

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [5.04 pm]: Before question time, I was discussing the demise of Woodside's decision to be involved in the Browse liquefied natural gas development. I was saying that we must continue to provide those facilities, as there will be other players in the market. A member mentioned the other day that the Canning Basin, which is on land, has some 226 trillion or 229 trillion cubic feet of gas. To say that may not mean a lot, but I can say that one trillion cubic feet of gas is enough to supply a city of one million people for 20 years. Members can do the maths from that of what the estimated reserves are now. It will therefore ensure a great supply of domestic as well as export gas, and of course there is the opportunity for oil there as well. Bearing all that in mind, it is important for us to look to the future. However, I must say that it was a tragedy to not have Woodside involved in that development, particularly for the Aboriginal people of the Kimberley. There was an agreement for a \$1.5 billion package that would have given them opportunities for jobs and would have provided health services, education and training. I must say that I have met some of those young fellows who were working for Woodside at James Price Point. They had enthusiasm and a purpose for getting up in the morning to go to a job. I must admit that I was talking to one of them. About six or seven of them came in on a shift and I was talking to them about how they liked their job and the role they were playing out there. It was the first job that several of them had ever had. They said it was great to get up in the morning because they had a purpose to get up and go to work. One of them had been doing night shift and I asked him how he liked the night shift. He said he liked night shift better. I asked why, as I could not think of anything worse than being on night shift—although I must admit we seem to do that in this place! He said that he liked night shift because there were no protesters. When the protesters were blocking vehicles out there, they had to form a convoy every morning and have security travel with them to get them through, and they were losing some 45 minutes every day. Of course, when that is added to the cost of such a project, we probably do not need to wonder why in the end this project was pulled.

I believe the opportunity exists for using offshore floating platforms. I must add that the technology for that has not yet been proven. The supply vessels will operate out of Broome and probably some will operate out of Darwin. However, as a government, we must ensure that the infrastructure is in place to make that option attractive for companies looking to invest.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you know what's happened to the Point Torment proposal?

HON KEN BASTON: The Point Torment project is waiting for somebody in the resources sector to take part in it. I have been to Point Torment. Now that Hon Ken Travers has raised the point, I would very much like to talk about it. It is about 32 kilometres north of Derby. It is deep water, but actually getting in there through Sunday Strait is quite hazardous, although it used to take Stateships many years ago and it still has barges going out there to service Cockatoo Island. It is still an operational port for light ships. It is possible that it could be used as a port in the future.

Hon Ken Travers: Sorry; has the government dropped it as its proposal for the northern supply base, then?

HON KEN BASTON: It was never going to be the northern supply base.

Hon Ken Travers: You submitted it to Infrastructure Australia as one of the priority projects about three years ago.

HON KEN BASTON: I think all ports were being looked at.

Hon Ken Travers: No, Point Torment was in particular.

HON KEN BASTON: I was not as heavily involved in that. As far as I know, it has always been looked at as a port. It always has the viability of being a port, but a large amount of capital would be needed to do it. If companies such as Rey Resources Ltd, which is a coal company, went ahead, that is the port that would be used, so there is the possibility there in the future. Somebody said that every port should be married in, but I would support any ports that develop along the coast, as they would be exporting out of Western Australia and bringing in real dollars.

Hon Ken Travers: Look, I don't disagree with you, but —

Hon Liz Behjat: Stand up and make your own contribution!

Hon Ken Travers: All in good time, member.

HON KEN BASTON: I do not mind an interjection about Point Torment. In fact, the member just reminded me —

The PRESIDENT: Order! It has only been the first week and we are getting close to the end.

Hon KEN BASTON: Thank you, Mr President.

The real risk of losing these opportunities is by not making sure that the facilities are there or not encouraging the infrastructure to happen when anyone approaches. The Inpex Corporation proposal was a classic example of this. That project, of course, has gone to Darwin. There were many delays over Maret Islands. The company had been given permission by something like four ministers to go ahead with that, and it did not happen. Interestingly enough, I was invited to the send-off at one of the hotels in West Perth for the Japanese person who was in charge of the Inpex company in Western Australia at the time. I was only a mere member of the opposition, but I was very surprised that I was the only politician there—Parliament was sitting and I took some leave to get out there. I felt, I guess, very sorry for this gentleman, who felt like he had failed because he had not been able to get Inpex up in Western Australia; it had decided it was too hard to deal with the offshore facilities that it required. Of course, it ended up putting that pipeline to Darwin. Darwin made the facilities available and won the catch.

Western Australia has had an incredible decade of economic growth and low unemployment, but it worries me that this has perhaps given some of us a sense of immunity to the economic troubles that are faced by other countries around the world and even some states here in Australia. We must strike a balance between regulation and encouraging investment. There always will be a balance between the regulation of environmental issues and encouraging investment. We must make Western Australia a place where it is easier to spend, develop and invest in these big projects that last for a long time and employ the people of Western Australia. Recent discussion with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy highlighted to me the frustration felt by companies which are more than happy to meet, and are extremely capable of meeting, regulations but which face incredible difficulties in navigating red and green tape imposed at both a state and federal level. It would be a shame to see these opportunities lost because it is simply too hard to do business here.

I would like to touch on one of those pieces of infrastructure that I have spoken about in this house before, Tanami Road. This piece of infrastructure requires ongoing consideration and a collaborative approach with the federal government, and possibly private investment, to upgrade this road. For those who do not know where this road is, it goes east from Halls Creek across to just north of Alice Springs. It has 308 kilometres that are unsealed on the Western Australia side and the Northern Territory section has some 414 kilometres of which 321 kilometres are unsealed. The Northern Territory has sealed 193 kilometres already.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later sitting.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Collier (Leader of the House)**.