

TONKIN HIGHWAY EXTENSION

Grievance

MRS A.K. HAYDEN (Darling Range) [9.52 am]: I will start off by saying that I am disappointed that the Premier did not accept my grievance today on behalf of the people of Darling Range. The community would have been very keen to hear from the Premier and to understand his position and why it does not have his support on this extremely important project. My grievance is on behalf of the families of Darling Range, who have yet again missed out on an important infrastructure project. They are still waiting for this government to get on with the job of building the Tonkin Highway extension.

The Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale is still one of the fastest growing local government areas in Western Australia, but the state government has not matched infrastructure investment to its population growth. As a result, local mums and dads have to go up against trucks on increasingly congested and dangerous roads every single day. We needed this project well before the COVID-19 outbreak, and we need it even more now, because so many people have lost their jobs and are in financial distress. This project will create jobs, support local small businesses, make our roads safer and reduce travel times.

There was an opportunity to get this project done but, sadly, it was again overlooked by this government. On 30 April 2020, the McGowan Labor government announced that 24 major projects would be fast-tracked to support jobs during the COVID-19 crisis. The Tonkin Highway extension was not on that list, despite being long overdue and ready to go. In fact, not one of those projects is in Perth's south-eastern suburbs. The Tonkin Highway has, theoretically, enjoyed bipartisan support for several years; however, so far only the federal Liberal government has committed funding to it. As early as September 2015, Mr McGowan, as then Leader of the Opposition, was quoted in the local paper as saying that the Tonkin Highway extension needed to be a priority. That was five years ago. In November 2017, the former member for Darling Range, Mr Barry Urban, told the same newspaper that he had been working on the extension with the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, since March 2016—that was four years ago.

In April 2018, the federal member for Canning, Andrew Hastie, secured \$252.5 million for the extension through the federal budget—half of the total \$505 million cost. As agreed between the Premier and the Prime Minister, the state government would fund the remaining half, but that never happened. In March 2019, Andrew Hastie came to the rescue again and secured a further \$151.5 million towards the project, bringing the federal contribution up to 80 per cent and leaving the state government with only 20 per cent of the cost of the project to fund. The minister may recall that I raised a grievance to her on this issue the following month, and asked the state government to commit the remaining funds and to prioritise the extension. Despite overwhelming public support for the project, the McGowan Labor government still refuses to make it a priority or to commit to the remaining funding.

Additional to the Tonkin Highway extension are three overpasses at the intersections of Kelvin, Welshpool and Hale Roads. This is the Tonkin Highway corridor, which does not include the extension. However, in the 2019–20 state budget, the two projects were combined, with no detail being provided on the breakdown of spending. Only a portion of the federal funding was committed to the combined project over the forward estimates.

Since I was elected as the member for Darling Range in June 2018, I have asked time and again for details on this project, including when we will see the work begin and when it will finally be completed. To date, every response provided by the Minister for Transport—in writing, in responses to questions on notice and through quips in Parliament—has been dismissive, deflective and disrespectful to the people of Darling Range and this important project. Only this week, the minister's responses to my questions on notice failed to provide an expected completion date. The minister also implied that the project began in May 2019, but she would not clarify when we would actually see shovels in the ground. She also still could not give the people of Byford, Cardup, Mundijong and Mardella any peace of mind by telling them whether their land would need to be acquired outside the existing road reserve.

Every week, Darling Range residents walk into my office or call or email to ask when the Tonkin Highway extension will begin. They know that the federal Liberal government has put money up and has contributed 80 per cent of the funding towards this project. They know that it is now in the hands of this state Labor government. Now they want to know when it is going to happen and why it is taking so long. They also know that the federal Liberal government committed funding to the Thomas–Nicholson Roads intersection and they ask me why this project also has not been done. They want to know when their roads will be safe to drive on, and they want to see more jobs come into our region. Most of all, they want certainty. Members can imagine their disappointment at learning that although the state government has found the time and money to fast-track 24 projects across the state, Darling Range was overlooked again. They still have no Tonkin Highway, no Thomas–Nicholson Roads intersection upgrade and no train to Byford. Those were all promises made by this government, but they have been broken.

I have asked time and again for the McGowan Labor government to deliver on its promises to the people of Darling Range. I had hoped that today I could ask the Premier whether he understands the merits of this important

project and to fast-track this project along with the other 24 projects already announced. The lives of people in Darling Range are just as important as those of others across Western Australia. The Premier and this government have called for bipartisanship many times over the last few months, but only when it suits them. This project deserves to be lifted above petty politics and it needs bipartisan support. The minister has been playing petty politics with this project and with the lives and safety of the people of Darling Range since she came into Parliament. She is a minister of this state and swore an oath to serve all Western Australians equally. Darling Range deserves respect, after all it has been put through. This government needs to stop playing petty politics and get on with the job of delivering jobs and delivering the Tonkin Highway extension for the people of Darling Range.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.00 am]: I thank the member for Darling Range for that grievance. True to form, she has come up with a gutter political grievance. Looking at the camera, just as she did, I say that as a member for that area for eight years, she did nothing on this project.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I did not interject on the member when she insulted the Premier of this state. The member for Darling Range insulted the Premier of the state, who is out there —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Point of Order

Mr F.M. LOGAN: As the member opposite knows, it is inappropriate to interject during a grievance. The minister and this side of politics did not interject on the griever in this case, and I ask you to ensure the same respect is given.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L. Mettam): Minister, will you accept —

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I did not interject. I just wanted to correct the minister, who said —

Mr F.M. Logan: You are interjecting.

Several members interjected.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Can I finish?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, will you accept an interjection?

Ms R. Saffioti: No.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: My point of order is that I was not the member for Darling Range for eight years. She needs to get her facts right.

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, member for Darling Range. Minister, continue.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Darling Range stands and says whatever she likes. She said, “Why doesn’t the Premier support the people of Darling Range?” Of course the Premier supports the people of Darling Range, as he does every person in Western Australia. Nothing can demonstrate that more than him being out there today outlining our plan for schools in Western Australia. That is why he is not in this place. There is a COVID pandemic and he is outlining the strategy for schools in Western Australia.

The member for Darling Range should not stand in this place and make claims about the Premier. Do not do that. She said that the southern corridor had missed out. I will tell the member this: I grew up in Darling Range; I know the area of Darling Range, and no government has done more for those people than this government has. For eight and a half years, they were told lies and mistruths by the previous government and that things were happening when they were not. If the previous government had actually done some work on this project, we could have it shovel ready and happening. However, the previous government did not. It did not engage with Infrastructure Australia. No business case was submitted to Infrastructure Australia. Not one business case was submitted to Infrastructure Australia during the previous government’s eight and a half years of government.

Even the Liberal Party’s own transport plan said that this project should not happen until 2050. What did we do when we won government? We started the work and we submitted some business cases to Infrastructure Australia. I negotiated the funding with the commonwealth. I will tell the member for Darling Range where it is at now. It is with the federal environmental process. I would love to bring it forward and start it now. However, this is exactly where it is at. We have done planning and project development and spring surveys, which are a necessary part of the environmental process, and they were completed in October 2019. It was referred to the federal environmental authority for consideration in January 2020. The federal environmental authority has determined that it is a controlled action and will need assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. It is currently within the federal government jurisdiction. The federal authority has determined that it is a controlled action, and has asked us for further information about black cockatoos and plants and we are doing further work. The member

should go to her federal Minister for the Environment and say, “We do not want it to be formally assessed.” She should go to her federal Liberal Party —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Do you understand anything?

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She delivered nothing in government. She lied about projects all the time. She said the Tonkin Highway project was shovel ready in 2018. You guys did nothing in eight and a half years.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not taking interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, the minister is not taking interjections. Minister, through the Chair, please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Darling Range did nothing for this project in eight and a half years—nothing. We have gone through the IA processes and secured the funding and we are going through the environmental approvals. I asked for this project to be fast-tracked, but we were told that it could not be fast-tracked because it is caught up in federal environmental approvals. That is the reality. I secured the funding for Thomas and Nicholson Roads. If members opposite are so good at doing things, they should get the federal government to exclude the Tonkin Highway extension from federal environmental approvals. Members opposite do not do the work.

The member for Darling Range wrote to me a year ago about improving a bus stop on Brookton Highway. We improved it and she wrote a month ago asking whether we would improve it. She was told that it had been done, but she then asked whether we would write a letter telling her it had been done.

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Even though we had improved the bus stop. A year later —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Why did she not go and look?

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Darling Range, no more interjections. Minister, continue through the Chair, please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member wants me to advise her when I go to her electorate. I go every Sunday to see my mum and we have roast chicken and pasta, one of my favourite dishes of the entire week. I will let her know now that every Sunday she can find me on Irymple Road having roast chicken with my mother.

A member interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: To be honest, she is not cooking meals big enough for three growing children, but that is another point.

The member for Darling Range wrote to me a year ago outlining how a bus stop on Brookton Highway needed to be improved; we did that, and she wrote to me a month ago asking why we had not done it. We rang her to say that we had done it and she asked whether we could put that in a letter. Okay; I will put it to the member in a letter that we have done it. Her party does not do the work but she goes around spinning in circles, not delivering anything because she is not capable of it. She was not capable of it in government. She was part of a disgraceful government that basically rejected any proposal along the whole corridor and said that this project should not happen until 2050. When the Labor Party got in, it did all the work and secured the funding and now the project is going through a formal environmental assessment. What more could we have done, members?

We love Darling Range. We love the southern suburbs. There is no greater advocate for the southern suburbs than me—Kelmescott, you name it; we love the southern suburbs. To have a fraud such as the member for Darling Range pretending that she loves the southern suburbs makes me sick, to tell the truth.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I would like the minister to withdraw the comment that I am a fraud. Maybe her previous member for Darling Range was, but I am not.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, that is unparliamentary language.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She is disingenuous. She does not believe anything that is said in this place. We are committed to Darling Range more than she will ever be.