

COMMITTEE INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No.10)

Senator Louise Pratt asked the Department of Defence, upon notice, on 17 November 2021:

Senator Louise Pratt: I've now got some questions in relation to the Pacific support vessel for WA that dropped off the shipbuilding program. You'll see that in question on notice number 66. What were the original job estimates for the Pacific support vessel, please?

Mr Fraser: Senator, Tony Fraser. I don't have those at hand. I will need to try and find them for you during this. The appropriate officer who manages that is not before the committee today. But I'll see if I can find that information for you before the end of this session.

Senator Louise Pratt: Are you able to advise me in terms of the 2024 structure plan which states, "There will be acquisition of another vessel built in Australia to help the Pacific"? I am assuming that's a reference to the Pacific support vessel. In this context, the Australian Government promised an Australian build, but it appears to me, based on this information, that the government knew all along it wasn't going to happen and didn't do an estimation of those jobs.

Mr Fraser: Senator, Tony Fraser. This issue was addressed at Senate estimates. I might seek to find the information for you from my colleague that provided that information there, to see if it might assist you.

Senator Louise Pratt: I'd like, please, the baseline estimate workforce estimates from 2014 to 2015 to present for Western Australia as well. Are you able to have that information available today as well please?

Mr Fraser: Senator, I'm not sure whether I'll get it to you today. It is, I understand, a question on notice that was taken at Senate estimates, and I believe we're working through that information to provide back.

Senator Louise Pratt: I understand from estimates itself, that the direct workforce in Western Australia is just under 2,000. You have baseline estimates for this year that provide an estimate on workforce to 2030?

Mr Fraser: Again, Senator, that is in the information being developed for the response that we –
Senator Louise Pratt: How are you able to tell me the positive spin, but not the actual numbers in that context.

Mr Fraser: Senator, because we are working that information up which will be in the plan. My colleague will be able to answer that more accurately. He was not called before the committee today and is more appropriately able to answer that question which we've taken on notice from estimates."

Senator Louise Pratt: Thank you. The fact sheet provided in response to question number 66 said over 2,000 jobs by 2030. Are you able to advise, are they direct shipbuilding jobs and what is the exact increase in shipbuilding workforce in Western Australia?"

Mr Fraser: Again, Senator, all that information will be in that response that we provide.

Senator Louise Pratt: Sorry, it's school drop-off here because it's early here in Perth. May I ask, please, because you did give a figure of 2,000 – a forecast workforce of 2,000 in 2030 and yet we've got 2,000 in WA now. I'm not I'm somewhat confused about, are you saying there'll be substantial growth. I don't see the substantial growth in that. It sounds like the fundamentals of the

planning you're talking about still hasn't been done, yet in this changed scenario.

Mr Fraser: Senator, we took on notice at estimates to work through that detailed workforce plan which we will provide in due course to that response.

Senator Louise Pratt: So why isn't that growth reflected in the answer to the 2030 figure that was provided?

Mr Fraser: Sorry, Senator, I don't have that in front of me. The appropriate officer wasn't called today, but I'm trying to assist you and the committee as best I can. I think it more appropriate if I were to take that on notice and I'll answer it through the question on notice that we currently have on this workforce.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the Senator's question:

With regard to workforce demand forecasts for Western Australia, refer to question 13.

The Department of Defence's previous workforce demand forecasts did not include a specific workforce estimate for the Pacific Support Vessel, which was one of several future projects captured under 'Emerging Projects'. Please refer to Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Supplementary Budget Estimates Question No. 3.