

STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION

**243. Mr M. HUGHES to the Minister for Science:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant investment in creating jobs and diversifying the Western Australian economy.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how this government is investing in the science sector in the state, including funding for health and medical life sciences and the emerging space industry?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this investment will support new jobs in this sector?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I thank the member for his ongoing commitment to particularly STEM, but the science community generally. It is an important question. As members all know, *Diversify WA* is a key economic policy of the McGowan government to build strength and resilience into the Western Australian economy. It is about targeting nine sections of our economy in which we believe we have a competitive advantage and are right to continue to advocate and build in those areas so that we can continue to broaden the base of our economy and take Western Australia forward. Two key areas of that are health and medical life sciences, and space. I was at a business news breakfast just yesterday, and I was delighted at that event to be able to make two significant funding announcements in relation to these sectors.

Last year, I was very proud to launch WA's first ever medical life sciences strategy, and yesterday we backed up that announcement with an \$8.65 million investment for implementing this strategy over the next four years. I very much look forward to working with the Minister for Medical Research and the Minister for Health to seek to commercialise some of the great medical discoveries that we make here in Western Australia. It is time that Western Australia benefited economically by ensuring that these great discoveries are translated, scaled and commercialised in Western Australia so that we can enjoy the economic benefits of these great scientists. Over the next four years, this funding will lay the groundwork to establish the state as a global hub for research development and commercialisation, for digital health, medical technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and health and wellness products. Supporting WA's growth in health and medical life sciences is part of the McGowan government's diversification strategy, and what drives the diversification strategy is a genuine ambition to create well paid, meaningful jobs, building the opportunities that are available for our young life scientists as they go through their careers.

In addition to that, over the next two years the McGowan government will invest \$16.75 million to enhance the capability and capacity of WA's space sector. Many members will be aware of the great talent, skills and capability coming out of our resources sector, particularly oil and gas, in robotics and autonomous vehicles to make sure that we can not only fix a gas pipeline 200 metres below the surface of the water, but also drive robots on the moon and Mars, and beyond. This represents a huge opportunity for Western Australia. We could become the space capital of Australia by utilising the incredible expertise and capacity that we have in our workforce here.

The funding announcement we made yesterday commits \$2.5 million to Curtin University's Binar space program. This will enable Western Australian startups and small and medium-sized enterprises to test their technology in space for commercialisation as well as for training students in the development, testing and operation of spacecraft. This funding will enable the program to retain existing expertise and develop a new and highly skilled workforce through the manufacture and launch of three Binar spacecraft each year over the next three years. This is an extraordinary opportunity. In addition, \$4 million will be recommitted to Australian Remote Operations in Space and on Earth, a Perth-headquartered industry-led consortium at the forefront of knowledge and technology transfer between Australia's traditional industry sectors and the international space sector.

Diversifying the Western Australian economy is a key economic policy of the McGowan government. Space, and medical and life sciences represent two vital sectors of our economy. We look forward to growing them and we look forward to growing the jobs that go with those sectors.