

ASCOT KILNS — RESTORATION

Grievance

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [10.00 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Heritage, and I thank the minister for taking this grievance this morning. As the minister is well aware, the Ascot kilns are an iconic feature of my electorate in Belmont. It is a feature that I am very passionate about. The minister has come out on a number of occasions to view the kilns. This historic structure is an absolutely beloved aspect of our local community and many of my constituents have expressed a deep connection with the heritage-listed site. The kilns are indeed a treasured part of Belmont's heritage. This has been reflected in the community campaign to preserve the site and restore the ageing kilns. The poor condition of the kilns has been a topic of discussion amongst Belmont residents for a very considerable time. The restoration of the kilns is a cause that I have been passionate about and advocating for even before becoming a member of Parliament, prior to the 2017 campaign. Over the past four years I have worked with local community members to advocate strongly, consistently and passionately for action on this important project and the restoration of these ageing kilns.

I would like to recognise the tireless efforts of the Ascot Kilns and Parry Field Action Group and particularly Sharren Holt and Andrew Gibb, who have been relentless in their pursuit of action on this very, very important issue. I would also like to recognise the advocacy of one of the local councillors in the City of Belmont, George Sekulla, who has also worked hard to bring much-needed attention to this cause.

Early last year, this campaign achieved an enormous victory, with the Ascot kilns being recognised as a state-heritage site. I want to thank and congratulate the Minister for Heritage for making this possible. It is a landmark result for our community, so thank you, Minister Templeman. This gave local residents a greater sense of security that the site would be maintained and protected by the state government and was a very important decision made by our government, so thank you.

However, the campaign did not stop there. Alongside the Ascot Kilns and Parry Field Action Group, I continued to advocate for urgent funding to be allocated for the restoration of the kilns, which had been left for many decades almost in a state of ruin. Late last year, I was absolutely delighted that this funding was announced as part of the state's COVID recovery plan. A commitment of \$6 million for the restoration package for the Ascot kilns was announced by Rita Saffioti. I am incredibly grateful for her support and that of Minister Templeman. That funding has made sure that the kilns will be preserved in perpetuity.

The restoration funding announcement was momentous for the Ascot kilns. However, the true benefit to the community will be the completion of the works. The completion of this project is highly anticipated amongst Ascot locals, especially the Ascot Kilns and Parry Field Action Group. It will mark a new beginning for the site and be a longstanding reminder of the power of local community advocacy. It will provide constituents with a strong connection to the site, and much joy and relief to know that the kilns will continue to be a feature of the local area for many years to come. It will provide Western Australians and tourists alike with a glimpse into the history of our area.

Finally, it will provide closure to Sharren, Andrew, Councillor Sekulla, all of the Ascot Kilns and Parry Field Action Group, many locals and me that the site will continue to be enjoyed by future generations. Given the importance of this project to my electorate of Belmont, I kindly ask the minister to provide an update regarding the progress of the restoration works.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Heritage) [10.04 am]: I thank the member for Belmont for her grievance today and for her acknowledgement of the community of Belmont, particularly those who have been passionate about ensuring that the Ascot kilns will be protected for future generations. Many of us would know Ascot kilns, having driven past it on the way to Ascot Racecourse. People need to appreciate just how remarkable these kilns are and why the member for Belmont deserves acknowledgement for her strong advocacy for and work with the Ascot Kilns and Parry Field Action Group, which has been so passionate about protecting them, and the individuals the member mentioned in her grievance this morning.

As members would be aware, listing on the state register is reserved only for those heritage assets that are of state significance. That is why it was very important that we ensured that the Ascot kilns site was entered on the state register last May. We need to understand the significance of these kilns. The site comprises eight circular kilns and five iconic brick chimney stacks. It is one of the largest collections of its type still standing in Australia. In addition to the industrial and economic impacts that the former kiln operations had, the Ascot kilns produced clay pipes and terracotta tiles that characterised our community infrastructure and building infrastructure for more than 70 years. Throughout the Perth metropolitan area is the legacy of what was produced and created there. Of course, the kilns also pay homage to a lost art; that is, the art of beehive kiln construction. The beehive kilns are a unique kiln construction. We understand that there is no known living artist left in Australia who has experience in the construction of the beehive kilns, so we have now lost that craft in Australia. No living person is connected to that, underpinning importance of the protection of this site. That is why we invested \$6 million in it. It is because of the

advocacy of the member for Belmont and those community members that \$6 million has been invested through the WA Recovery Plan. Those works are now underway, which is important.

I think this site will be a very special place for a whole range of reasons. It is of note to the house that previous budget proposals for an increase in spending on this project were not supported; therefore, achieving the \$6 million allocation was remarkable. A multidisciplinary team has been appointed for the job of the restoration and protection of this asset. That team includes qualified heritage architects and engineers, who only recently completed an assessment of the condition of the kilns and those important chimney stacks. The assessment will help inform the next stage, which will go to the design, plan and scope of conservation works to secure the structural integrity of the chimneys and the kilns and will assist also with the sourcing of authentic materials and inform the conservation approach in accordance with the borough charter. This project will be very much focused on high-quality protection and conservation works. It is a complex project, but it is a necessary one. It is estimated to be completed within the next two years. Importantly, the funding provides an opportunity for additional local jobs and, given the unique nature of the structure, is expected to increase the expertise of heritage builders within Western Australia. The full works package will involve the repair, replacement and upgrading of structures, the construction of a new roof canopy to ensure protection from the elements, and the installation of lighting to highlight the unique heritage features. I think this is going to be a great feature. At night, it will be lit up beautifully and will be a special place for people as they pass by, including pedestrians and cyclists.

We also know about the *Brick Man* statue that was anonymously gifted just prior to Christmas last year. This is an example of an urban guerilla art installation. The statue appeared mysteriously on the site on the night of 22 December 2020. The *Brick Man* statue is 10-foot tall. It captures the imagination of the local community for its acknowledgement of Sir Hugh Lancelot Brisbane, a former industrialist and philanthropist and an owner of the former Bristle clay company. The artwork is the result of considerable time and investment, and we are working with the artist to safely protect and relocate the statue while works are underway before returning it to pride of place at the Ascot kilns. This piece of urban art installation will be part of this precinct.

Mr D.J. Kelly: I thought it was you, minister!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It certainly has very chiselled looks—a very good likeness, I might say.

I thank the member for Belmont for bringing this grievance seeking an update on the works and acknowledging the importance of this project. I also thank her for her advocacy and also her acknowledgement of those community people who have advocated so long for the protection of these kilns. These kilns will now be protected, and they should be. That is occurring, with gratitude to you, member, and those community members. I look forward to the completion of the project.