

GREAT SOUTHERN REGION — GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Motion

Resumed from 24 August on the following motion moved by Hon Col Holt —

That this Council commends the Liberal–National government on recognising the importance of the great southern region of Western Australia and applauds the work done by this government to support the communities of that region.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral) [1.04 pm]: I had commenced my remarks last week before the debate was adjourned and I had made some initial comments about how members on this side of the chamber will not support this motion because we do not believe the Liberal–National government has done enough for the people of the great southern region. Royalties for regions has really not delivered as much as it could have delivered for the great southern region. This state government has not dealt with all the issues—be they social, economic or otherwise—in the great southern region. I mentioned that I had recently visited the great southern region and Albany in particular with the member for Albany, Peter Watson, and my colleague Simone McGurk, the shadow Minister for Community Services.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am not going there. It is opportune that we had been there recently, just before this motion was to be debated in the chamber. Bear in mind that Hon Col Holt gave notice of this motion in 2013, so, as it happened, it came before us a few weeks after I had visited Albany and heard firsthand the concerns of local residents. I also briefly touched on the fact that residents there have concerns about housing. The priority list has not been reduced, a large number of houses in Albany have been demolished by the Housing Authority with no sign of any being rebuilt and residents of Housing Authority houses have waited for long periods to access maintenance. The words used were that the waiting time for maintenance is farcical. Groups also raised with me the lack of crisis housing for people affected by domestic violence and the issues of mental health and homelessness. Someone also raised with me the issue of people living in cars, which, of course, is an issue right around the state. People also raised the issue of roads and said that the roundabout at the ring-road was an accident waiting to happen and that no work had been done on it in eight years under this government.

I mention briefly that Albany port is now run out of an office in West Perth, much to the disdain and concern of residents in the great southern region. South Regional TAFE is now run from Bunbury. It is not run locally by local people in the local community and, under this government, it has had jobs and courses cut. Residents in Albany also raised with me their concern about the Department of Agriculture and Food and the fact that this government, under successive ministers has essentially, I will not say gutted but it has certainly reduced significantly the number of staff at that agency, and particularly the number of staff who were involved in research and development. That, too, is a great concern to residents down there. It is also something that Hon Col Holt did not mention in his contribution. Another issue raised with me was the concern of the local people in about the government's plan to sell the TAB. The member for Albany brought to my attention that even the idea of the sale has been a big blow to the confidence of the racing and breeding industry, which is a major employer in the great southern region.

I also want to bring a few other issues to the attention of the chamber this afternoon, particularly in mental health and child protection. Members are aware that late last year the government announced the 10-year mental health, alcohol and other drug services plan. I have been complimentary about that plan before in various debates in this place and indeed in the media and outside this place. When that plan was announced, people in the great southern were very welcoming of it. The plan states that mental health and alcohol and drug support services are expected to more than double in the great southern region before 2025. The manager of Palmerston Great Southern Community Alcohol and Drug Service, which is a drug and alcohol non-government organisation in Albany, was quoted in the media as saying that he was very excited as the current resources were not meeting demand. I will quote from an article in the *Albany Advertiser* from late last year, 10 December, in which Mr Ben Headlam, the manager, said —

“Demand in the Great Southern for drug and alcohol treatment is certainly above what we currently deliver, so we would love to see an expansion of services,” he said.

“Mental and drug and alcohol are health issues and the burden for treatment and support of these health issues for people in the (Great Southern) is quite large, so anything that reduced this burden is very welcome and will come at great relief.

“To see such a service in the Great Southern is very exciting.”

That was in December last year, and since then the state budget was released by this government but not one extra cent was included in that budget for the mental health, and drug and alcohol services plan. In fact, if members recall when the plan came out, a line of small print in the media release said that this plan had to go through the same budgetary processes as everything else and was in the mix with everything else. Even though this plan came about through statewide consultation and the non-government sector—indeed, everybody in the drug and alcohol sphere in the state—was very complimentary and excited about it, and they supported it, this government did not include one extra dollar in the budget for this plan. How can the Legislative Council commend the Liberal–National government on “recognising the importance of the great southern region”, when it has not dealt with this issue that is of such great concern to residents of the great southern region?

I mentioned that I recently had the opportunity to meet Andrew Wenzel, the CEO of headspace in Albany. The oppositions knows from headspace that suicide is an issue in the great southern region, and that the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that suicide is the leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 44 years. Headspace’s Albany manager, Andrew Wenzel, is also on public record saying that more needs to be done in the community to address suicide and mental health issues. We have not seen this government focus on that issue. Again, I cannot in good conscience congratulate the Liberal–National government when this issue remains such a scourge in the community. It is fair to say that this issue is a scourge right across the state and, indeed, across Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! There are several very audible conversations. The member is saying some very interesting things and I think you should be following him.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, Mr President. I appreciate your kindness there.

I was saying that suicide is an issue right across the state. It is a very important issue that we all need to do more work on, and certainly it is a very big issue in the great southern region. It is an issue that headspace and the opposition have raised time and again, but this government has not focused on it in the great southern region or anywhere else in this state.

I refer to other health issues in the great southern region. Headspace is a very important agency that operates in the mental health space. It works with young people and has a great brand that young people respect and are happy to engage with. We know that headspace is under attack by the federal Liberal government. The opposition has raised questions in this place and in the other place about headspace and its funding, but all we got from the government was a head-in-the-sand response, saying that it was a federal issue and that was the end of it. I do not think that response is good enough, and neither do the people in the great southern region—more needs to be done. We know that mental health is an important issue across regional Western Australia that touches many lives, so it is disappointing that members of the state government have refused to talk to their federal colleagues in the Liberal and National Parties to ensure that this vital service does not lose its presence, is not downsized or does not lose its focus or funding in the great southern region. That is another reason I could not possibly agree with the motion to congratulate the government.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Oh, go on!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Hon Robyn McSweeney knows that occasionally I do stand and congratulate the government, to the disdain of my colleagues on this side occasionally; however, in this case I cannot in good conscience congratulate the government for what it has done in the great southern region because there are still gaps in the provision of services in that region. As I said previously, this region has not received the focus from royalties for regions that it should have.

Hon Sally Talbot: We’ll be listening to your defence.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I, too, look forward to Hon Robyn McSweeney’s contribution later on.

I want to touch on a range of child protection issues in the great southern region. Again, the government has not focused on this area in the great southern region in the past few years. I know that when Hon Robyn McSweeney was Minister for Child Protection, given her connection to the great southern region, she took a special interest in it. Since then, the government has not given this issue the focus it deserves, which is a great shame. It is an issue of concern in the great southern region, which I am sure Hon Robyn McSweeney knows.

Another issue in the great southern region is foster care, and the big need for foster carers. Under the last Labor government there was a campaign to encourage more foster carers into the system, and that continued on a bit under Hon Robyn McSweeney as minister. Since then, the government has broken apart the foster care unit. It was one solid unit based in Cottesloe, but now those people have been dispersed; in fact, some of those people have been taken out of the foster care area. I saw Ms Fay Alford, the president of the Foster Care Association of Western Australia in the building today. Ms Alford is a tremendous advocate for foster carers in this state. I did not speak to her, but just seeing her reminded me of the former Labor government’s campaign and how

recruiting foster carers was a priority for previous ministers. Under this government, we have seen that fall away and now in the south west and the great southern region in particular, we see a real need for more foster carers. Aside from an occasional story in the paper, we do not see enough focus being put on foster caring. We know that the number of children in care in this state has doubled over the past eight years and that the number of Aboriginal kids in care is at 52 or 53 per cent, which is a disgrace in my book. It is fine to bring kids into care when we need to, and that is happening, but there is a sense that when we bring them into care they are suddenly protected. I know from asking questions in this place that a significant number of children in care are in Rangeview Juvenile Remand Centre at the moment. The state, and the CEO of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, is legally responsible for these children and young people, yet they are locked up in a detention centre. If we were taking them into “care”, as the meaning of the word suggests, there should not be such a great number of children in a detention centre, but there is. That area needs more focus. The number of children in care, particularly, Aboriginal children, needs to be tackled by government, but I do not think it has done this. It is certainly an issue in the great southern region.

There have been issues in the great southern region with families being evicted by the Housing Authority, as there has been right across the state. This government has been heartless at times. Various ministers have had different views and emphases but, as a whole, huge numbers of families have been evicted from public housing. The great southern region does not have the same number of early intervention services as it had previously. Best Beginnings and other parenting services face the chop when money is tight. I have said previously and I say again today that it irks me greatly every time I drive in from Perth Airport to see the massive big stadium being built, while at the same time money is being taken out of schools and vital parenting and child support services across the state. That is happening in the great southern region and is an issue that was raised with me on my recent visit to that area.

I could raise a number of other issues relating to this motion but I will not because I know that other members want to make contributions and, of course, this is a government motion so I should give government members the opportunity to fill up their time and raise their issues. I say again that we do not support this motion. I am sorry, Hon Col Holt; you are a nice bloke but we do not support your motion. We do not believe that the Liberal–National government—be it the Barnett–Grylls, Barnett–Redman or, indeed, the Barnett–Grylls government again—has done enough for the great southern region. More can be done and should be done; I think Hon Col Holt would agree that, absolutely, more can be done but definitely more could have been done. The great southern region could have had its fair share of the royalties for regions fund but that has not happened. People down there are concerned and it has been my pleasure to vocalise their concerns this afternoon, Mr President. With that, I will finish my contribution.

HON ROBYN MCSWEENEY (South West) [1.21 pm]: I am very pleased to support this motion. Indeed, the great southern is a very important region. I thank Hon Col Holt as the mover of the motion. Hon Col Holt’s office was next to mine in Albany; we were not too far away from each other. In fact, I think we shared the same back door into our offices.

Before I start to debate the merits of this motion, I would very much like to pay tribute to the former Mayor of Albany, Annette Knight, who recently passed away. She was affectionately known as Albany’s first lady. Annette was mayor from 1988 until 1998, so she spent a decade as mayor. Even after she stopped being mayor, she never really stopped working for her community. In 1996, she was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to local government. In 2012, she was presented as a freeman of the city. Many well-deserved accolades were bestowed upon Annette during her lifetime. In March this year, she was inducted into the Western Australian Women’s Hall of Fame, which was very fitting for such a wonderful woman who will be greatly missed in the great southern region. Annette was heavily involved in getting Great Southern Grammar up and running, and she sat on the board for many years; I think she was still on the board. She was also the lead person in getting the university to Albany. I am sure Hon Barry House would agree with me about Annette Knight. She was married to Tom, who was a member in this place for some 12 years. Both Hon Barry House and I send our deepest sympathy to Tom and his family. Albany and the great southern area have just lost a wonderful person.

I was elected in 2001 and, from the outset, my office was going to be in Albany. Coming from Bridgetown, I had never had a great deal to do with Albany or that area. I had been more concentrated on Manjimup, Bunbury and around the south west area, but, of course, the great southern—Albany—is in the south west area. Over the 14 years I stayed in Albany, I grew to know and love the area very much. It is a very beautiful area. The travel was horrendous but every time I went out the back through Frankland, into Mt Barker and up the highway to Albany, there was always something new to see. It did not matter whether the season was summer, winter or spring, there was always something new to look at. During the period our government has been in power, there have been so many changes for the better in all portfolios, but perhaps I can start with tourism. Hon Col Holt said that the great southern is one of the state’s best kept secrets and I agree. Some people go down there for

Christmas and New Year and it is raining and cold. If they went down there in April or May, they would find the weather is so beautiful, albeit that we have four seasons in one day. It is such a beautiful part of the state.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: It sounds like Melbourne.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It is very much like Melbourne, Hon Peter Katsambanis.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: Actually, Albany's much nicer than Melbourne!

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, but they are both pretty historic communities.

Hon Col Holt mentioned hiking the Bibbulmun Track. My electorate officer, Beverley Walsh, does it quite often, but I have never hiked the Bibbulmun Track. I have driven along various parts of it and seen the entrance where people get into the track. It is on my to-do list one day. There are also many beautiful fishing spots in Albany. One of the prettiest places down there is called Two People's Bay, which Hon Col Holt would know very well. Good Beach is another beautiful place. There are yacht races down there; I think they are World Series yacht races. There are many national parks, including Torndirrup National Park, which is where the new lookout is. There is site information and wheelchair access at The Gap and the Natural Bridge. That is something this government has done; it has really brought tourists to the area. Some \$6.1 million has been spent on that development and the tourists come from far and wide. Castle Rock skywalk is another place that I have not seen since the skywalk was built, but it is also on my to-do list. However, I did climb up Bluff Knoll when it was snowing. I thought that was quite a feat, really, but coming down was worse than going up. That was a few years ago now. I do not think I would climb Bluff Knoll again but it is one of those challenges that people do once, they are very pleased to have done it, then they leave it.

The government did an amazing job of the National Anzac Centre and I am sure that Hon Stephen Dawson and Hon Sally Talbot would agree that the National Anzac Centre is state-of-the-art and absolutely world-class. I went to its opening in late 2014. I think it was opened by the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott on the same day that we celebrated the 100th anniversary of when our troops left Albany for Gallipoli. I had purchased a wreath to lay at the service but I was told by the Feds who were organising the service that I was not good enough to lay a wreath so I could not do it. I got my back up a little bit about that so I carried the wreath down to the service and put it under my chair. As I sat there, I read through the program and it said that community members could come and lay wreaths at the end of the service. I went over to Hon Barry House and asked whether he would do me the honour of coming and laying the wreath, because Hon Barry House has a really good history in WA like I do; our people came out here on the First Fleet and our people also went to war. My grandfather's brother left from Albany and my grandfather left from Fremantle. We just wanted to pay our respects so when they called for community members to come and lay wreaths, Hon Barry House and I went and paid our respects. I think it was us who got on television that night, not the high-powered Feds who would not let me lay the wreath. I did not think it was proper. We represented the area and to be told no was just not on.

Getting back to the National Anzac Centre, the whole area around that Anzac centre has received an upgrade and it is truly a wonderful precinct. The Padre White Lookout and the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial at Mt Clarence are just beautiful. As I was reading some of the notes I got from the minister's office, I noticed that Padre White was written as "Padre Wilde", so I think somebody needs to go back to the minister's office and tell those young people there about Padre White, the role he played and the fact that he is the reason the Anzac service is so big today. It started from Padre White doing the first service on Mt Clarence as the ships went out.

There is absolutely no shortage of things to see in the area. Whale watching is hugely popular. I note that last night on Cheynes Beach, a whale was caught in the reeds and people were waiting for the tide to come in so they could get it out and it could float back out to sea. They come in very close to Middleton Beach. There was a shark attack at Middleton Beach some years back. The whales frolicking down in the base are an absolutely beautiful site from the cliff top.

Each community in the great southern has its own brand of tourism. There is Denmark, Tambellup, Cranbrook, Gnowangerup, Woodanilling, Mt Barker, Kojonup and Frankland. I think Hon Helen Morton grew up in Frankland and so is very fond of that area, as am I. There is also Bremer Bay, Fitzgerald River National Park and Jerramungup, which is soon to be in our area of the south west, but it is certainly in the great southern. I did not mention those towns in any necessary order. Each small town has something that it contributes to tourism. I have probably left out a few little towns and I apologise for that.

We can talk about health and the massive injection of money into health capital works in the great southern, and not only the great southern, but also all of Western Australia. I remember that when Labor was in government, all it was going to do was patch up Albany Hospital for \$20 million. The Liberal Party said that if we got in, we would build a new hospital, and that is what we did. We went to the election promising a new hospital and we did that. It is a magnificent health campus. There is also a new eight-bed hospice worth \$4.7 million. The hospital cost \$170 million. Denmark Public Hospital is a new hospital. Construction on Katanning District Hospital started in July and that is a \$32.4 million project. Manjimup, which is closer to the south west area, is

getting a new hospital well over \$30 million, and the injection going into that community is just amazing. We can talk about economic growth, with support to our farmers with the Katanning regional saleyards, which were opened in 2014. They are state of the art and were a \$25 million project. True to our word, they were built. Hopefully, Boyanup will be next on the agenda. I am going the wrong way, so I will get back to the great southern.

Turning to education, Hon Peter Collier is always talking about the beautiful Yakamia Primary School, which was an election promise of his. He built a brand-new school and the community is very happy with that school. At the Great Southern Institute of Technology, as it was known, we built an amazing health and community services teaching block for \$5.76 million. We now have student accommodation being built, stages 1 and 2, with a value of \$19 million. I was at the opening of the new TAFE library earlier this year and the opening of the Mt Barker TAFE. Nothing stands still. There are so many projects and many of the smaller ones are down to the initiative of the community; they come to fruition through the sheer hard work of those little communities.

The state government's royalties for regions country local government fund was developed as part of the state government's commitment to fund the regional local government infrastructure backlog. Since 2008–09, I think approximately \$360 million has been allocated across Western Australia.

Hon Sally Talbot: It has been abolished.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, but I am just saying. All that money has gone into —

Hon Sally Talbot: So you have spent all the money and now you are abolishing it.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Is that all Hon Sally Talbot can say? Of all the good things I have been saying about our area, which ones does she not want?

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I am singing the praises of the money that has been going in over the years and I do not shy away from that.

There is the Katanning town centre commercial and streetscape revitalisation. I went to Katanning earlier in the year, but I have not gone back to see what has been done and I must get back down there. There is the Katanning heritage centre project, on which we spent \$15.7 million for an \$18.3 million heritage project that will deliver a welcome precinct, visitors centre, museum and recreational infrastructure, which is just what Katanning needs. There is so much history in Katanning. When my grandfather came back from the war, my great-grandfather bought him some land that was owned by the Piesse family—I think there were 2 500 acres. That is where they started out and then they moved on to Clear Hills in Gnowangerup, where they had 5 000 acres of wheat farm. My historical roots are all around Katanning, Kojonup and Gnowangerup and the great southern region. Even though we are in the south west, we certainly visit those areas. There is also the Bremer Bay town centre and trails project. Bremer Bay is a beautiful place. Many people go there to go fishing and spend holidays. In 2016–17, the Shire of Jerramungup received \$1.7 million through the Growing our South royalties program for civil works, landscaping and infrastructure for the Bremer Bay town centre.

I turn to housing for seniors. People do not really recognise that state government royalties for regions funding has gone into that. In Albany, \$1.9 million has been given to the Great Southern Community Housing Association to build a complex comprising 12 two-bedroom rental properties for seniors and people with disabilities, which will be about 15 minutes' walk from the town.

I turn now to early childhood. There is a \$6.3 million project through the state government royalties for regions program for an early childhood hub in and around the region. In early 2016, planning commenced for the construction of a multipurpose building to house a range of early childhood services in Katanning. That \$6.3 million project includes \$5.7 million of state government royalties for regions money.

I could keep going. There is the Albany gasworks site remediation, the Tambellup sports pavilion and the Denmark Riverside Club. Denmark is a beautiful area. I think that is where Hon Sally Talbot resides when she is not in Perth. It really is known as a unique community. There is a lot of culture and arts, and there are very artistic people in Denmark.

Visitors — John XXIII College

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): I interrupt the member for a minute to welcome into the public gallery students and staff from John XXIII College. Welcome to the Legislative Council and welcome to a debate on the great southern region.

Debate Resumed

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I think I will have to do my hair and shave my mo, Mr President, if I am starting to look like Hon Simon O'Brien!

Sorry, Mr President, I will get back to talking about the great southern region. At the beginning of my contribution I spoke about Annette Knight and I will end my speech with something she was quoted as saying. According to my notes, she said —

If you wanted something, it did not matter whether you were a male or female you just got on with the job and did it. We all worked together because we all had a common cause—if they want to do something, we'll get in there and do it.

What a great legacy Annette Knight leaves. People like Annette who have vision and the tenacity to get on with things are why Albany is such a good community. She was at the helm for many years, but, as I said at the beginning of my contribution, she never stopped working for her community; she was tireless. A lot of people used to ring her and I would watch her out at functions where people would come up to her, and they revered her because she was the first lady. If I could hope to be a quarter of what Annette was to that community, I would be doing a fine job. Thank you, Mr President.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [1.41 pm]: Having a fair portion of the great southern in the Agricultural Region, I thought it would be remiss of me not to make a contribution to this debate. Nine of the 11 local governments in the great southern reside in the Agricultural Region, namely the Shires of Cranbrook, Jerramungup, Broomhill–Tambellup, Katanning, Plantagenet, Gnowangerup, Kojonup, Kent and Woodanilling. Only the Albany and Denmark local governments are considered to be outside the Agricultural Region. I thank Hon Colin Holt for bringing this motion to this place to enable us to highlight the hidden gems of the great southern region, and certainly to bring them to the attention of this place.

The great southern region is indeed a region of great variety and much richness. Its natural beauty, obviously, is well recognised, including the south coast, the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges, and Mt Barker. Some of the most wonderful natural beauty occurs in the great southern region. Sitting alongside that natural beauty, inside that umbrella, is the region's biodiversity. We have all heard much over the last 12 months, 18 months or two years about the Bremer Bay canyon, which is a biodiversity hotspot in Bremer Bay about 70 kilometres off the coast. We are seeing substantial tourism into that area, and it is becoming an area of international significance. Killer whales are present 99 per cent the time. I see Hon Alyssa Hayden with her tourism badge on nodding her head. We have great white sharks there. I think the killer whales versus the great white sharks down there is quite interesting. We saw the news article and the documentary about the tagged great white shark with which contact was lost after it was forced to the bottom of the ocean. It had obviously been chased by something, and the indication is that it was probably a pod of killer whales. It is interesting to see that biodiversity just off our southern coast, which is part of the great southern region. David Riggs should be commended for bringing that particular place to the attention of the world. He has done some remarkable work down there, and that work is now being fully recognised.

The great southern region covers an area of about 39 000 square kilometres, including many offshore islands. It composes approximately 1.5 per cent of the state's total area. Although 1.5 per cent may not seem a great deal, it contributes a lot to the economic viability and wealth of our great state. Residents enjoy an enviable lifestyle and benefit from that growing economy. We have seen substantial investment from the state government. The Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture vision, which has received a \$350 million package from royalties for regions, has made a substantial investment into agriculture in that region. The region already had a wonderful and substantial agricultural industry, but as a government we have been able to make a substantially greater contribution to enable that area to underpin agricultural development in this state. We have supported the development of the sheep industry in that area. We have committed \$10 million to the Sheep Business Centre in Katanning, which provides information, research and data to the industry to enable it to take up the opportunity of growing demand from international and domestic markets for Western Australian quality produce. Also through the royalties for regions program we have funded the \$250 000 three-year pilot of the National Livestock Identification System help desk to increase WA sheep traceability. If there is an outbreak of a notifiable disease, our industry has a viable response to curtail it as soon as possible to give our trading partners confidence that we have those tools at hand.

Two of the major companies in the sheep industry in the great southern are the abattoirs—Fletcher International Exports at Narrikup and Beaufort River Meats at Beaufort River. Fletcher International is now a world brand delivering produce from all over the state but particularly from the great southern to customers across the globe. It sends a high-value product to customers around the world. Beaufort River Meats is doing the same. Although it is a much smaller scale than Fletchers, it nonetheless is doing a valuable service to our agricultural industry. They both need to be commended for supporting agriculture in the great southern.

Another great achievement by not only the government, but also the Shire of Katanning, is the Katanning Regional Sheep Saleyards. It was a \$25 million project that received \$17 million from the state government. The \$17 million was from the proceeds of sale of the old Midland saleyards site, and that was reinvested back into our saleyard system and into saleyards like Muchea, the Great Southern Regional Cattle Saleyards and the Katanning saleyards. As far as I am aware, it is the largest undercover sheep saleyards in the world—certainly in the southern hemisphere, and absolutely certainly in Australia. My information is that it is not only the largest saleyards in the southern hemisphere, but also now the largest in the world. The saleyard was substantially built by the Shire of Katanning and its staff. Specific industries were set up to allow them to be able to build the saleyards and keep the dollars local. From that, the shire has been able to invest in other businesses in the area and give them the confidence to expand and invest. That is another benefit of investing government money in these small regional shires—they deliver valuable projects that deliver economic benefit to the state.

One of the other great economic assets for the great southern region is its development of aquaculture on the south coast. In the 2016–17 state budget process, \$3.6 million was allocated through the regional blueprint investment fund to aquaculture development, particularly on the south coast, and to facilitate a steady expansion of commercial aquaculture investment. Essentially, that money goes into a \$2 million investment in a new multispecies shellfish hatchery in Albany. We have seen the expansion of the shellfish industry across the great southern area with both 888 Abalone and Ocean Grown Abalone making large investments into expanding. Similar to the agriculture industry, the aquaculture industry and those companies have seen a significant expansion in demand for the quality products that they are able to offer. The clean, green brand that is delivered from Western Australia is sought around the world. We are seeing not only abalone, but also the pearl spat for mussels being grown down there and finfish and other species being produced and caught. Wild catch is also expanding in that region because there is a demand for and recognition of the clean, green brand that is being delivered out of the great southern area. Food and wine is also a great area of expansion in the region.

One of the areas that was highlighted through the Great Southern Development Commission's blueprint under "Growing Value: Transformational Project One" was to further expand production, value adding and international marketing of the region's food products. One of the questions the commission posed to itself and to us in general was: why? The answer is quite simple. Global demand for food, including premium products, is anticipated to rise strongly in the near to medium future. The great southern is a consistent and productive food region. It can expand production, add value and further promote the region's food products. How do we do that? We boost land use planning, develop a central great southern food processing precinct, expand aquaculture and horticulture opportunities, and build better links to emerging markets. What will this mean? It means a highly productive regional economy, with more jobs and better primary production infrastructure. That has been identified and it is being delivered through investment into the great southern region by the state government.

One of the other areas that has been highlighted in the blueprint, which is underpinned by all of this investment, is the strong communities that this investment generates. One of the transformational projects that is identified in the blueprint is community development and amenity, to maintain and enhance the region's communities to ensure the great southern is recognised as a preferred region in which to live, work and invest. That again poses the question: why? It is because the great southern's population will continue to grow and regional communities need to be able to offer a range of job opportunities, good social environments and attractive local amenity. Apart from being able to showcase what we do on an international playing field with our agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture, we also need to highlight what a great place regional WA, and particularly for this debate, the great southern, is to live, work, invest and play. What can we do? We can plan better for human services in the region, refresh town centres, improve waste management, develop community leadership, provide access to affordable housing, enhance early childhood development—I am sure members opposite would support that—foster opportunities that flow from the South West Native Title Settlement, support arts and culture, and extend services and facilities for seniors and in health, sport and recreation. What will that mean? A bigger population in the region—up to 100 000 people—will have the right facilities and services from early childhood through education, family years and on to senior years. They will have health outcomes that compare with the metro area. Community strength will show in volunteering; taking part in sport, arts and culture; and measures of the sense of community safety. They are just some of the things that investment by our state government is delivering for the great southern area.

Another industry the great southern offers for this state and that is an attractor to that region is forestry. We have seen substantial investment, both privately and publicly, in forestry and the agroforestry business.

I will touch again on tourism in the region. Although I represent a large portion of the great southern region, I still take my family each year outside of the Agricultural Region portion of the great southern to visit Albany, in the patch of Hon Robyn McSweeney and Hon Col Holt. It is our annual pilgrimage. We love it down there. As Hon Robyn McSweeney said earlier, it is four seasons in one day there. We can get up in the morning and it is a beautiful sunny day, and by the end of the day we are rugged up and have our ugg boots on in the middle of

summer. It does not leave us thinking that we know what is going on! We have to take a careful of clothes to rug up—or un-rug on some of the very hot days there as well.

Hon Robyn McSweeney mentioned earlier the National Anzac Centre in Albany. I also was there on the 100th anniversary of the Anzac convoy's departure and the official opening of the National Anzac Centre, although I was a bit further back in the crowd with the family. We stayed in Denmark for the weekend and travelled into Albany on the day to be part of a wonderful community event. I certainly knew that I was not worthy of getting up at the front of the crowd and laying a wreath. I was happy to sit down the back with the mob, shall I say.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: But I am cheeky!

Hon PAUL BROWN: Yes, I understand that, and it is part of the member's patch; it is not part of my patch. Nonetheless, it was a wonderful day. The Anzac centre that was opened on that day is a wonderful tribute to all our veterans, both fallen and returned, who have served our country well. It is another fantastic investment. I think \$9 million out of a total of \$12 million was put into the Anzac centre from the state government.

Other regional events are also good for tourism in the great southern. One event that I try to take my family to every year is the Kulin Bush Races. It is an absolutely wonderful event. If anyone has not been there, they need to go at least once. They should take their camper trailer or caravan, pile their family into the car and go down for a couple of days. The event runs from Thursday to Sunday, and it builds every day and builds greater and greater numbers every year. It is a fantastic, relaxed event, because of the conviviality of the crowd and the people there. The lubrication that is enjoyed by the crowd is on a scale that makes me wonder what anyone else is doing elsewhere in regional WA on that day. The crowds are enormous and the fun to be had is without compare. I thoroughly recommend to anyone to go to the Kulin Bush Races and have a weekend down there. It is a bit similar to spending time in Albany—take clothes for four seasons in one day, as it might be stinking hot during the day at the races, but I guarantee that long sleeves and long pants will be needed at night even though people might be sitting around the bonfire that the organisation puts on every night.

Another great event that I try to get down to every year is the Grapes and Gallops at Mt Barker. I have seen Hon Brian Ellis and Hon Col Holt and a few others at the Grapes and Gallops. It is always another good day, with another great crowd. Quite a few of the Albany connection come up. It is a big day out, not far from Albany. I can tell members that a lot of people from Perth and regional Western Australia get down to Mt Barker for the Grapes and Gallops day. It is a wonderful celebration of everything that the Mt Barker region has to offer. They produce some great horseflesh that runs around the track; they have got some great studs. One of the great attracters is the local produce of that region. We always see Mary Nenke of Cambinata Yabbies, and the wineries, Ironbark Brewery and others always have their stands there, always ensuring that people are, again, well lubricated, well fed and enjoy the day. Although being well lubricated is not a necessity of enjoying it, it is certainly a great part of the region that I encourage everybody to enjoy.

Hon Dave Grills interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Hon Dave Grills is exactly right—drink responsibly, but enjoy having some of that wonderful local produce as well.

One of the other great things the great southern area is well known for is its sport and its sporting identities and sporting personalities. I do not think anyone in either house of this Parliament of Western Australia has been a greater advocate for sport than Hon Tuck Waldron when he was Minister for Sport and Recreation and also as the member for Wagin, which also encompasses much of the great southern region.

Hon Sally Talbot: He is not an Olympian, though. You have to pay Peter Watson—he is an Olympian.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Yes. Hon Sally Talbot is pre-empting a little what I have to say, but I thank her. I am ecumenical in my praise of the people of the great southern region, and the member is right: the honourable Peter Watson—Peter Watson, not the honourable Peter Watson—is a great sport advocate.

Hon Adele Farina interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: I think he is a very honourable man but his title is not “honourable”. He has been a great advocate for the great southern region as the member for Albany and as a past Olympian as well. Hon Tuck Waldron as Minister for Sport and Recreation has done much, not only for that region, but also inside the cabinet process, to elevate the Ministry of Sport and Recreation from an afterthought to a position that showcases what sport has done for Western Australia as a whole, in both its regions and Perth. One of the projects that we have done in the great southern region that has fundamentally benefited those communities is the Tambellup Sports Pavilion, with \$1.2 million through the royalties for regions fund for that \$3.6 million project. I think the \$1.2 million came through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund.

Hon Sally Talbot: You cut that, too!

Hon PAUL BROWN: No; it is part of the ups and downs of the budget process. CSRFF is still alive and well.

Hon Sally Talbot: This is the down part of the budget.

Hon PAUL BROWN: It comes back up; I think next year it comes back up again. Like any funding in any department, it is a competitive process. I do not think anyone can say that statewide the CSRFF has not done its job. It has absolutely supported community sport and recreation throughout our state.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: It is not worth Hon Sally Talbot's breath to suggest that the CSRFF has not done its job. I think she is taking a cheap shot at a fund that has been reduced but will increase in the out years. The member needs to recognise the good work that that fund has done through royalties for regions, particularly in regional WA. That fund has delivered outstanding benefits across all regions of WA, but particularly for the great southern region. Similar to the country local government fund, it has achieved what it was designed to achieve. Members may say that it has been cut; in fact, the country local government fund achieved what it was designed to achieve, and it was always going to be a four-year project. Members opposite may well sit there and decide to take pot shots at a reduction in funding, but why not recognise the very good work that both the CLGF and the CSRFF have done? Members may well say that the funds are a victim of their own success, but the key to that is "success".

One of the other great projects in the great southern region is the Denmark Riverside Club. The project is a \$2.5 million investment in the construction of a new clubhouse and associated infrastructure in Denmark. It is a mix of state government allocations through the country local government fund—my golly!—royalties for regions, Lotterywest and the Department of Sport and Recreation. There it goes—the Department of Sport and Recreation again investing in regional infrastructure, along with the country local government fund; funny that. A further \$200 000 is funded from the great southern regional grants scheme, so again that is more royalties for regions money. That is due for completion later this year. Considering it is part of Hon Sally Talbot's electorate, I am sure she is very familiar with the benefit that that building and that facility will have for the good people of Denmark.

Another great project is a \$1.9 million royalties for regions funded facility at Sounness Park. These are just more indications, recognition and a great demonstration of the work that this government has been doing to invest in the great southern region—not just the great southern region, but all over regional WA and the Perth metropolitan area, but particularly for this debate, in the great southern region. Sounness Park is a \$1.9 million project for the construction of a club and change rooms, which has taken it to such a level that earlier this year we had an Australian Football League game played there in the off-season. It was the Dockers versus the Crows, from memory, and it provided an outstanding benefit to Mt Barker. People went to that game from all over the state. People could not book accommodation, could not get into restaurants, bars, pubs and the cafes because so many people went to Mt Barker because of the facilities that we provided for that community. If those bars, pubs, cafes and restaurants are full, that is outstanding. We have to provide more opportunities for them to create more restaurants, bars and pubs. That is more jobs, more investment in the community, and better access to the great produce from that region, and that is exactly what we will do. Members can sit over there and criticise it, but that is exactly what we are doing.

Support for the community is a highlighted part of the "Strong Communities" section of the "Great Southern Regional Investment Blueprint". There are 7 788 great southern pensioners who can now remain mobile and connected to their community through the \$575 that will be given to them each year towards the cost of fuel and taxi fares through the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. We are investing in those regional communities to enable age pensioners to have access, mobility and flexibility. Although they might not all drive, they can still make use of that opportunity for family members to take them to doctors and community events, or they can get taxis. That is an outstanding opportunity that this government has provided to that community through the royalties for regions program. That is 7 788 people who have directly benefited from that program.

We know that volunteers are an important part of our emergency services, so emergency services volunteer organisations have also benefited from the state government, which has put \$2 000 a year into each emergency service sub-branch throughout the great southern, including St John Ambulance, the State Emergency Service, bush fire brigades and marine rescue services. They all now receive \$2 000 each year to reward their volunteers for the services that they provide to our communities. That \$2 000 can be used for professional development courses, either in Perth or locally, but volunteers can also be rewarded for the time and effort they make and the hours they take away from their businesses, employment and families with a portion of that \$2 000 towards a tank full of fuel to thank them for all the travel and work they do on behalf of our communities.

The royalties for regions regional grant scheme and community chest fund both go towards providing a level of support and confidence to those community groups that do not have the capacity to lobby government with extensive business cases through other funding opportunities. The community chest fund has delivered enormous benefits to the great southern region. Those small groups have only to write a one or two-page application—not an extensive business case that takes months to put together—to seek support from the development commission. There have been some outstanding benefits from that sort of funding for those small regional communities, such as delivering a plinth for an Anzac ceremony, or delivering roofing for a couple of community houses. There has been an enormous amount of benefit to some of these regional communities from the community chest fund.

Another funding opportunity that has delivered substantial benefit to the great southern region is through the regional telecommunications project, or RTP. That is \$85 million across the whole of regional Western Australia, and a substantial investment into the great southern region to enable businesses and communities to stay in touch through telecommunications. It is not just about mobiles; it is also about data for farming communities, tourism operators and emergency services volunteers. They now have the confidence of being connected to their families and the world through the improvements in telecommunications that we have provided.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: If the member wants to talk about ADSL connection, she should give Telstra a call. Through royalties for regions we are actually backfilling what the previous federal Labor government and other federal governments have not delivered. The royalties for regions program has invested \$85 million and partnered up to deliver 260 regional telecommunications towers, which has substantially increased the footprint; I think it is twice the size of Tasmania now.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: No, the member can talk about ADSL. ADSL has nothing to do with what I am talking about here. I am talking about regional telecommunications. ADSL is a line to the house that is administered —

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: No, that is exactly what I did not say. I said that the member should go and speak to her federal counterpart —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order! It is getting a little bit messy here and you are not aided by interjections or by interjections from your own side. I ask everyone to take a deep breath and allow Hon Paul Brown to continue.

Hon PAUL BROWN: The member may well talk about ADSL; we will talk about the benefits that this government has delivered to the great southern region through the RTP.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PAUL BROWN: Thank you, Madam Acting President. I will endeavour not to take interjections, but I cannot promise you at this point.

I am talking about the benefits that this state government has provided to the great southern region through an \$85 million royalties for regions investment in telecommunications. We have delivered a footprint twice the size of Tasmania and backfilled successive federal governments' lack of ability to provide quality telecommunications to regional WA. No other government has been prepared to try to address this. We have done so and are continuing to do so. As I said, I think there are 257 mobile towers, which are delivering a substantially better quality of life. It means that people and their families are connected to the globe and other businesses and friends because of the investment by this state government, and that substantially means that the great southern region—one of the biggest regional agricultural, horticultural and aquacultural contributors to the economy—is now connected to the world. It is providing job opportunities and investment through being able to be connected. We did that; not the previous state Labor government, not the previous federal Labor government or the federal Liberal government. Nobody except this state government has provided that opportunity through the royalties for regions program, so I thank the member very much for allowing me to highlight that.

Another important point acknowledged earlier by Hon Robyn McSweeney is the Katanning heritage centre project and town centre development that have been enabled through royalties for regions. There is also the Bremer Bay town centre and trails project, for which \$1.7 million has been provided through royalties for

regions to carry out civil works, landscaping and infrastructure for the Bremer Bay town centre completion and for the development of a town-to-sea tourist walk and cycle trail. As I said earlier, the Bremer Bay canyon is now a globally recognised tourist hotspot, and we are seeing an enormous number of visitors in that region. The state government has enabled the small community of Bremer Bay to become tourist-ready and has provided opportunities for that community to grow and invest in itself to capitalise on that market.

The state government has also provided affordable housing options in Albany—I think Hon Robyn McSweeney also spoke about that earlier—with the completion of 12 two-bedroom rental properties for seniors and people with disabilities. Royalties for regions has also made \$1.9 million available to the Great Southern Community Housing Association to build that complex, which is situated less than 15 minutes' walk from the town centre, close to public transport, shopping, medical and community facilities. It has also funded seniors' housing in Tambellup, Cranbrook, Kojonup, Woodanilling, Gnowangerup and Mt Barker. This government has also funded the Katanning Early Childhood Hub. The \$6.3 million project includes \$5.7 million of royalties for regions funding.

Without trying to harp on about it too much, I think that the state government has done a wonderful job of contributing to growth and investment in the great southern region. We have proven again and again that we value our regional communities. We have invested heavily through the royalties for regions program in telecommunications, jobs, growth and public housing and in making these small towns and centres attractive to tourism. Hon Col Holt should be commended for bringing this motion to the house. As I said earlier, he has allowed us to talk about the hidden gems of the great southern region. On that note, I commend Hon Col Holt for bringing this motion to the house. Thank you very much for letting me contribute.

Distinguished Visitors — Ronnie Roach and Peter Hackett

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Before we go to our next speaker, I welcome to the President's gallery Mrs Ronnie Roach and Mr Peter Hackett and family and friends. Mrs Roach and Mr Hackett are the two remaining Western Australian World War II gunners and they were part of the commemoration service that was held in Kings Park today to remember all those who served in World War II. Welcome and we acknowledge your service. Thank you.

Members: Hear, hear!

Debate Resumed

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [2.22 pm]: It is such a shame that those members on the other side did not pay attention to Hon Stephen Dawson when he was providing the opposition's initial response to this motion.

Hon Alyssa Hayden interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Have you finished? It is my turn now.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: You don't want any interjections although you are happy to give them.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am happy to take interjections, but why would the member bother when she does not have anything to say?

Hon Alyssa Hayden interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I think mine was totally relevant. Did the member not see the way Hon Paul Brown was engaging with me? We were having an actual debate there for a while, which is something that does not happen all that often in this place.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order, members! I remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is a good reminder. Thank you, Madam Acting President. I will face you and speak to you.

It is a shame that nobody on the government benches was listening to Hon Stephen Dawson when he went through some of the realities of life for people in the great southern region. As Hon Paul Brown pointed out, many shires comprise the great southern. I will talk about the two shires within my electorate, which is the South West Region; they are, of course, the Shire of Denmark and the City of Albany. I will focus my comments on those shires because they are the people whom I represent. This is like *A Tale of Two Cities*. A parallel universe is exemplified by this chamber. Hon Paul Brown and Hon Col Holt, the mover of this motion, and to a lesser extent, I must say, Hon Robyn McSweeney, have taken the opportunity, in speaking to this motion, of providing one of these kinds of grainy black-and-white 1950s newsreel accounts of the great southern. It was like a cook's tour, talking about wine and chocolates. I am thrilled to bits that Hon Paul Brown has a good time in the great southern; I am really pleased about that. Millions of people would agree with him that this is one of the greatest places in the world to live and to visit.

I respectfully point out to honourable members that debating motions in the Parliament of Western Australia is not the place where we—to quote Hon Paul Brown—highlight the hidden gems of a region. We are not debating what slogans to use on the tourist pamphlets. Here we are talking about the reality of life in the great southern. The National Party has moved a motion that is unbelievably smug and self-congratulatory and complacent. It is incumbent on us on this side of the house to point out to members opposite where they are wrong, because they obviously —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! I remind members that comments should be through the Chair or there should be no comments at all.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Because you are obviously not listening.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! I remind all members that comments should be through the Chair.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I know that this is making members of the Liberal–National government uncomfortable, but I am going to press on here because I have something to say that they need to hear. I will not be distracted by these mindless interjections.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Just hold your horses. There is plenty of time for members opposite to get to their feet later and we will be chuffed to bits to hear what they have to say. Can I just ask a question through you, Madam Acting President? Did the Liberal–National government have a budget breakfast in Albany this year?

Hon Alyssa Hayden: That changed the life of everybody down there, didn't it!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Alyssa Hayden asked whether having the breakfast in Albany changed anyone's life in the great southern. So we know that there was not a budget breakfast in the great southern. I wonder why there was no budget breakfast. There has always been a budget breakfast in Albany.

Hon Adele Farina: It's too far to go.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is too far to go. Members have all moved away from town anyway. Nobody has their office there anymore. They did not know where it was. I do not think those are the reasons.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We do not need to tell them anymore; that is why the Liberal–National government does not have a budget breakfast anymore. This is really interesting. This is fascinating.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hansard is finding it difficult to take note of your interjections, let alone hear Hon Sally Talbot, who is on her feet.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is it not fascinating to hear those little comments about why the government canned the budget breakfast in Albany? We know why it was. Members opposite have nothing to say because they are embarrassed about all these cuts and their failure to deliver on some of these key promises, which have been promised not only once to people in the great southern but twice. I will go through some of those because I know that members opposite struggle to find their way to the broken promises website where all these are listed. I would have thought that when members saw this motion on the notice paper, task number one would be to log on to a website called brokenpromises.org.au.

Hon Alyssa Hayden: A Labor website? Why would we do that?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I can assure the member that she will not get Labor germs from reading it. It comes up just like every other website. The website is brokenpromises.com.au. Members could have searched it to find words such as “Albany”, and “Denmark” and “great southern” and then they would have seen the reasons a budget breakfast was not held in the great southern this year. Just in case members opposite were truly mystified or Hon Paul Brown really thought a budget breakfast was not held in Albany this year because the government has done all the work and it does not need to go back, they can look at the broken promises website and see exactly why no-one from the government was prepared to stand up in Albany and spruik the budget. Government members have nothing to say and they have everything to be embarrassed about because of this series of broken promises. In the absence of any research done by people in the Liberal–National government, I will slowly and gently walk members through this.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! This is messy. One interjection at a time, please.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will slowly and gently walk honourable members on the government benches through this appalling list of broken promises and defunded programs, but I will start on a positive note. Let us change the whole ambience here to cheer everybody up.

Hon Alyssa Hayden interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is the member all right there?

Hon Adele Farina: Perhaps we could give Hon Sally Talbot an extension of time with all these interjections!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That would be nice. I must say that one of the proudest days I have ever spent as a member of Parliament was the centenary of Anzac in Albany. It was longer than a day; in fact, it was a whole weekend. It was a fantastic weekend. I would like to award the major prize for the weekend to the Albany weather. I think members have all been very rude about the weather in Albany. It is not called the rainbow coast because of the gender preferences of people living there; it is called the rainbow coast because it rains a lot. It rains; people get over that and they just live there. That weekend I had never seen anything as pretty as the City of Albany. The whole weekend was utterly perfect. It was a very proud moment for the community to celebrate. That is a funny word because it was actually a sombre occasion—I am sure that Hon Robyn McSweeney would agree with me—filled with memories and regrets. I must say that the community did us proud. When I move around the electorate, talking particularly to young people at school who are studying politics and want to know a bit more about how it actually works, one of the things I always point out—this may surprise some members on the government benches—is that if all of us who represent an area, such as we are debating today, the great southern, were asked to make a list of all the things that we thought our communities needed as a matter of priority, there would not be that much difference between those lists. The disagreements arise in how we deliver those things and perhaps in the priority order in which we put them and, of course, in some of the more basic philosophical questions about what needs we are trying to meet. When it comes to the delivery of services and resources, I think all members would be pretty much in agreement. That was a weekend that I celebrate as being a significant marker in the life of the community in the City of Albany and surrounding districts. That was the point I wanted to make, because one of the outcomes of that weekend, from my perception living down there and spending a lot of my working life down there, is that people invested a great deal of hope in that event and there was going to be a big wave of tourism and commercial activity throughout the region in the weeks and months to follow. The main ceremony was attended by the Prime Minister and dignitaries. Hon Robyn McSweeney and Hon Barry House, I think, went out the front all by themselves with their wreath, and we are all very proud of them for pulling rank and standing up to the Prime Minister of Japan. It was very impressive. That ceremony was televised all around the world. The response I got when I talked to people in the region after that weekend was that they were quite disappointed—of course, that was the time when Western Australia began to go into that recession phase—because the tourism and commercial activity that came after that did not live up to expectations.

Hon Col Holt: Could you take a minor interjection? Interestingly, I was reflecting on that and some of the commentary that came out from particularly the police about travelling to Albany in my opinion actually drove people away. The police said it was going to take seven or eight hours to get to Albany. I drove down and got there in almost the same time that it normally took. There was a kind of lowering of expectations that it was not going to deliver, and people thought they would not bother to go, which was a bit of a shame because I think they missed out on what was a great outcome for the community and a great celebration.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The member is right, and there is always a bit of fear in the south west in general that infrastructure will not hold up under an influx of that many people, as has happened in Denmark over many years, particularly over the Easter period, when basic services have collapsed. That does not occur so much now, but certainly it did in the past. There was a slightly negative perception.

Hon Col Holt: The police overplayed their hand a little. They were trying to be super-cautious and warn people, but I think it sent a message that perhaps people should not go. That was a real shame, I think.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Col Holt has probably heard the same wry comment that I have heard; that is, the best thing that can happen to tourism in Albany and Denmark is the fast road to Margaret River. The distance from Perth is seen by many people as a great advantage, which is something we should talk about more. It does not matter that the great southern is four and a half hours away from Perth; it is still worth doing that drive, and people arrive somewhere that is quite different from anywhere else.

I can say lots of other things, but I do not believe we should use this period of debating time to provide a kind of travelogue introduction to the region, because everybody knows it is a brilliant area. What worries me is that

governments are supposed to provide good schools and decent health services, and are supposed to be able to keep communities safe. The problem is that when I move around the great southern region, particularly the communities of Albany and Denmark, and talk to people I hear a story that is very far from expressing satisfaction with that provision of those basic services to which people have not just an expectation but a right.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Are you talking about health—the beautiful health campus we have in Albany?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am talking about the fact that the reality of life for a lot of people in the great southern is that they cannot get accommodation for elderly people who need special care. Hon Robyn McSweeney knows that the great southern region is still heavily reliant on transport routes into Perth for medical services. My colleague in the other place Peter Watson, the member for Albany, pointed out that our air service is getting rather an unfortunate reputation for not being reliable. I have to say that Peter Watson is very brave to put on the record in Parliament his frustrations with the air service, because we all travel on Regional Express airlines a lot. I think they do a fantastic job and if people do that journey as often as members of Parliament do, they get to know all the staff. I appreciate having four air services a day—four up and four down—and the times that they operate. I love the fact that Rex overnights in Albany, which is another boost for the region. I love the fact that I can now get to Perth at 7.30 in the morning, do a full day's work and fly back home 12 hours later. I think that Rex does a fantastic job. But, coming back specifically to the question of health, there are pathology services that will not send their blood supplies down on the plane, because the service is simply not reliable enough. We have a problem with the carriage of baggage on those little Saab aircraft. I am sure that members have read the accounts that Peter Watson has brought to the attention of Parliament. Rex airlines can have a full plane waiting on the tarmac but when they calculate the weights, they have to start taking freight off the plane. This is Western Australia's second major regional centre and it does not have an air service that is reliable enough to carry blood supplies. That is pretty sad, even though I take my hat off to Rex for doing what it can with that contract.

There are major differences in the health services provided in Albany compared with those in Perth. If a person needs access to medical services, particularly specialist medical services, they have to plan their life very carefully to live in the great southern. I will tell members what I hear people saying as I move round the community. I hear people talking about basic infrastructure and the fact that water supplies are a very troubled area of everyday life. We have fortunately got passed the stage in Denmark when the tap water is undrinkable. I now do not use bottled water and can use water from my tap. That is largely because of the planting done up around Mt Lindesay. We have now reforested sufficiently to make the water supply less saline and usable. Members would have read the series of questions that I have asked over the years about the chemical content of the water supply. At Easter and Christmas, when the system is under stress, the water has to be treated to keep it clean. There is a water shortage in that whole area. We have had massive water restrictions all through the great southern. It is simply not a reliable water supply. We are not planning ahead and are not using the resources that are given to governments to make proper plans for an area; we are constantly retrofitting. We are constantly running behind to try to clean up the mess. There is no proper plan for water. We start running out of water and then we whack up a couple of little desalination plants. We come up with a plan to pump wastewater out over the beach near Shelley Beach—I cannot remember the name of the beach, but it is the one next to Shelley Beach. Then there is a huge outcry from the local community who are going to see their local amenity ruined and, all of a sudden, we are back to the beginning again. That service provision planning is simply not happening properly in the south west.

This is what disturbs me most about life in the great southern at the moment. In the last eight years, people with what we would all regard as secure, regular, full-time employment in the public sector—people such as nurses and teachers—can no longer contemplate being able to meet the financial burden of sending their children to university. In the last 12 months or so—for the first time in eleven and a half years—I have heard from people: “I am a nurse. I have full-time work with a health service provider around the great southern. I've got two children at high school. I am a single parent.” I can give members the specific example of a conversation I had the other day. A woman told me that her daughter is very bright and wants to be a doctor, but she will not be able to afford to let her go to university because to send her there, she will have to find somewhere for her to live in Perth and she has to provide all those things in years 11 and 12 that used to be free and now cost a fortune. If I was talking about somebody who had been made redundant at the age of 45 years and not been able to find work or somebody who had not been able to retrain, or if I was referring to a family in which both parents were on some kind of disability pension, I would say that life is very, very tough. However, it is not those people. Ordinary working families are telling me that they can no longer contemplate being able to meet the financial burden of sending children to university. That is very, very serious. What about the children who go into years 11 and 12 and are not heading for university, but who want to do their certificate I or II? Particularly at agricultural colleges, we see students who have completed certificate III in year 12. Look at the cost of those courses now. They are thousands and thousands of dollars.

Hon Adele Farina: It's astronomical.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: As Hon Adele Farina said, the cost is absolutely astronomical. If a parent was putting two or three children through high school, there are the kinds of fees that we used to associate with the top-ranked private schools in Perth. That is what people have to pay for their children's education.

Hon Peter Collier: Garbage.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Peter Collier, have a look —

Hon Peter Collier: It is absolute garbage. You're talking about the specific courses; what courses are you talking about? I appreciate that some are expensive, but that is a minuscule number.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will tell Hon Peter Collier the problem. He would have noticed the series of questions that I, as well as Hon Adele Farina, have put through. Between the two of us, we have a couple of decades' experience of dealing with Parliament and governance, and that sort of thing.

Hon Adele Farina: You don't need to age us, but anyway!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I said, between the two of us, we have a couple of decades.

Hon Peter Collier: After your reciprocal pat on the back, what's your point?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I was going to say that we were surprised. I was admitting to the fact that we were surprised, if not shocked, when we saw the cost of some certificate II courses at high schools in the south west. Hon Peter Collier knows the ones I am talking about.

Hon Peter Collier: Yes; I am well aware of that, but I said: do you know how many students are involved?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Then, of course, I came back, Hon Peter Collier, and I asked how many students were doing those courses.

Hon Peter Collier: How many?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Peter Collier knows that the first answer I got from him was zero.

Hon Peter Collier: Yes.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Peter Collier cannot rest his case on that. He cannot say that it is okay to jack up the price of the course to over \$3 000 because there are no students so no-one is paying it!

Hon Peter Collier: What are you talking about? You do not understand the education system. You don't understand the —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I do understand.

Hon Peter Collier: No, you don't.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes, I do; I do understand!

Hon Peter Collier: To say they cost as much as a PSA school just shows the complete ignorance of the education system.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Well —

Hon Peter Collier: It does.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The minister might not think that verges on unparliamentary —

Hon Peter Collier: You've got no idea.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: — but it is certainly pretty uncivil. The minister knows that I, as does Hon Adele Farina, understand the questions we are asking. The minister sees the questions come through; he sees how specific they are.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Listen; can I just press the pause button on this because, Hon Peter Collier, the next motion on the notice paper —

Hon Peter Collier: Oh, yes—I am looking forward to that one!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes; all right. Will Hon Peter Collier allow me not to concede the point here but to recognise that, in one hour and 28 minutes, we have four hours to talk about education, and that is where we will be able to talk to him about this?

Hon Peter Collier: I can't wait! But you won't get a time because we're all going to talk over here.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The minister can keep making it up as he goes along, but I am talking —

Hon Peter Collier: That's what happened in the last motion.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: We are talking about this motion.

Hon Peter Collier: Oh, okay—we have changed tack now, have we?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Stephen Dawson has contributed —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order! That is enough. We have had a number of interjections and a fine exchange, but I think that is enough.

Hon Peter Collier: Oh; I was really enjoying that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Leader of the House, thank you very much for demonstrating your school background! Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I think Hon Peter Collier would do better to regard the Acting President as the principal; he should think of her as the principal. She gets the last word, not him or me.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: That is correct, Hon Sally Talbot. You have the call.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will move right along to another of Hon Peter Collier's favourite subjects, which, of course, is TAFE. For families who are lucky enough to be able to afford to get their children through high school with certificates I and II, they then face the whole TAFE problem. Hon Paul Brown and Hon Robyn McSweeney referred to TAFE. I am not sure about Hon Col Holt; I had to be out of the house on urgent parliamentary business when he spoke, but I read his speech. I am not sure whether he referred to TAFE, but his colleagues certainly did. Albany TAFE is now run from Bunbury. How does that work? What happens to a student who has gone through years 11 and 12 and comes out with an Australian tertiary admission rank score, but does not want university qualifications because they want to go into a trade or to get an apprenticeship or traineeship? Suddenly, they find the local TAFE is run from Bunbury and there is no interconnection with local demands. A higher education and training sector cannot be run like this. A total of \$58 million has gone out from TAFE in Western Australia. Members opposite cannot tell me that the exponential impact on regional communities like Albany and Denmark is not of significance. Surely it has registered on the political radar of members opposite that this is a major problem in the regions.

I am willing to have a discussion about Denmark. I think the major problem in Denmark is that people now cannot do some of the courses that go over three or four years because if they are lucky enough to get two consecutive years, they are almost certain to find that in the third year, it drops away because the numbers have gone down. They will then be told that they have to go to Perth or some other centre to do the third year of their course. However, it does not have the same sort of emphasis that there is on trade training in the bigger TAFE centres. I went down and talked to the TAFE people in Albany a few months ago. I can tell members that they are on their knees and it is not because of a lack of demand for their courses or because of any failure on their part to deliver what industry needs. In the case of TAFE, we are not talking just about the kind of traditional, heavy industry, old trades when people were always looking for plumbers who had done basic certificates in plumbing; we are also talking about that very special link that TAFE has forged with the disability sector so that disability trainers are able to match students with particular courses that are offered at local TAFEs. All that is gone now in Albany. What does that do to the heart of a community? Hon Robin McSweeney clearly wanted to suggest that I was overstating the case with health and that there were good health services in the great southern. I concede that is absolutely true; I was talking about access to specialist services—the kinds of things people cannot get down there. What about people raising a child or caring for a family member with a disability who now find that the whole training side has dropped away because of this \$50 million that has been ripped out of TAFE? These are the things that actually make a difference to how people live their everyday lives. They can go to the Anzac centre and to all these fabulous places that the great southern is famous for and they can feel better when they are there, but they have to go home afterwards and worry about how they are going to pay for their

kids to get through school, how they are going to find decent care for their relatives who are getting older and all that sort of thing. That is what weighs people down.

I want to say a couple of other things about that really dark side of life in the great southern. There has been a lot of media reporting recently about what might loosely be called the south west and problem methamphetamine use in those communities. There have been reports about the analysis of wastewater in Bunbury and how a calculation can be made about the number of meth addicts in that community because of what is found in the water. I can tell members that it is not just Bunbury and they will know that. If they have anything to do with those towns all through the great southern, they will know that it is not just Bunbury. I had a very interesting conversation the other day that bore out a point I have been making for a couple of years. We often use in a slightly glib way the phrase that this is a scourge and an evil that affects every family and every family has been touched by it. I have been doing my own little private empirical research on this. I talk to people who come into my office and I mention something about it and ask them if it is true for them. I had a conversation the other day with a woman who dropped in some flowers or something and we got talking about this issue. I mentioned visiting Hakea Prison and she said she was there last year because she had to visit her nephew who was in for a drug offence. The other day I was in Denmark talking to a good friend. I often ask people whether their families are affected by this issue and she said no and that she was very lucky that she was untouched by it. Then she said, "Except for ..." and she remembered something. It was not that she had forgotten, but it was just the awful reality of talking to people about how the lives of their family have been impacted. Those observations make for sensational headlines and that flurry of government action saying it now has a meth strategy and that it will fix the problem.

I saw a situation the other day with which I know all members in the south west are familiar. I know Metricup is not in the great southern, but I bet it will happen over and over again. The proposed rehabilitation centre in Metricup was knocked back by the council. It is now with the State Administrative Tribunal, and I will be doing whatever I can to help SAT come to the determination that the centre should go ahead. When I was reading the reports of the council meeting when that decision was taken, I was horrified. Members know that I asked the question in this place about whether the state government was doing any work with local governments to help them get their heads around what we need to do if we are able to provide decent services for addicts and decent support for the families of addicts, who are all screaming for this kind of help. I really hope that SAT overturns that decision. If we are going to be serious about this issue, we have to work with local governments, and the state government is not doing that at this moment. I really fear that the crying need for the provision of services throughout the great southern will be held back by the fact that there is now this perception that everybody wants rehab facilities, but they do not want them in their backyard. We have to get over that. I have talked to a good number of people in Albany and Denmark, the communities with which I am most closely associated, who would welcome these facilities. They are not afraid of them. They do not come up with all those arguments that I think are utterly specious, if not malevolent; for example, this is a wine region and some of the people in the rehab facility will be alcoholics, and it is not a good look to have facilities for alcoholics in the middle of a wine region. What a lot of nonsense; what a nasty, dangerous idea to be propagating. I think we have to be absolutely on the front foot with this and be brave enough to say these things.

I was talking to a primary school teacher in Albany the other day. There are not that many primary schools in Albany, so I will not go any further than that, because I do not want to identify the specific situation. She told me that the staff of the school stand around in the staff room and they watch the drugs being dealt in the playground by the parents of the students at that primary school. We do not need this nice, fluffy stuff about what a fabulous area the great southern is and how we have to attract more tourists—of course we have to do that; we want to build the economy—but we have to get real about what people who live in the great southern need to make their lives bearable, because a lot of them at the moment have got to the stage at which life is simply not bearable. Hon Stephen Dawson touched on some other aspects of that problem when he talked about the provision of mental health facilities and resources. I know it is hard to keep up when there is an almost limitless demand for these services, but we have to try harder and we have to produce better results than the Liberal–National government has produced up to this point after eight years in government.

This is pretty sombre stuff, but the community knows this. I have to say that Hon Col Holt is a brave man to move this motion, because he might like the people of the great southern, but they did not much like the National Party. He saw that in the recent federal election when the National Party came third. I have not seen that before. Members will have all noticed that I am quite closely related to the Labor candidate, Jon Ford, who ran for Labor in O'Connor. It was very interesting for me because it meant that for the first time in our political lives we were campaigning in the same area, albeit for different jurisdictions. I was very interested in some of the meetings that Jon went to and the reports he was getting about what life is really like, and certainly the problem with methamphetamine is a major one.

There is another problem, and I do not know why the National Party is prepared to turn its back on this. I am not sure that the National Party would have come third in the election if it had been prepared to listen to this clamour for a royal commission into the banks. I know members opposite will probably shout me down and say that this is all federal stuff and I cannot talk about it in relation to a motion on the great southern, but if there were two things I would say to people in the great southern if I wanted them to support me, whatever I stood for, I would talk about putting in a real plan for tackling drugs—that means proper rehab, education and support for addicts and families—and I would talk about a royal commission into the banks. I do not know why the National Party will not do it, because I can tell it that our constituents in the great southern would almost give their eyeteeth or their left arm to have the banks investigated. Do members know the kinds of stories I am hearing? I cannot believe that members opposite are not hearing them as well, and I cannot believe that they can dismiss them if they are hearing them. We are talking about farmers, not rich people, not hobby farmers, not people —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Farmers always grizzle about banks.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I do not think that is true. Let me tell this story. I know Hon Robyn McSweeney can say that farmers always grizzle about banks. I can tell her that farmers always grizzle about the weather as well, but they were the first people to recognise climate change and start putting in place measures to mitigate the effects of climate change. Sometimes Hon Robyn McSweeney has to listen to what farmers are grizzling about. I suggest that just as we listened to farmers about climate change and recognised what they were doing to amend their practices, we need to listen to them about the banks. I will tell members what is happening to them now. When they go through a bad season —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Most of them I am related to.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: But I am talking about the great southern; I am talking about farms a bit further down than where the member is and where a whole lot of other factors are coming into play. I am talking about farmers who fall on hard times for one reason or another, almost always to do with factors that are outside their immediate influence, such as weather and that sort of thing. Members can criticise and say that I am always whingeing about something, and say to people that they have made unwise investment decisions, but I am not prepared to do that, because I think we have to listen to these people, and they are going to keep saying it until they get a reaction. They have got a reaction from the Labor Party. If we had won on 2 July, we would have a royal commission into the banks up and running that would directly address the needs of the community in the great southern. It would already be up and running. Let me tell members what is happening to some of these people. They go back to the bank to renegotiate their mortgage payments and they find that the bank is no longer the holder of the mortgage, because the bank has sold the mortgage to a private provider.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I am not saying that banks are perfect.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am very, very glad Hon Robyn McSweeney is not saying that. Why does Hon Robyn McSweeney not try ringing her federal colleagues and telling them that the Western Australian Liberal Party has had this enormous revelation that banks are not perfect? I have not heard that in the eastern states. I do not know why the government has a tin ear when it comes to hearing these very real concerns that are being expressed by the community in the great southern.

I have a lot of other things on my list I wanted to raise in connection with this motion, but I think I might finish by talking about royalties for regions, because this is the subject of the great lie. All throughout National Party websites, Facebook pages—I do not know whether they are quite up to tweeting yet, but I am sure that if they did, they would be tweeting as well—it is stated that Labor does not support royalties for regions. It is just a lie. There is no polite way to say this: it is just not true! The Labor Party in government will keep royalties for regions going. Royalties for regions is in legislation and we supported the legislation when it went through, and we have supported it ever since. We opposed the amendments the Liberal–National government has made to the legislation and the cuts to royalties for regions. There will always be a royalties for regions program under a Labor government. That is a simple fact and anybody who argues otherwise is not telling the truth. That includes all those National Party websites and Facebook pages where that is being stated. Look at what the National Party has allowed the Liberals to do to royalties for regions. What was the original promise? The original promise was that 25 per cent of all royalties would be allocated to new projects and services in regional areas in WA. That sounds good to me. It sounded good to me in 2008, and it still sounds good to me now. It is a sensible thing to do. Some tweaks needed to be made, and they have been made. I think royalties for regions is a fine program and I heartily respect not only the program, but also the people in our community who are aware that they benefit from the program. What has the National Party allowed the Liberal Party to do to royalties for regions? It has allowed the Liberal Party to take out about \$3 billion. If it is not \$3 billion, tell me why it is not \$3 billion, because I cannot make it add up to anything different. The original promise of 25 per cent—that is, one-quarter of royalties—has melted away to the point at which it is 12.5 per cent in 2016–17. The figures 12.5 and 25 have a relationship with each other—12.5 is half the amount.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.