

CASTLEDARE MINIATURE RAILWAY — FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Statement

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [9.45 pm]: Before the house adjourns, I am sure members will join me in offering congratulations to Castledare Miniature Railway as it celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. Over 11, 12 and 13 October there was a three-day celebration, during which members and friends, new and old, came together to celebrate what is one of Western Australia's great institutions. I acknowledge the team there, led currently by the president, Craig Belcher, who has been ably supported over many years of course by Ken and Sue Belcher and all the other members of the extended committee of enthusiasts who run CMR. Keith Watson, one of the founders of CMR 50 years ago, was on hand to join in the celebrations. It was he, operating out of his place then in Applecross, who first started to nurture the development of 7 ¼ gauge miniature rail, joined later on by the well-known Jack Stanbridge, and so a great institution was born.

On Sunday, I had the pleasure of being there with the extended "family", for want of a better word. John Ahern proudly showed me around the premises; it was not the first time, but it is always great to catch up on the latest there in terms of locomotives and other developments. Steady improvements are being made to existing infrastructure that was perhaps built in a fairly basic fashion over the years but is now being reproduced in a very professional manner, and they should be congratulated for it.

I have mentioned the redoubtable Keith Watson. We were joined by Dr Mick and Mrs Lekias. Mick, of course, is the former Mayor of the City of Canning—he was recently made a freeman—and a well-known doctor in the district, who actually does have some memory from his time early in practice of when Castledare Miniature Railway came into being all those years ago. He has been a great supporter in a number of ways, including as Mayor of the City of Canning.

Tom Winterbourne was there, and it was nice to catch up with all sorts of friends, old and new. Trish and Richard Stewart were there, as were a whole host of other people. Sunday was a great day, as we celebrated a dream born on the banks of the Canning River as part of the old Castledare Boys' Home, as it then was, and the adventures that Keith and others had in approaching Brother O'Shaughnessy to get a bit of land on which to locate a miniature railway. He reportedly said, "No, no, we don't be needing any railways here", but when it was pointed out there might be some money to be made to help pay for the upkeep of the place, he said, "When can you start?" So the story goes, anyway!

The bottom line with CMR is that it was, has been and will continue to be well into the future a great institution in Western Australia; one that has brought pleasure, enjoyment and fellowship to so many Western Australians young and old, whether they are down there every Sunday, whether they go there even more frequently to volunteer, or whether they are just an occasional visitor. I heartily congratulate those who are involved in keeping this great institution not only alive, but also going from strength to strength. I wish them all the best for the next 50 years, when I am sure we will all go along and enjoy its centenary celebration as well.