

HYOGO PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT AND JAPAN — SISTER STATE RELATIONSHIP

Motion

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [11.36 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council commend the Barnett government on enhancing and strengthening our trade relationships and cultural links with the Hyogo Prefectural Government and Japan, and acknowledges with gratitude our 30-year sister state relationship.

On 22 April I had the privilege of travelling to Japan on a study tour. I am pleased that Hon Brian Ellis, Hon Nigel Hallett, Hon Peter Katsambanis and Hon Rick Mazza accompanied me to Japan on this tour. Basically, it was an opportunity to not only build on our current 30-year sister state relationship, but also learn about existing and future trade opportunities for Western Australia. I have to say that our timing was perfect because only a few weeks before we left, our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, secured a free trade agreement with Japan. It was very timely that our tour started after that happened.

It was also an opportunity to look again at waste-to-energy technology in Japan. It was my third trip to Japan, but it was the first time the members who came with me had looked at a waste-to-energy plant. Our tour coincided with another delegation, which was being led by Phoenix Energy Australia. Our trip was not about waste-to-energy technology, but we caught up with people from the City of Cockburn, the City of Fremantle, the City of Kwinana and the City of Melville. I think the Shire of Kalamunda was also represented, along with the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce and a few others. They were all there to look at waste-to-energy technology. From what I could hear, they thought that it was not rocket science and that it would be a good thing for Western Australia.

One of our first meetings in Hyogo prefecture, with which our government has a sister state relationship, was with Kawasaki. I always thought that Kawasaki was about motorbikes and jet skis, but I was educated that the company does a lot more than that; for example, it builds jet engines for planes. One thing of particular interest is that Kawasaki has built a hydrogen gas plant to demonstrate that it could build a hydrogen gas plant here in Western Australia. I was absolutely gobsmacked, because I did not know that Kawasaki was looking at building a hydrogen gas plant somewhere south of Corrigin. The plant would probably cost \$650 million to build. I believe that WA is in competition with Victoria to have one of these plants. There would be about 1 000 jobs in peak construction and, once it is operational, there would be 130 operational staff. Export revenue for the state would be in excess of \$1 billion. I just thought: wow, this would be a big thing for Western Australia if we were to get this. How does it work? Apparently Kawasaki has designed and engineered a plant to extract hydrogen gas from brown coal. Then it wants to pipe it from Corrigin through to probably the Western Trade Coast, put it on a ship and send the gas up to Japan. I am not an expert on brown coal, but I think our government needs to embrace this quite quickly and do what we need to do to make sure that those brown coal deposits are available. It would be fantastic to see this plant built in Western Australia; I would definitely rather see it here than in the state of Victoria. I was very amazed with that. I will be watching the progress of that plant as we, hopefully, go through the necessary steps of making sure it happens in Western Australia.

I am constantly talking about local content for Western Australia and I think I have said many times that 90 per cent of the steel fabricators in Western Australia reside in Kwinana in the South Metropolitan Region. I took the opportunity to meet with not only Kawasaki, but also Mitsui and Mitsubishi. I asked them to think about local content when they bring projects to Western Australia. I asked them to ensure that we are given the opportunity to tender for some of those projects, because I believe that sometimes we have not been given the opportunity to tender.

The other point I put to the Japanese, which is my personal opinion and some members might disagree with it, was the issue of foreign workers. I think there is more opportunity now for us to be pushing for jobs for Australians and Western Australians. Do not think for a minute that the amount of foreign workers we have in Western Australia, and I know we have needed them, has not brought social problems to this state and put pressure on social services. It has, especially down in my electorate. I believe the wave has now gone and there are now more Australians looking for jobs than there were a few years ago. We all need to do our bit to make sure we push our point to shareholders, the Japanese or even to Shell that we want to look after our people here. We want our steel fabricators to have work; we want Australians to have a job. I have to say that I think that point was pretty well received by the Japanese.

On a lighter note, in March 2011 I accompanied the Premier to Hyogo prefecture on a trip to re-sign the 30-year sister state relationship. The Premier brought four koalas with him on that trip. I report to the house that when we met with Governor Ido of Hyogo prefecture, he said to me that the koalas were very, very happy there and one of them had just given birth. I thought it was very good that they were happy in their environment.

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I can see Hon Lynn MacLaren must be on urgent parliamentary business, but I would like to take this opportunity to express my disgust at her questioning of the government in relation to this trip prior to it taking place. I just make the point that all the delegates I mentioned have wives who they left at home alone in order to attend this tour, and in some cases they have young children. I do not think it is wise for anybody in this place to expose the fact that a delegation is about to go on international travel when their kids and wives will be left at home. I just think it is ludicrous and Hon Lynn MacLaren should be ashamed. That is the reason none of us wanted to talk to the media about our trip and why none of us were prepared to expose that in this house. The whole matter may have more to do with the angle of waste-to-energy plants, which may be a sore point for some on the other side. I just say again that from all the local governments I mentioned that were over there the feedback I got was that it was not rocket science to have waste-to-energy plants in Western Australia. I know they can be difficult to understand when someone has not seen one, but all members of the large delegation that Phoenix led, which had nothing to do with our delegation, seemed to be supportive of the project. There were plants there that were just so clean that the Japanese asked us take our shoes off; that was at one of their rubbish tips.

Finally, I would just like to say something about our trade commissioner in Tokyo, Craig Peacock. In my opinion Craig Peacock is a Western Australian asset—an absolute asset. What he did and the way he went about the meetings was just incredible—the way we were treated, the times of the meetings—and we could just not ask for a delegation to be better run. I have met a few trade commissioners in different parts of the world, but this trade commissioner, I have to say, really stands out. And Craig, if you are listening to this speech, you did a fantastic job and my delegation is truly proud of the job that you do. With that, there was a lot of value with this trip to Japan. It is all about enhancing and building on the trade relationships that we already have. Something I would finally like to add, which came from the embassy and also, I guess, our own trade office, is that the Western Australian government spends more time on trips to Japan and has more engagement there than any other state and territory in Australia and I think that is something we should be proud of. We should continue to build on that to make Western Australia's trade relationship with Japan even stronger than it is.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.46 am]: I just want to say a few words and support the motion moved by Hon Phil Edman. I was not a participant in the recent delegation to which Hon Phil Edman referred, but I want to make a few short remarks about the sister state relationship between Hyogo, which as Hon Phil Edman has mentioned, is a relationship that has extended since 1981 when an agreement was signed by the late Sir Charles Court and the then governor of Hyogo. It was formed on the basis of well-established connections between Western Australia and Hyogo. Since 1981, of course, the relationship has developed into a diverse exchange of activities encompassing business, education and culture. Hon Phil Edman focused much of his contribution on the industry and trade side of things. He also mentioned the gifting of the koalas and I have to say that I understand there are now two koala joeys that have been born at the farm park, which I think we would all agree is a very good outcome. There are other initiatives as well and I am sure the other members of the delegation will say a bit more about those, so I will keep my remarks short to enable them to also speak.

One of the key sister state initiatives that supports the wider relationship with Japan by offering cultural opportunities with a commercial focus is the Banshu fashion textile program. I appreciate that the member talked in terms of industry and trade, and it has that focus, but it is slightly different, and I think it is worth saying a few words about this program. I learnt about this program last year when I was fortunate enough to officially open the Banshu fashion textile showcase at last year's Perth Fashion Festival. That also involved meeting with representatives from the Hyogo Banshu textile industry who travelled from Japan specifically to be here for that showcase, demonstrating their very strong support for this initiative. It was established in 2011 by the WA government, the Hyogo Prefectural Government Cultural Centre here in Perth and the Banshu textile industry. The program offers talented fashion school graduates a unique opportunity. It is an opportunity to travel to Hyogo and to collaborate with world-class Japanese textile manufacturers to develop fabrics based on their own designs. For those not aware, Banshu textiles are renowned for the traditional method used to produce elaborate woven patterns with dyed yarns. They are distributed worldwide, mostly to the high-end fashion houses. In terms of production costs, I am told that 10 metres of custom-made Banshu fabric is estimated to cost anywhere between \$1 500 to \$2 500, which gives an idea about how expensive it is. Given the deep history of these textile productions, which I think extends more than 200 years, the opportunity to see how these beautiful high-quality fabrics are produced and meet with expert technicians has been an invaluable experience for the 16 graduates who have participated in the program so far, and I think three have attended as part of this year's delegation. I was told at the event by the representatives from Japan that even established designers are rarely afforded the opportunities that these graduates are. Importantly, outside of the cross-cultural and creative collaboration that generates from a program such as this, the graduates are provided with industry exposure here in Western Australia through events such as the Perth Fashion Festival and other activities, which I suppose comes back to

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some of the issues surrounding trade and business. But it also provides a unique opportunity for the state's fashion industry to access and develop networks with the high-profile Japanese design industry, specifically its manufacturing sector, which of course we do not have in this state. It is clearly a very valued program. I know that the participating universities, the textile industry and, of course, the graduates see it as a very highly valued program. As I have stated, it is just one of a number of initiatives currently underway that have flowed from that original agreement in 1981. As I say, it is a slightly different perspective, but I think it is a unique opportunity for some members of the Western Australian community to follow their passion in a particular industry. I think it is great that they have that opportunity that has stemmed from this very strong relationship. With that in mind, I thank Hon Phil Edman for bringing this motion to the house, and I look forward to hearing from other members of the delegation.

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [11.51 am]: I start by thanking Hon Phil Edman for arranging this trip to Japan, along with the trade commissioner, Craig Peacock, and his assistant, Noriko. The trip ran like clockwork, and we had a very full agenda for the five or six days we were there.

I support the motion in that I think it is very important, as a relatively new member of Parliament, to see what is going on in other parts of the world, and ascertain how, as members of Parliament, we can enhance trade opportunities with Japan. It may be the case that many of the things we think may be trade opportunities with other countries are actually not. One of the things I noted when we visited Hyogo University was that we were given a very good commentary on the changes within Japanese society, and there will be some quite stunning changes in the next few decades. One of the things I always thought about with Japan is that we would be mainly involved with the agricultural and mining trade, but after the presentation from the university, which also works with the University of Western Australia in a research cooperative, it is clear a number of social issues will change the face of Japan in the next 20 to 30 years. Japan is experiencing the migration, particularly of young women, from rural areas of Japan into the cities. Those young women are not having families, so it is expected that the population of Japan will drop from 127 million to 80 million by 2050. That massive drop in population will change the way the Japanese trade. Japan is also experiencing, which I was quite surprised about, a lot of dementia in its ageing population, and it has issues in trying to deal with that ageing population. It is also experiencing a lot of type 2 diabetes. Japan has determined that one of its biggest exports throughout the Asian region in the next 20 to 30 years will be medical services. It was quite enlightening to hear about those changes.

We spoke about exporting lupin to Japan, and Hon Brian Ellis may speak more about that, but there are actually other opportunities available for Western Australia. Another thing that was quite interesting was our visit to Mitsui. I had no idea of the level of investment that Mitsui has in Western Australia—it is massive; everything from the Shark Bay salt mines to agriculture and other worldwide industries. Mitsui is looking at buying up to 120 000 hectares of agricultural land now that we have this trade agreement between the federal government and Japan to relax some of the Foreign Investment Review Board requirements, and I am sure Mitsui will put in infrastructure to go along with that. There are a lot of ties there.

I was also quite surprised at the strong bond between the Hyogo prefecture and WA; Governor Ido even made himself available to meet with us, which I thought was very good of him. Thirty years as a sister state to Hyogo has paid good dividends. Governor Ido said his favourite destination is Margaret River, and he loves the Margaret River red wine.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Did you take him a bottle?

Hon RICK MAZZA: We did.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Very wise.

Hon RICK MAZZA: A very wise move indeed!

I know other members want to speak on this issue, but in closing I think it is very important that as members of Parliament we engage in professional development by travelling and seeing what is going on around the world, and how we can benefit through trade with other countries. I commend the motion of Hon Phil Edman.

HON BRIAN ELLIS (Agricultural) [11.56 am]: I stand to speak in support of the motion of Hon Phil Edman. Like Hon Phil Edman, this was my first trip to Japan and I was not sure what to expect, but I was pleasantly surprised. I had been told that we had a good relationship with Japan, but I was actually quite surprised at the welcome we received. The Japanese are very friendly people who have a lot of time for, in particular, Western Australians.

It is probably no surprise that we have such a good relationship with Japan, because, as was pointed out to us, our Premier is held in such high regard there, and the efforts made by this government to keep a good relationship with Japan have paid off, as exemplified by our sister state relationship. I, like Hon Phil Edman, would like to express my gratitude to the trade commissioner, Craig Peacock. As Hon Phil Edman said, he went

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out of his way to make sure that we were treated well and met a great cross-section of different organisations. Craig and his team scheduled visits to energy and heavy industry plants, and Kobe University. It was full-on; it was very hectic, but it was very interesting. I thank Craig for the effort he put in; the work Craig does up there is very valuable for WA. I also mention Noriko Hirata from the Kobe office who went out of her way, along with Craig, to make sure we had a successful study tour in Japan.

Like Hon Rick Mazza, I had a special interest in our visit to Kobe University. Being a lupin grower, I had a particular interest in the research and development that Kobe University is doing in collaboration with the University of Western Australia. Lupin is imported into Japan as a stockfeed source, but it is not allowed to be imported as a human food source. I think part of that problem is our own fault. Industry, farmers and farming organisations probably should have been looking ahead to value-add lupin if we really wanted that grain to be taken seriously as human food. We have probably been lulled into a false sense of security because the grain has been used for stockfeed and we have always been able to sell the amount of grain we grow, but we should have also been looking for markets for lupin as a human food. The Japanese may come on board if we find a food that can be made from lupin that they would like.

Hon Rick Mazza touched on the similar problems we have, including young women leaving the country and moving to the city. It sounds similar to what happens in WA—women move to the city looking for work. They do not wish to have children anymore; they do not even wish to marry anymore. That creates social problems that are very similar to country life in WA.

We also had the pleasure of learning about governance both at a prefectural and at a national level. Hyogo has been our sister city since 1981. A parliamentary friendship association was formed between the WA Parliament and the Hyogo Prefectural Assembly in 1994. We had a very pleasant dinner one evening with the friendship group. It was an experience for me to attend a social outing involving interpreters. To the credit of the Japanese, they certainly speak English far better than I speak Japanese.

As Hon Rick Mazza mentioned, it was quite an honour that Governor Ido met us for half an hour. He is a very friendly man. He was a pleasurable person to meet with. As Hon Rick Mazza says, we exchanged gifts. I think his gift was taken in good spirit. Knowing some of the stories about him, he may be looking forward to another gift at some stage!

We also had the privilege of touring the National Diet. My main interest, obviously, was in agriculture and trade. I get a bit annoyed with our industry at times, including my own farming colleagues and farming organisations. The trade agreement that Hon Phil Edman spoke about was very timely. We arrived in Japan just after that. Before we even got there, we heard criticism about this trade agreement. I despair sometimes that when governments make some progress for the benefit of the industry—I do not care which side of government—that the industry turns around and criticises it. There are some useful benefits to the industry in that trade agreement and we should work on that.

I note that I am starting to run out of time. I will move through some of the other things I have to say. My main, fuller report will be when I present my imprest report to the house later. Hon Rick Mazza mentioned the meeting we had with Mitsui. I was quite surprised as well—it is a far bigger company than I thought. I did not realise that this —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! There are a number of audible conversations being held in the chamber that are making it very difficult for Hansard to record the comments of Hon Brian Ellis, who has the call.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I did not realise that Mitsui had been operating in Australia since the time of Federation. The company first opened an office in Sydney in 1901. By 1925, Mitsui shipped a record 40 000 tonnes of Australian wheat to Japan. That was something I just did not know about, and I do not think many Australians do. The company has continued its interest in Australia for the past 113 years. It is one of the biggest investors in Australia, having taken stakes worth \$13 billion over the past 10 years. They were very open to us at our meeting and were happy to take questions. Hon Rick Mazza mentioned Mitsui's interest in buying land in Australia. The company already owns 120 000 hectares in Brazil and would like to get into Australia. I put out a word of warning to our own industries, such as Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, that these companies are very interested to move in here. CBH will face some challenges in the future. As the competition comes, such companies will be quite happy to handle their own grain and will be looking for port space to export to their own countries. That is something that CBH and the like should take on board.

It is great to look for more markets around the world for our product, but when we have such good friends and such a reliable market we should never forget the markets we already have and should foster them, such as the Japanese market. Our study tour was most rewarding for us. It was a very worthwhile trip.

HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West) [12.06 pm]: It was a real privilege to go on this trip, which was organised by Hon Phil Edman. Firstly, I thank Craig Peacock, who is an outstanding representative for WA, in his job as the WA trade commissioner to Japan, and also his staff member in Kobe, Noriko. Very similar to Hon Brian Ellis, it was my first trip to Japan and I did not realise the importance of having quality people like Craig and his team working for Western Australia. I would also like to acknowledge the commitment that Hon Phil Edman made to put this trip together. He certainly represented his local community in his strong desire to see local content for the Western Australian economy come back into it.

The major things we took out of the trip were agriculture and food security. In the two or three parliamentary overseas trips I have been on, they have been the number one and two issues. As Japan's population has aged, their quality of food, ever since I have been involved in agriculture, has been second to none. When we visited Mitsui, one of its first comments was, "Australia, particularly Western Australia, has the ability to do risk management in agriculture." The company now wants to invest in agriculture in its own entity in Western Australia. When players such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi take a very positive role, agriculture will move forward in an equally very positive way.

I digress—last week Andrew Forrest's Minderoo group announced its purchase of Harvey Beef. It shows the shift in investment from mining into the next boom industry—agriculture.

I will give a quick snapshot to the house. The Japanese market lies in the grain industry. That started back in the early 1970s. It was led by a gentleman from Boyup Brook, Lionel Moore. In those days he took on what was the grain pool, which had complete control of the coarse grain market. He developed a quality of oats—from memory, it was about 58 kilograms—into the Japanese horseracing market. That was done in the early 1970s. It was a big issue when members think about where the state was positioned. We were only two decades post-World War II. That was a groundbreaking achievement in those days. That has now led on to barley. Japan is one of Western Australia's top five markets, worth \$400 million a year. We are also the world's single supplier to the Japanese and Korean white salted noodles market. WA is also a major supplier of Shochu barley. Western Australia is a major contributor to the Japanese market. It is also a major contributor in the cattle market through the hay industry. There are several players in the hay industry in Western Australia that contribute. They are under a lot of pressure from South Africa and also South America. They have a product and it is very difficult to get that product to the standards that the Japanese demand of their food, which is something that we certainly experienced in our dinners with the various groups; the quality of the food and the freshness were remarkable.

We are certainly very well positioned now to take advantage of the new demand that is eventuating in the overseas markets for agriculture. Maybe we need a new image for our agencies and a more corporate approach, but we certainly need capital injection and energy to come through for the agencies to push this on the corporate side of things. An example of this is the connection between a corporate body in Perth and a Japanese body coming down at the end of the month to try to find some common ground and take a particular project forward.

We also need to look at Japan's use of our liquefied natural gas. It takes some 79 million tonnes of product, which is 32 per cent of the global market. In 2011, exports to Japan were worth some \$23 billion, so Japan is a major player in Western Australia. It is an important, long-term and proven player; it is a market that we must continue to service, and we respect the quality of this long-term relationship.

HON PETER KATSAMBANIS (North Metropolitan) [12.12 pm]: It is a real pleasure to rise to support the motion moved by Hon Phil Edman. I also want to thank him for encouraging me to join the delegation to Japan that he organised. It was quite eye-opening for me to actually understand the deep and strong mutual respect between the state of Western Australia and the Hyogo prefecture and Japan generally. It is a relationship that has been built up over decades of mutual cooperation, understanding and respect. To walk into government offices at prefecture and national levels, and into large corporations, and be welcomed as old friends—even though, for most of us, it was our first visit there—was, as I said, eye-opening. It indicated that the best way to build strong and meaningful business and cultural relationships with other places is to foster visits and friendship, and to work together to continue to build on our friendship and strengths.

I was particularly taken by some of the initiatives that the Japanese corporations are interested in pursuing here in Western Australia. My colleagues have spoken about interest in investment in agriculture, and it was quite apparent that large Japanese trading companies—Mitsui, Mitsubishi and the like—are very keen to increase their interests in the agricultural sector here. There was also a strong appetite expressed for further investment in our energy sector, particularly our domestic energy sector as we hopefully, in the future, free up that sector for more investment from the private sector. That is encouraging and very welcome. I support further investment in Western Australia from Japan and other sources; I welcome the competition that they will bring to our domestic market and to players in our domestic market, as we start to understand just how serious these organisations are about investing many millions of dollars here. It gives us a level of comfort that this state will continue to attract

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high-quality investment and will derive the benefits of that investment, including job opportunities for local people and the export income it will earn.

Hon Phil Edman touched on the proposal by Kawasaki Heavy Industries to set up a new area of energy trade in liquid hydrogen. It was amazing for me to see liquid hydrogen effectively being generated from brown coal. Brown coal is a commodity that does not travel very well because of its combustible qualities; it cannot be put on a ship and moved around, so the energy properties contained in brown coal, unless it can be used within close proximity to wherever it is mined from, are lost and we do not get the benefits. Kawasaki seems to have perfected a new technique whereby it liquefies the energy on the spot, close to the mine, and then ships it on tankers, as happens with LNG, petrol and other products. As the hydrogen fuel market expands, particularly through motor vehicle manufacturers concentrating on providing hydrogen-powered motor vehicles, Kawasaki sees a wonderful opportunity, and it wants to commercialise that technology here in Western Australia. What a wonderful opportunity for us. I hope that we can work with Kawasaki to enhance and support this project and to see it go ahead because of the enormous benefits it could bring to Western Australia in employment opportunities and export income.

I was also interested in waste to energy, and how that is treated in Japan. It was quite opportune, from my perspective, to be in Japan looking at waste to energy only a few weeks after the Mindarie Regional Council, which looks after waste in a large part of my electorate of North Metropolitan Region, had made an announcement that it was looking at potential investment in a waste-to-energy plant. Seeing these plants operating firsthand and understanding the technology gave me a greater appreciation of what these plants entail. I put it on record that I am very open about the fact that I did not come back from Japan as some sort of convert to the idea that waste to energy is a panacea, and I am not any sort of proselytiser for it, but I do now understand the technology a lot better and I think I understand the economics of the industry a lot better. I can also probably say that the economics of the Japanese industry, in how it derives the majority of its income from gate pricing for waste and for processing the ash that is generated into bricks and other commodities, surpasses the funding that it receives from selling energy. I am not necessarily sure how a project based largely or even partially on obtaining a price for the energy it generates into the domestic Western Australian market will fare at a time of oversupply, but I am sure that the proponents of this plant will be able to work through all the economics of it, and if it is viable and stacks up, I would be more than happy for it to go ahead. Apart from the economics, I think that a number of issues need to be overcome, including environmental approvals, but I am sure all of that will happen. But it has given me an understanding of what my regional waste management council is proposing to do.

In the short time left to me I want to mention Craig Peacock, our trade commissioner in Japan. What a wonderful asset he is for Western Australia. Members do not have to take our word or the word of the Western Australian government for that; federal government bureaucrats from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade made the point very clearly to me that Craig's knowledge of Japan, his ability to access the highest levels of government and corporate life in Japan, and his ability to follow through on meetings conducted by Western Australian companies and the Western Australian government give us an edge that no other state has. I want to thank him for his continued efforts over many years. I want to thank all his staff in both the Tokyo and Kobe offices, including Noriko Hirata, who was of great assistance to us as well. I wish them all the best. I hope they continue to do this wonderful work for Western Australia for many, many years to come.

I also want to touch on the issue raised by Hon Phil Edman about some people wanting to treat these trips as some sort of political football for their own political advantage. We are big people; we can handle it. I think we got great value out of this trip. We have spoken a bit about it today; we will file our reports. If people do not think the state of Western Australia got good value out of it, have a go at us.

I want to touch on another aspect Hon Phil Edman talked about. Please do not publish our travel itineraries ahead of time, especially at a time when government offices in Western Australia were targeted with hate-mail campaigns and unknown powders. Unfortunately, there are people out there who might use that information ahead of time for nefarious purposes. Members might think we are talking academically, but we all come to this place with crosses from other places. In my previous life I experienced the unfortunate circumstance of direct threats being made to my family, and I had to take protective measures for my family. That happened in the past while I was a member of another Parliament. I hope that never, ever happens to any member of this place and I hope it never happens to any of our families ever again. A word of warning: be careful in highlighting these travel itineraries when they could place our families at risk. With those comments, I commend the motion to the house and I hope we continue to have a wonderful relationship with Hyogo and Japan for many years to come.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [12.21 pm]: It is with great enthusiasm that I support the motion moved by Hon Phil Edman, but it is also with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction that I have been

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following this debate. I want to associate myself with the sentiments that have been expressed within the chamber that give testimony to the benefits of members visiting major trading partners and associating with decision-makers and other key participants on their home soil. To listen to some members describing their recent visit to Japan and the understanding and outcomes that were derived from that was very, very pleasing. It prompts me to commend their experience to other members in the chamber and to anyone else who might be following this debate. It is a very good investment when our members are sent at their own or some other initiative to major trading partners, in this case Japan, to better understand the environment that so many of our key industries have to work in, and to gain an appreciation of the backgrounds and culture of those with whom we do business, whether it be at a government level, a trade level or, indeed, even on a social level.

When it all boils down, as you know, Madam Deputy President, we are ultimately in the people business. It is people who make politics work and what politics is all about, but it is also the relationships with and understandings between people that grease the wheels of diplomacy and of our trade with our major trading partners. We have just heard from Hon Nigel Hallett, who reminded us that the trade in liquefied natural gas alone between this state and Japan is a substantial part of the entire world's trade in that commodity. These are significant figures. We could go through a range of industries and a range of petroleum products, minerals or other commodities and come up with similar figures. Hon Nigel Hallett's remarks in support of Hon Phil Edman's motion reflected the basic expectation of the people of Western Australia; that is, that successive governments need to actively promote our jurisdiction as an export economy, because that is what makes us strong. It is great to have that understanding reinforced.

Just to throw in a bit of personal travelogue: I recall some basic elements of the itinerary on what I think was my third trip to Japan that I went on with Hon Ken Baston and a number of others. In doing so, members would understand how it benefited our understanding of our relationship with Japan when we could go to the headquarters of places like Mitsubishi, Tokyo Power and Light, and a range of other major industries and to sit down with them and engage in dialogue. Anyone who has been a member of Parliament for five minutes knows that, when dealing with constituents, they have to go out in the field to understand what they are dealing with. Members have to visit the schools and go to the factories. If constituents are having a dispute over a fence, members know very early in their career that they will have to go out and have a look at the fence! It is the same with portfolios. If an opposition spokesperson or an aspiring government member wants to learn about a particular portfolio, they have to go out and sit down with people in that sector and observe what they do, where they do it and the general environment in which they operate. That was a great trip, as I think Hon Ken Baston would agree.

Hon Ken Baston: Absolutely.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We also enjoyed, in my case not for the first time, the assistance of Craig Peacock and Noriko Hirata. I hope that a copy of this debate will be sent to them, so that I can again add to the appreciation that has been expressed by other members and to give them my greetings. I have had an association with those people for more than 10 years, so that just shows what consistent, long-term servants they are in the interests of WA's trade office in Japan. That sort of experience and exposure counts for a great deal.

The key point I want to provide to this debate is to encourage members on all sides of the house to get out and, if they can, to go to Japan. It is a great pity that the direct flight from Perth to Tokyo, which I used on a number of occasions, has been done away with. It annoys me to see our national carrier treating Perth in that way. Perth is a major place of interaction between Australia and Japan and we had a direct flight—I think there used to be three a week—but that has now been done away with. I was in charge of Customs out at Perth Airport when those flights were first running. I know darn well that it was not the passengers who paid the way but the freight and all our top-quality fresh produce that would be flown out overnight—a 10-hour flight—to Japan direct from Perth. They are the sort of lifelines that either we have or we do not. They are very hard to —

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is a shame.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It was a pity that Qantas made that decision. I think there are now no Qantas international flights that go out of Perth at all; so that is a pity. I hope these mildly critical comments I have to make about Qantas and some of its decisions are taken as a positive encouragement to engage more and to assist, and do not prejudice any other aspects of the relationship that I might have with them!

Hon Ken Travers: I imagine the Qantas PR people are quaking in their boots as you speak, Simon!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I do not know if they have a secret monitoring unit.

Hon Ken Travers: They would be watching us online every time you get up!

Hon Phil Edman; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Rick Mazza; Hon Brian Ellis; Hon Nigel Hallett; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Kate Doust

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: They probably are watching us online! The people we want to communicate with in the first instance, of course, are members here who have not yet had the benefit of going to Japan. I suggest they do so. It is an easy place to get to from here, even if we cannot go direct. I would also like to join others in sending my appreciation to the staff of the WA trade office located in Tokyo, with a branch office that I think is still in Kobe. Also, I place on the record not only my congratulations to the members who recently have gone as a delegation—I think it is a pity if they get any shallow-minded criticism for going because I know they would have worked hard—but also my appreciation again to Hon Phil Edman. I think it is interesting that even when pursuing his own personal development over the years, he has sought to extend the benefits of his experience to other members by organising this trip. It shows he is orientated towards achieving outcomes that are good for Western Australia and for his parliamentary colleagues. For that he needs to be encouraged and congratulated, and I am delighted to be able to do so.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.32 pm]: I rise to make some comments on Hon Phil Edman's motion. Of course, the Opposition supports the continuation of sister state relationships, not just with Japan but with a range of other countries as well. We continue to support the concept and principle behind the creation of trade offices and the work that is conducted by trade offices. It has been illuminating—not necessarily interesting, but illuminating—to listen to the debate today. Some of the concerns we have with the continued work of the trade offices is that perhaps there could be more done in that space. I note that the Liberal government made commitments prior to the election that it would establish a new trade office in Africa. We have heard nothing more since that time, and I would imagine that in today's budget there will be no mention of any development of that trade office to go into Africa. It is a real shame because it would be a targeted and strategic move on the part of this state to establish direct links into Africa with mining and other opportunities that exist there currently for us.

Although there about 10 trade offices listed through the Department of State Development, it is quite interesting to note that four of those offices have now been hived off and are managed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet without any explanation or understanding. If we go to the website for State Development, it still appears as though that department has the whole of the management of those offices. It is very difficult to find out how the work of trade offices is assessed—how the government genuinely assesses the success of these offices. I note that whenever I have had the opportunity to speak to people from a range of businesses or educational facilities, I always make the point of asking whether they use a trade office in the respective country to advance their cause or to seek assistance to open up opportunities with other businesses. I am yet to find a positive response. Part of the reason, they say, is that quite often the trade offices get into a pattern in which they only go about the same businesses continuously; they do not necessarily step out of their comfort zone to look at new opportunities for the state. I think trade offices could diversify in how they present opportunities for our state by offering up opportunities.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.