PORTS — CAPACITY EXPANSION

859. **Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Ports:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record investment in Western Australian ports.

(1)   Can the minister outline to the house how this government's expansion of capacity at our ports is supporting local jobs and allowing for further industry growth?

(2)   Can the ministry advise the house how this government is developing WA's maritime workforce to meet this continued demand?

Mr D.R. MICHAEL replied:

(1)–(2)   I thank the member for the question. I have visited the port of Geraldton, which is run by the very good Mid West Ports Authority. Some great work is happening in Geraldton. I look forward to working with the member on the expansion of the port of Geraldton in the upcoming years to support more trade and economic diversity and development in Geraldton and the region. The member will know about the importance of pilots to our ports. For those members who do not know, pilots are those people who by boat or helicopter head out to those big iron ore carriers and safely and efficiently get them into port. They know all the little nuances at each port. I am told that sometimes these iron ore carriers can have a mobile phone height width between the bottom of the carrier and the seabed, so they do a very specialised job.

I was up in Dampier and Port Hedland with the member for Pilbara a couple of weeks ago to announce an innovative new employment program at Port Hedland that will open the way for a younger and more diverse pool of talent to enter the highly specialised career of marine pilotage. The new program has been implemented by the Pilbara Ports Authority in order to ensure that the port of Port Hedland is able to support 24/7 operations. The training program uses on-water training, simulators, prior experience recognition and technical competency assessments to improve training efficiency without compromising high safety standards. They had me on a simulator with lots of screens in front of me. They clearly did not know that I am no good at *Call of Duty*, but I was able to get past my lack of hand–eye coordination when it comes to video games to pilot a ship into port. Traditionally, marine pilots have required a master mariner certificate, which is very difficult to obtain unless the person is able to spend long periods at sea. By removing this barrier, the Pilbara Ports Authority has been able to employ and utilise skilled maritime professionals and provide them with an alternative career pathway.

Women currently account for only two per cent of the global maritime workforce. Through this program, the port of Port Hedland has been able to employ the first female pilot. By removing barriers that have disproportionately impacted women, Pilbara Ports is improving diversity and inclusion in the industry. As I said, marine pilots play a vital role in port operations, and I am pleased to see the Pilbara Ports Authority growing its capability to provide these essential services. Hopefully in the future, that will flow on to all Western Australian ports. The program will keep the engine room of Western Australia, and indeed Australia's economy, going.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: I take this opportunity to discuss the role of the Cook government in increasing the capacity of our ports in the Pilbara to ensure that WA's economy remains strong. The continued development of the Pilbara Ports Authority is yet another critical step in the diversification of Port Hedland and the Pilbara, with investment in continued works at Lumsden Point further contributing to an increased capacity for the Pilbara to drive WA's economy forward. We all know that the Pilbara, like the midwest, will play a critical part in WA's transition to net zero, and it is important that this is done in a way that continues to create jobs, grow the local economy and ensure that the Pilbara remains a cornerstone of the WA economy.