

HANSARD
RESOURCES SECTOR — LOCAL CONTENT REPORTS

Matter of Public Interest

10 August 2011

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton) [3.56 pm]: I have already said a lot on this issue, but I want to share a really brief story in the two minutes that I have.

During the parliamentary recess, I took a break and went to Africa to visit my daughter who is working with refugees for the United Nations. That is a side issue. I stopped in Johannesburg, Gabon and Botswana, and I went to Kenya. I saw two things that are very relevant to this debate.

First, the Chinese are investing very heavily in infrastructure in Africa—a side point, but very, very heavily and are all over the place—and on every plane I flew, business class was full of Western Australian mining people. They were not only investing heavily in Africa, but were also providing a whole range of mining services, including geophysics, accounting, law and exploration expertise.

I met a group of environmental scientists who had graduated from Murdoch University and who are now employed by a whole range of firms, including the Chinese, to do the environmental assessment in preparation for mine sites.

One of the weaknesses in the bill put forward earlier today was that it had, as Martin Ferguson also said, a very narrow definition of local content. Indeed, if we broaden the definition, we can see that local content in Western Australia is one of our great success stories; that is, we focus on the mining sector and projects that leads to a large amount of local activity not only in allied areas both in and outside the fabrication industry, but also in sustainable industries throughout the world.

It is a phenomenal success story; it is one that we are aware of, and one that we should promote. I might add that the provision of mining services is one of the fastest-growing areas in our economy.