the doors of suburban homes and talk to people about their fruit trees. This is about proving our area free of them. If we find one Qfly anywhere in the state, we mobilise to ensure that there is no outbreak so that we can guarantee our markets that there is no Qfly in our fruits and vegetables. That is significant. I am incredibly proud that in my first budget as minister, I was able to secure additional funding for biosecurity to ensure that we are free from not only Qfly, but also things like foot and mouth disease and lumpy skin disease. I am incredibly proud of that.

Earlier today, I was criticised about the submission I made to the panel consulting on the phase-out of live sheep exports. The export of live sheep by sea is an important export market for us. I thank the opposition for acknowledging the significant support that I gave the industry in a motion it moved in March. Hon Steve Martin said that the industry was grateful for my support. Hon Colin de Grussa noted that my commitment to the live sheep export industry was unflinching. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, credited me as the minister, the Premier and the government for our support of the industry. I thank them for that.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: What a cooperative opposition we are.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Indeed.

However, there has been criticism about the government putting in a submission to the export phase-out panel. Let us be clear: the panel was consulting on the phase-out of live sheep exports and was seeking consultation to inform how and when the phase-out should occur. I have been criticised for not saying, “No, we’re not getting involved in that discussion” and laying out some sort of road map. This is out of our control. The commonwealth government has made it clear that we are exiting live sheep exports. There was criticism earlier today that it was somehow wrong to stand up for Western Australian farmers and say that we need transition funding support if the commonwealth is doing that. The key pillar of my submission to the phase-out panel was that support needs to be provided for the processing sector and export market development. That is clear in the submission that I tabled last week in which I talked about market opportunities. I said —

... global demand for sheepmeat, and the capacity of WA processors to capitalize on the opportunities to grow export markets and provide strong market signals to WA producers, will be important for the future of the WA sheep industry.

I do not think it is wrong for the state government to say to the commonwealth, “You’ve imposed this on us. You need to provide some funding. You need to provide some support.” I would have thought that the opposition would be congratulating me for outlining to the commonwealth government the economic impact of the phase-out of live sheep exports. The submission states that Meat and Livestock Australia produced an update on market information in May 2023, highlighting the opportunities for the sheepmeat industry. Global sheepmeat import demand is forecast to rise at 2.3 per cent between 2023 and 2027; global sheepmeat prices have remained firm; and there is a forecasted increase in national exports of sheepmeat from Australia between 2023 and 2025, with the export of mutton increasing by 33 per cent and lamb by eight per cent. I appreciate that many, many farmers—myself included—would like the live export of sheep to continue. As I have said before, the WA state government does not control exports; we are not above the federal law in this matter. It is mindboggling that I have been criticised for putting in a submission that outlines the economic impacts and asks the federal government to support this transition. The horse has bolted. In July at the ag ministers meeting in Perth, Murray Watt, the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, stood next to me and confirmed his commitment to end live sheep exports by sea. I appreciate that the opposition will take this issue to the next federal election in 2025 in the hope of a better outcome. But what is the harm in saying to the federal government that it needs to provide support so that we can build export markets? As Hon Sandra Carr’s motion notes, we need to diversify our economy and boost the trade of our primary industries.

In the short time I have left, I will speak about a couple of events I have attended in my short time as the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I have discovered that the job includes a lot of eating and drinking; my waistline is not liking me for it. Recently, I was incredibly fortunate to be part of the Taste WA trade mission, at which there were 25 food buyers from 10 markets. They toured metropolitan areas, the south west and great southern. I had an opportunity to have dinner with them in March. The buyers came from China, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The week-long program was facilitated by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. I give a special shout-out to the export and trade team at DPIRD, which is excellent. It is well supported by the export team in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. This delegation connected buyers to 84 Western Australian agribusinesses to help them gain insight into their provenance. I had dinner with that group. I sat next to a representative from one of the largest airline catering companies in the world. Many people who travel internationally will know that Singapore is a hub for many international airlines and its catering companies are huge. I also sat next to a representative from one of the major supermarkets and they told me how impressed they were with the quality of food in Western Australia. A delegation

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from Indonesia was specifically looking for fresh fruit and vegetables from Western Australia. Again, that is why biosecurity is really important.

In the very short time I have left, I want to spruik evokeAG. It is the Australia–Pacific region’s premier agfood event, and it will be held in Perth in February 2024. It was announced in April 2023. The other thing I am incredibly proud of from my short time as minister is that I stole this event from Melbourne. We are incredibly proud that in six months we will be hosting evokeAG. It is a conference that will attract up to 2 000 agrifood innovators, farmers, processes, accelerators, start-up businesses, researchers, universities, corporates and government investors. Australia is home to the most innovative farmers in the world. I really believe that. We also have excellent universities. We have some amazing ag science degrees available. That ties into international student exports. With that, I commend the motion to the house.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [12.00 noon]: I would like to make a relatively short contribution to the motion before the house, but I suspect that will depend on the level of interjection. We are probably a little calmer than we were a bit earlier. I do not usually take to motions that congratulate the government from its own side but I note the opposition condemned the government today and we do not generally do that either so I guess we will cut a bit of slack in both directions because it is a Thursday morning and it is the day for it. I think the Minister for Agriculture and Food was quite reasonable in that presentation. I was pleased to hear she recognised the opposition—I do not remember the exact words but she thanked and congratulated or vice versa in her position —

Hon Jackie Jarvis: All of the above.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That does not happen all that often from someone in her position.

Particularly on the live sheep export trade, I understand that, on occasions, our federal colleagues do us no good and sometimes they are more of an embarrassment than a support. I suspect it is not just the Labor Party in which that occurs but we do our best to provide a team response. It is a fact that the Minister for Agriculture and Food has attempted to outline the position for the state of Western Australia. As I understand it, she has always supported the continuation of the live sheep trade in Western Australia. I have not heard her put an alternative position and, if she has, she will no doubt let us know. It has been a reasonably bipartisan position, at least at the state level. It is certainly not at the federal level and that argument needs to be had. I am more than happy if the incumbent member for O’Connor, Rick Wilson, contests the seat of O’Connor with Hon Kyle McGinn. I am sure we will have a bipartisan ticket on the live sheep export trade —

Hon Kyle McGinn: He got upset about a sticker!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Hon Kyle McGinn could stand out there and take a stand for the regional communities, unless of course the powerbrokers are going to bump up the ticket a bit. Maybe a haircut would help the rise, but let us not go there. We will see where that ends up. A bipartisan approach could be taken, which is good.

I am relying on the motion as it was foreshadowed. I presume it is the same motion and has not changed from the one that was distributed yesterday. I will move on from congratulating the Cook government. We have said nice things about the minister and that should be sufficient. On developing a more sustainable and diversified economy, particularly supporting and boosting primary industries and trade, I am not sure whether the mover of the motion intended to include the mining sector as well as agriculture. They are slightly separate but both very important areas of trade. In some areas they are both considered primary industries. In other states the minister for primary industries has both areas. It is not so in this state, where we have a separate minister for mining. Obviously the mining sector is critically important as well. Diversification in the mining sector is more difficult. There are enormous opportunities in rare earth minerals in particular and there is growth. Lithium has finally now beaten gold in royalties collected by the state. The royalties collected by the state are obviously massive and prop up the surpluses this government enjoys. Just as the price of iron ore corrects, we will probably find that rare earth minerals will continue to make this government rich, giving the lie to the position government members put that they are good economic managers. It will reinforce the fact that they have been extremely lucky in their timing. However, diversification is important. It is not just lithium. We will potentially move on from lithium. The Acting President (Hon Dr Sally Talbot) has the best lithium mine in the state and probably the world in her electorate. It will remain important for a decade or two. Other minerals may well take over. Diversification of that industry is also important.

Diversification in the agriculture industry is also difficult. I still miss the debates we had when Hon Alannah MacTiernan was here. I think we got close this morning to the level of forthrightness that we should have on a Thursday morning. That was good. On diversification of agriculture, the former minister was very keen to diversify and move away from the traditional parts of agriculture, which I think she did not support well, to those alternative parts of agriculture that she did support, probably to the detriment of traditional agriculture. I criticised her for it not infrequently. I remain of that position. The current minister takes a much more balanced approach. I think that is a good thing.

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The diversification of that industry is critical. I accept that, for trade, it is run by the federal government. The trade deal with barley in China was particularly important for the state of Western Australia. There is not much that the government of Western Australia can do around things like that. The tariffs put on things like wine from Western Australia are also critically important. All those things require a national approach and there is not much the state can do except lobby their federal colleagues to make sure that it is an important part of the debate. That is why, unfortunately, the obvious politicisation of the federal Australian Labor Party for things like live shipping are incredibly disappointing and problematic. The federal ALP is more than willing to sacrifice regional industries for its political purposes to pick up green votes and attempt to balance the left-wing spread in major metropolitan areas and heartland Labor seats in central capital cities, which they always thought were their own. I think it is unfortunate because diversification is going backwards. We call it the wheat-sheep industry for a reason. They put in crops and would run sheep. The number of farmers getting out of the sheep component has been massive so the diversification of that industry has contracted. I am not necessarily going to lay blame directly at the feet of the current state government but —

Hon Darren West: I think you'll find there are economic reasons for that.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Economic reasons are a part of that, absolutely Hon Darren West, but the position of the federal Labor Party is about to make this worse. It has already driven down the sheep price. It has already made it far less economic to run sheep. By undercutting the live export market, the federal Labor Party has undermined confidence in the industry and overseen the slashing of the price returned to farmers. It will drive more farmers out of the industry. It will drive them back into less diversification and more focus on cropping alone. Unfortunately for the mover of the motion, the federal Labor Party is an enemy of the motion, even with the best intent in the world at the state Labor level to try to increase diversification. I accept all sides of government want to increase diversification in the wider economy, the mining economy and in the agricultural economy. In the south west, lots of niche industries are trickling along. The poor old dairy industry continues to suffer. It is probably still a declining industry, unfortunately. Do not start me on the potato industry. We do not have the time for that level of fun! Some of these niche industries are growing and that is a good thing. Ultimately, I suspect they will remain niche industries though. They will not expand to take over from the wider agricultural sector and that is why the support for the wider agricultural sector—what I call traditional agriculture—is absolutely critically important. That is where we want to see a bit more effort.

This government, for example, still cannot tell us whether tier 3 rail lines will or will not be redeveloped years down the track. It will not release business cases or tell us what is going on. Yesterday we learnt that the business case for the Greenbushes rail line will be kept secret as well. This lack of disclosure is incredibly worrying for a government that promised gold-standard transparency. It is not gold-standard transparency. It is lead-standard transparency—even Superman could not see through it! The government's intent in this area of diversification is good. The current Minister for Agriculture and Food is trying, but a bit of transparency and honesty would help the argument, and I urge the government to go down that path instead.

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.10 pm]: Thank you, Deputy President.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I hear that there may be a new member for O'Connor from the honourable member's side. I heard about a very interesting competition involving Hon Steve Martin.

I want to touch on the motion at hand and thank the member for bringing it to the chamber. Talking about our regions and primary industries is integral. I will pick up on something that Hon Dr Steve Thomas said around the sheep industry. When we got into government in 2017, one of the big things that restricted the running of sheep in Western Australia was the total lack of care for the wild dogs issue in Western Australia. In my region, I met with people who had gone from farming sheep to farming goats because of the challenges they faced from the lack of investment in the dog fence. As soon as Hon Alannah MacTiernan became the Minister for Agriculture and Food, we held a wild dog forum at one of the universities here, which was well attended by pastoralists and interested parties. The forum centred around the lack of investment and the lack of care put into protecting the sheep industry at the time because the wild dog problem was massive. I am proud that this government stepped up; it did some great work in that space, but there is a lot more to be done. That is one way of reviving our sheep industry. When we compare how many sheep we used to produce with what we produce today, the figures are staggering. I have met many people who diversified out of the sheep industry for that exact reason. It is a bit disappointing that that was not put on the record, but it has been now.

I want to touch on the fisheries space quickly. I know that there are other speakers to follow, so I will not take up too much time. In the previous motion I did not get the opportunity to talk about the great things that the government has been doing in the fisheries space, because, once again, the opposition is focusing on the little things that are not

Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Darren West

completely true and is trying to make it sound like the world is ending. The government has done a lot of work, particularly in the aquaculture space. Aquaculture has been a huge mover in terms of jobs and innovation, and, hopefully, it will have a massive impact in the export space. In this year alone, the WA Labor government has injected \$8.5 million to support aquaculture development, which is primarily based in regional WA. The Albany Shellfish Hatchery will be upgraded to keep up with a huge industry demand. The Pemberton Freshwater Research Centre will also be upgraded, which supports regional tourism through trout stocking. The Broome Tropical Aquaculture Park will also be upgraded to support ambitious plans to increase the production of ocean-grown barramundi in the Kimberley. These are great aquaculture projects. I know that Hon Rosie Sahanna gets excited when we talk about aquaculture in the Kimberley because some great innovation is happening in that space. I will also talk about the aquaculture development zones in the Kimberley around the Abrolhos Islands and in Albany to encourage aquaculture development in prime locations that will directly benefit regional areas. Aquaculture is a new space that we are playing in. I know that Minister Punch is very passionate about this area and it will only grow into the future.

I have only a little bit of time left so I will touch on the mining and energy space and talk about VSUN Energy. A vanadium redox flow battery is being used for a long-duration energy storage pilot in Kununurra, which is very exciting. It plays an important role in the Cook government's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. Horizon Power has invested in the vanadium redox flow battery, and VSUN Energy is a subsidiary of Australian Vanadium Limited that operates in the Murchison and the midwest in Western Australia. The 78-kilowatt/220-kilowatt hour redox flow battery will enable Horizon Power to test the capabilities of providing 100 per cent renewable energy for long periods, with the potential for the energy to be utilised across WA. That is fantastic. I am a huge supporter of hydrogen as well. I could talk all day on this motion. Hon Sandra Carr has brought a very valuable motion to this chamber, but I will leave some time for my two colleagues who I know have already jumped up to speak.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Member, I recognise that we still have several members wishing to speak, but Hon Sophia Moermond has jumped up every time since the beginning so I give her the call.

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [12.16 pm]: Thank you, Hon Sandra Carr, for putting forward this motion. I am all for a more sustainable and diversified economy. I think that is great. I have to say that this session is a wonderful way to learn what the government is doing, and is sometime more effective than question time, so thank you for that.

We cannot talk about sustainability and diversification and not include hemp in the discussion, obviously. I understand that other people wish to talk as well, so I will be very short in my summary of what hemp does. It does not make a person jump over buildings, but we can use it to make fire-retardant hempcrete bricks. One hemp plant takes three months to mature, which allows for four crops a year to be grown. It uses less water than cotton and about five different products can be produced from one hemp plant. The fibre can be used for rope, cloth, insulation or pet bedding. The hurd can be used to make hempcrete, and cannabidiol oil can be extracted from that as well. Bizarrely enough, the farmers over east can extract CBD oil to create a good income stream but Western Australian farmers cannot, unfortunately. The leftovers from the plant can be used as fodder for cattle. The seed or grain from this plant can be used for food, oil or fibre for fabric, and the hurd can be used in building. In the meantime, the root ball sequesters carbon and toxins from the soil as well, so it can be used in the regeneration of farmland. Thank you.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.18 pm]: I, too, would like to commend the motion put to the house by Hon Sandra Carr. It gives me an opportunity to talk about my agricultural profession. There has never been a better time to be involved in the agricultural sector. To anyone who is young and thinking about a career, get into "ag". It is fantastic at the moment and presents great opportunities, new technology and security of employment. It is a much different sector now. There is more corporate farming, which, on the one hand, takes away that family-farming dynamic, but it provides an opportunity for those who do not come from a traditional farming background to get into the sector. I would also like to point out the contrast between this very positive motion put forward by a government member and that put forward earlier in the day by the opposition. It lectures us from Perth and it talks us down.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You make it too easy.

Hon DARREN WEST: The worst of it, member, is this: I point out that at the last election, the Nationals WA got 2.8 per cent of the primary vote. The vast majority of people are not interested in being lectured from Perth and being talked down to, but it still disappoints me that the rural media swallow whole this negativity that gets put forward to us by the Nationals and is reluctant to take up the good news and positive stories about agriculture in regional Western Australia put forward by the government. Any wonder people are moving from the regional areas to the metropolitan areas. We will possibly lose another seat from the regions because people are moving away. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the National Party to keep negatively talking about our regions and saying how bad it is there; so, of course, people do not want to live there, but I digress. Before I was parliamentary secretary in the areas of the environment; climate action; racing and gaming portfolios, I had the great pleasure to work with

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Hon Alannah MacTiernan, the former Minister for Agriculture and Food. As some people were talking, and some people brought these up, I made a list of the positive impacts that she had on the portfolio. Members might remember that when we came to government InterGrain was for sale. It was a distressed seller in the previous government's depressed market, trying to flog off a valuable asset. Our government has kept it and boosted it. It is now producing some of our best barley varieties. RockStar Wheat, which I think was named after the former minister, is one of the highest performing wheats in Western Australia. Maximus CL barley is one of the highest performing barleys in Western Australia. Both are produced and owned by our state government. Our hardworking public servants breed and produce those grains to give better returns to farmers, thus providing a better export market for us.

Alannah brought the Rural Research and Development for Profit program back into the department of agriculture and food. Remember how the coalition decimated it to a shell of its former self? It is now back up and about, and finally organised. This was after countless years of talk from the coalition, which even said the program was underway with new plants. Funding has been secured for the building of new headquarters and I look forward to the new minister overseeing that important development for Western Australia agriculture. Minister MacTiernan worked very hard with the federal government to keep foot-and-mouth disease out of Western Australia. Remember those opposite talking about the sky falling in and the fear in the community because we were going to have foot-and-mouth disease, even though the risk only increased from a nine to 11 per cent chance? However, Alannah MacTiernan succeeded in keeping foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease out of Western Australia.

There is a new research facility in Katanning. The Muresk Institute closed under the coalition in 2014. It is now vibrant and up and about, with a new trade training centre and shearing shed, which was a great investment. People are back at Muresk thanks to that. There is also carbon farming, regenerated agriculture and as was mentioned earlier, the Esperance dog fence, the Murchison cell fencing, and others.

The biggest story in agriculture is the reopening of the Chinese market to Australian barley. I get the prices every day on my phone and I can tell members that barley prices are up \$50 a tonne since that announcement, and only because of that announcement. Nothing else fundamentally in the world grain market has changed, except there is now access to that market with our very good friends and wonderful trading partners in China. The attitude of the former coalition federal government was disgraceful and it cost us millions. Ask anyone who produces wine and crayfish. These products were shut out of China because of that attitude. For some reason, many of those producers still vote Liberal, which I do not understand. Anthony Albanese, Don Farrell and Penny Wong have done an amazing job in getting access back to those markets. I hope that good work continues because we need to have a respectful trading relationship with our good friends in China.

The motion is also about diversification of the economy. The condition of the WA economy is strong, and forecasts remain resilient even as we face the challenges of rising interest rates and a global economic volatility. We are set pretty well here in Western Australia thanks to the strong financial management of the McGowan government and now the Cook government. I also point to a lauded speech that the new Premier Roger Cook made to *The West Australian* business breakfast. Anyone who read yesterday's editorial will see that we have a Premier who gets it. He has a vision to diversify our economy, look to new industries and become the powerhouse of the world economy, not just the Australian economy. Western Australia's economy is expected to grow by 4.25 per cent, the strongest growth in nine years, bolstered by strong exports. Western Australia continues to carry the rest of the nation, accounting for almost 18 per cent of the national economy but with only 11 per cent of the population. In fact, Western Australia's real gross state product per capita is by far the highest of any state or territory, and more than 75 per cent higher than the rest of the nation. Western Australia accounts for half the national goods exports, with exports reaching a record \$272.8 billion in the year to May. Business investment is expected to rise by more than one-fifth over the forward estimates period to reach \$53.7 billion. The government is supporting growth with a record \$39 billion asset investment plan.

We have a bright future here in Western Australia. We have the opportunity to do anything we want. We have the minerals, the gas, and the iron ore, and the dedicated people who live in the regions and do the work. I think there are great times ahead for Western Australia. Get out to the regions, people. That is where the action is. That is where the best place to live is. Do not listen to those opposite. It is very positive and very good. I think this is an excellent motion by the hardworking and dedicated member for the Agricultural Region, Hon Sandra Carr. I proudly support it 100 per cent.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.