

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT — INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE**

*Motion*

**HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral)** [11.38 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council —

- (a) recognises the significance of investment in infrastructure to the continued development of regional Western Australia;
- (b) recognises the need to improve interstate infrastructure links; and
- (c) calls on the federal government to commit to the development of an additional interstate road link into Western Australia.

I will first start by saying that the national road network should be seen as an investment in the future by state and federal governments of all persuasions. Roads bring with them economic growth and industry development. They should provide a safe and, to some extent, cost-effective means of transporting goods throughout Australia. They bring with them the possibilities of increased employment and training opportunities. Having been a member representing the largest electoral region since May 2005, I have seen the pace of resources development and exploration increase incredibly during this time. The question, of course, is: in this time has the pace of infrastructure development kept up with this? What do I mean by infrastructure? Sir Rod Eddington, who is, by the way, the chairman of Infrastructure Australia, visited the Pilbara in July and spoke of hard infrastructure and soft infrastructure. The hard infrastructure, in his view, is the roads, ports, railways and airports. The soft infrastructure is health, housing, education, local government services and the like that people obviously need once they decide to stay in a place. We need the hard infrastructure to assist in the development of resource projects.

My remarks will be focused on the road infrastructure. In recent times the major growth in Western Australia has been in the Pilbara. Of course, there are other projects in the north such as Browse Basin, which is a \$30 billion Woodside project at James Price Point. We have other projects such as Prelude, which is the Shell floating platform project that will use Broome as a port. Buru Energy has made its first onshore oil find—quite a significant find and the first one in 10 years—in the Canning Basin. That is about 80 kilometres east of Broome on Yakka Munga station. Of course, the potential there for unconventional gas is huge. I might add that Buru estimated in 2011 that its reserves alone were 66 trillion cubic feet of gas and four billion barrels of oil. There are large deposits of coal in the Fitzroy Valley that Rey Resources and other companies are looking at, and there are rare earth deposits around Ringer Soak, which is south east of Halls Creek on the Western Australia–Northern Territory border. A company out there called Northern Minerals has discovered a large deposit of rare earths. For the information of anyone who follows the share market, the shares have gone up 30 per cent in the last week. There is also the Ord and the development potential of more than 28 000 hectares of agricultural land.

It is timely to look at interstate and intrastate roads to Western Australia—to the north west and the Kimberley. There are two significant interstate roads. In the south, we have Eyre Highway and Great Eastern Highway into Perth, which is the main route for freight into WA from the east. Eyre Highway passes through Norseman and goes on to Kalgoorlie. It then changes into the Great Eastern Highway, which goes down to Perth. Two lanes of bitumen connect those of us in the south to the rest of Australia. In 1975 we had floods as a result of a cyclone that went through the Sandstone lake system and closed the road. There were also, of course, the Boorabbin bushfires, which also caused the road to be closed.

In the north there is Great Northern Highway. It connects us to Victoria Highway, which goes into the Northern Territory via Katherine. Great Northern Highway is part of the national road network within Western Australia and is the main freight route linking the south and the north of the state. It also forms part of the interstate route linking Perth and Western Australia to Darwin and the Northern Territory. The road serves many user groups, including agriculture, mining and tourism, and is the main route for transport of goods to and from the north of the state—two more lanes of bitumen. The road passes through Carnarvon. We will all remember the 2010 floods and the fires in 2011 that closed that road. I am pleased to say that this government has committed \$45 million and the feds have committed another \$15 million to the flood mitigation strategy, which one hopes will result in that road remaining open when it floods. There have been significant floods in the Kimberley—for example, at Bow River—and a lot of the bridges are washed away from time to time. The Savannah nickel mine cannot transport its product when those roads get flooded. There are no reliable links when it comes to flooding, so we need to look at avenues to address that issue.

From Kalgoorlie to the north there is one route choice for freight at the moment; that is, it has to go to the metropolitan area, and then use one of those two intrastate roads to the north. One highway follows the coast

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through Carnarvon, as I mentioned, and the other goes through Paynes Find and Meekatharra and on to Port Hedland. Both roads have challenges for heavy-haulage vehicles, normal road traffic and the annual caravan treks. The number of caravans on the road is increasing as seniors seek to spend the winter months in the sun.

Our national road network seems to have been based on the need to link our capital cities and associated ports. Our WA road system seems to have been constructed around industry and mineral resources. We linked Perth with Kalgoorlie when gold was discovered, and developed the network in the agricultural areas and the wheatbelt. Gold was responsible for Great Northern Highway going through Mt Magnet and on to Meekatharra. In the Kimberley, the north west pastoral industry was developed, and gold was found at Halls Creek in the 1890s. Now we have the Pilbara as the mineral and gas powerhouse and the looming potential of the development of a mineral and gas–petroleum industry in the Kimberley. But the supply lines remain the same. It is now worth looking at alternatives and doing what happened in the early days of mineral discovery, which in crude terms was “follow the money”. I go back to my statement that most of our freight to the north west goes, by necessity, through Kalgoorlie. Oil and gas development is going to continue in the Pilbara and in the west Kimberley.

What are some of the factors we need to consider? We need to be aware of the oversized vehicles and the cost of transport. A report in the *Pilbara Echo* of 18 July quotes Assistant Commissioner Budge as saying that the number of police escorts required has doubled this year to more than 200 a month. That is only those that need a police escort; it does not include normal transportation without a police escort. I was told the other day that with the Wheatstone project, an extra 1 500 trucks a month will go up North West Coastal Highway, passing through Carnarvon. When the Browse project is in operation, there will be another 6 000 employees, so once again there will be more pressure on the road system. Of course, Buru announced the other day that it will be trucking its oil down to Kwinana from the Canning Basin while it is going through the process of testing how much oil is available.

We need to look at alternative routes. The current freight route from Kalgoorlie to Perth to Port Hedland is about 2 200 kilometres when it goes through Meekatharra. An alternative route, which involves an extension of Goldfields Highway through Wiluna to Meekatharra, would be 1 605 kilometres. That alternative route on Goldfields Highway would represent a saving of some 600 litres of fuel for a triple road train, about six hours in time and just under a third on maintenance costs. That would reduce the number of heavy-haulage vehicles on the other road that goes through Mt Magnet. Assistant Commissioner Budge also said that anyone using that road at present would need to allow an extra two hours because of heavy-haulage traffic.

Developing this route would seem to have some merit. A conservative cost per kilometre for a seven-metre sealed pavement is some \$350 000. It is estimated that to seal the section from Wiluna to Meekatharra, which is 182 kilometres, or from Wiluna to the highway through Neds Creek, which is 196 kilometres, would cost some \$70 million. I understand serious consideration is being given to this extension. Taking the conservative price of \$1.50 a litre, the saving on fuel alone over a year for two triples a week would be some \$9.63 million.

Noting the time, I am going to have to push this a bit harder. I want also to touch on the other route that is possible, which I have spoken on in this house many times—the Tanami Road. This route could come of age under our federal counterparts, whom I have written to. I have to say that we have made a submission to the Defence paper that has been looking at northern Australia. I commend the Shire of Halls Creek for commissioning Cummings Economics to do a study on the sealing of the Tanami Road. As I have said before that would cut off around 1 000 kilometres on a trip into the Kimberley and would also open up opportunities for that area. The Cummings study identified opportunities in hydrocarbons such as oil, gas and coal right across the Canning Basin, as well as uranium and rare earth production, which I mentioned; and also gold and base metals such as manganese, tungsten, copper and zinc. Of course, we have up there the Argyle diamond mine and the Savannah nickel mine, which are currently operating and profitable. Other industries that would benefit from the development of these roads are tourism and the service industry; another would be the pastoral industry with the live cattle industry opening up further markets to go through to Alice Springs and the abattoirs in the eastern states.

It is interesting that when we look at the road through Western Australia to the Northern Territory, the estimated cost to seal the Western Australian side is about \$110 million and to seal the remaining section of the road in the Northern Territory is some \$334 million. That is quite a considerable amount of funding; however, the Infrastructure Australia fund has some \$6 billion in its budget to 2020.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Not if Joe Hockey gets his hands on it!

**Hon KEN BASTON:** I did start this speech by referring to governments of all persuasion.

The other road I want to mention very quickly is the outback highway, which goes from Laverton, through Warburton, Docker River and out to Alice Springs and across to Winton. The construction of those two roads

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would give us alternative routes, whether for defence reasons or disasters like flood, fire et cetera, so I think the capital would be well worth spending in that direction.

I am running out of time. I commend the state government for committing funding in July of \$17.2 million from the Safer Roads program and \$91 million from Main Roads WA, and also for committing all the speed camera revenue to the road trauma trust fund, which makes up part of the funding now used for roads. That is well worth spending, but it is time now, while the resource industry is in a buoyant situation, to look at these major arterial roads that feed into and go across our state and how the eastern states benefit from what Western Australia is producing and to give them the opportunity, since they are always saying that they want to participate in the boom; they can participate by trucking their goods through better routes.

**HON PHILIP GARDINER (Agricultural)** [11.54 am]: I rise to speak to this motion and to emphasise how important infrastructure is. The words come off our lips very easily, but when we put some thinking into it we can see how important it is for the continued advancement of our way of life, not just in this state but in Australia and the world. Hon Ken Baston talked about the importance of roads and so on in the north west. I will range a little broader in this debate, because in my mind infrastructure can be physical, which is the roads, ports, airports and those kinds of things which assist in allowing things to happen, and there is also social infrastructure, to which Hon Ken Baston referred. However, when I talk about social infrastructure, it is not just health and education but the soft essence of infrastructure to do with bringing more out of people, so that everyone has an equal access to the same opportunities. The opportunities will vary and so will people's talents, but we need at least to give each person access to those opportunities. We are meant to be born equal of flesh and blood, which might be disputed in reality, but the important thing is that we have that social infrastructure to allow us that equal access to opportunities. The third area of infrastructure is structural infrastructure, in which industry, society or governments have certain ways in which they organise themselves and where we can make changes to get more out of the effort we put in.

Infrastructure overall is about productivity; that is, getting more from the same input, be it dollars or effort. It might be that physical infrastructure is the physical output per unit of labour, and social infrastructure might be more output from the dollars we spend but we are after productivity when we are talking about infrastructure. The managing director of Macquarie Bank once said that the most effective improvement in productivity is with an investment in infrastructure, and he is absolutely right.

From a government point of view, infrastructure is mostly funded by borrowings, so let us not have this word fall off our lips too easily when we want trucks on roads or ships coming into ports, because whenever that happens and we make that spend, there has got to be a business case that allows us to work out how we are going to pay the borrowing back. Any of us who have been in business knows that it is easy to borrow the money thinking it is all going to work out, and mostly it is much harder to pay it back. Governments in particular have to be religiously focussed on how they pay back the money that they invest in infrastructure to allow, hopefully, for improvement in our productivity. That is because often the productivity improvement is not as well defined as we would like. It is a matter of judgement. The only reason we should have any investment in infrastructure is with the objective of improving productivity in whichever way we seek to measure it.

The infrastructure spend that governments make is also tricky. It is not just dollars from their own pool of funds, if you like, from either their own balance sheet when they borrow or from the revenue they receive. There is a lot more now about private-public partnerships, and also about government doing it on its own. We know that private companies provide their own infrastructure in their own businesses and firms to enhance productivity.

The fourth area in infrastructure is the government's role as a catalyst. The catalytic role of government, from my observation in the few years I have been here, is something that we do not do sufficiently well. There is a huge opportunity for governments to improve the catalytic role that they have in actually bringing parties together and then filling in the potholes that occur when trying to work with the parties and negotiating with them about what they are going to do and the outcomes that each party wants. Of course, there are many cases when those negotiations either break down or get very close to breaking down, but if those negotiations are in the state's interests, the role of government becomes important. It is an investment in the catalytic role, which is one of the most important things that governments can do, rather than just making a decision—we will build a port or an education college or institute or whatever—and then backing away and letting it all happen. Life does not work that way. It needs close contact. It needs to be worked. Relationships need to be strong enough so that when problems come, they can be worked on and fixed or smoothed out, so that we can move on to the next stage. That is one of the other important aspects of infrastructure.

I think everyone recognises the importance of regional Western Australia. However, the state's economy is one of balance. We are talking not only about regional Western Australia; it is also a question of the services that are provided from the cities, because that is where a lot of the services work from. Finance is in the cities, insurers

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are in the cities and lawyers are in the cities. They are crucial for any development of infrastructure. That is part of why the services that come out of both regional Western Australia and the cities are so important for the state of Western Australia. We in the Nationals believe that what we have done with the application of royalties for regions funding is to lift some of that productivity capacity in regional Western Australia, where it was seriously run-down.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You have not spent it on roads. Your government has cut road funding.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** I accept that it is not always perfect, Hon Ken Travers, but at least it has made a significant change already. When it is run-down and people think that something is not worth doing, it reduces productivity just as much as not having the energy and imagination to get out and do things. That is part of the significant value, which has been invested, as we know, in local governments, health, education, airports and the Ord. With all the investment in the land up in the Ord there has to be a whole infrastructure plan to make sure that what we produce in the Ord gets to the market. That has to be part of a package. How many governments think of things in terms of a package? It is crucial that they do so. That comes back to the same catalytic role.

I will turn to some of my particular infrastructure concerns where there is an increase in productivity. One of my favourite little hobbies is tier 3 railway lines. With CBH using them, the increase in productivity is so material that it makes rail competitive with road for an investment, which could well be paid back quite quickly. That is one of the ideal things. Then there is the value change in agriculture. We need to work on the dairy industry. There is an abattoir in Gingin. The value chain connection between where something is produced and how it gets to the market and the distribution has to be linked much better than it has been in the past. Then there is social infrastructure, about which members have heard me talk before. Without a social infrastructure plan and strategy we are not going to raise the level of ability for people to access the opportunities that are there for all of us.

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [12.04 pm]: I agree with members on the other side about one thing—roads are important. They need to be funded by governments. But what is interesting is that we are getting this after four years of a Liberal government that has been the lowest spending government on roads. One of the things that royalties for regions has done, Hon Philip Gardiner, is that it has brought about a reduction in road funding. Road funding is one of those areas of government expenditure for which, in the past, over 50 per cent of the money was spent in regional Western Australia. Often 60 or 70 per cent of the money in the Main Roads budget went to regional Western Australia. That is the historical situation of government. I have brought a little chart to show members. There are three sources of funding for roads in Western Australia. The first is the money we pay under the Road Traffic Act for motor vehicle licence fees. That amount has been climbing since 2001 and 2002—it is the blue line on my chart. It has been climbing quite significantly over that period. The red line on the chart is the second source of funding, commonwealth funding. That has been climbing roughly in parallel with the blue line.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** It is all over the place! It's not parallel!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** If you put the trend line through, you goose, you will see it climbs in parallel. But the one that does not climb —

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** It's not in parallel—it's perpendicular to it. It is a good chart, Ken. I am sorry; I should not interject.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The problem, Hon Simon O'Brien, is that the other line, which is flat—the flat lining—is the funding from your government. We have to go back to the first part of this century to find expenditure in actual dollar terms, without even putting in a fee for inflation, as low as it has been in the last two years. What this government appropriated for roads in 2010–11 and 2011–12 is lower than what was spent in 2001–02. That is why, members of the back bench of the Liberal–National government, there are problems with roads. Their government has not been putting money into roads. I would agree that there are roads to be fixed, but can I suggest to members on the other side that what we have to do is to fix the roads that are a problem today. I was out on Great Northern Highway the other day and I saw the high and wide loads going up the highway, which I have talked about before. I have talked to the federal government about this. Great Northern Highway needs significant funding spent on its upgrade to take the task that is required, because if we do not, we will kill the goose that is laying the golden egg for Australia. If we cannot get the heavy machinery and equipment up that highway, we will not be able to keep the economy going. That is the first road.

**Hon Alyssa Hayden** interjected.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I will get to the member's projects. An amount of \$7 million has been spent on the planning for the Kununurra bypass. Where is the money for that? I agree; if we want a holistic approach to be taken with Ord stage 2, the government needs to find the \$150 million in funding that is needed to build the

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Kununurra bypass. There is no point looking into other roads into and out of Kununurra unless the government fixes the existing road, which will not survive for much longer because the one over the diversion dam is going to fall down. Hon Ken Baston's government took money out of the budget that would have provided the connection he talked about from Goldfields Highway through to Great Northern Highway. His government cut the funding for it; it stripped it out completely. Now Hon Ken Baston is starting to say that we need to be doing this stuff. Where was his voice when the government took the money away for that road? Where was his voice for putting money into the grain rail freight line, which, as Hon Philip Gardiner said, is going to save us money? I have been out to the wheatbelt a couple of times and I have seen the roads that the government built to replace the grain rail freight lines. They are already stripping off. I should have brought to the chamber the bit of bitumen that the people of Merredin gave me when I was out there to remind members about it.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Did they throw it at you, did they?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** They gave me a bit of bitumen to show government members such as Hon Simon O'Brien the bad decisions that this government has made about the grain rail freight line and the fact that the government is going to have to spend an awful lot more money on those wheatbelt roads to try to fix them. There is the Nullagine road—there are hundreds of them. Government members have to get their priorities sorted out. Hon Alyssa Hayden wants the Perth–Darwin highway to be funded. That is on the list for commonwealth funding.

**Hon Alyssa Hayden:** It is not on the list. They are not taking it on the list, Hon Ken Travers.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The government is raising expectations across the state, but how it is going to fund them I do not know. What are the government's priorities? Is it the port link proposal from Esperance to the Pilbara? Is that the government's priority? Is it the Kununurra bypass? Is it the Perth–Darwin highway? Is it Roe Highway stage 8? Is it the Mirrabooka light rail? Is it the Bunbury ring-road stages 2 and 3? Is it the grain rail roads into Bunbury port that will need to be upgraded so that the roads east of Collie are not destroyed? Is that going to be the government's priority, because it is now going to put 500 000 tonnes of grain through Bunbury port? Is it Tanami Road, which Hon Ken Baston referred to today? Is it the Mitchell Freeway extension, which the government has a working committee for? Is it the Tonkin Highway extension, which the government has a working committee for? All these projects are worth over \$100 million each. Is it the Fremantle port access road, because the government promised the people when it took the \$60 million out of the budget that it would put it back in the future? Is it my favourite project of all time? How many members opposite support the concept of the floating Orrong Road? Did any hands go up? Not a single hand went up, yet the Treasurer and the Premier have said that that is at the top of their list.

**Hon Helen Morton:** I like it.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The minister likes it; there is one voice. That is why the minister got in the cabinet! She is the only voice on her side that supports this billion-dollar project.

**Hon Helen Morton:** I love it.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** That is what the Minister for Transport has told us is his priority. Then there is the Shelley Bridge, which will cost \$70-odd million to widen. Which one is the government going to do? Where is the government's priority? That is the problem, members. For four years the government has cut funding for roads and now it has a list of road projects across Western Australia that run into billions of dollars—more than the \$6 billion that sits in the commonwealth government's Infrastructure Australia fund. That money will disappear if Joe Hockey gets his hands on it. For four years the government lectured us about the commonwealth government. The federal government has put more money into road infrastructure in Western Australia than has any federal government in the past, yet what do we hear from government members' federal colleagues when they finally come to Western Australia? They suggest that we have tollways. Which members on the government benches support Joe Hockey's suggestion to have tollways in Western Australia? There is a split between the federal and state Liberals. These guys are sitting on the fence. Do members opposite support toll roads?

Several members interjected.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Does the National Party support toll roads? Who supports toll roads?

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Labor!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** No, we do not.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Why are you making such a fuss, then?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Because the federal shadow Treasurer told the state government that it should have them. Government members are sitting on the fence. Are they going to oppose tollways?

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**Hon Jim Chown:** Yes.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Have members told their federal colleagues to get rid of Joe Hockey as federal shadow Treasurer?

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis):** Order, members!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I did not see the national Liberal leader at the conference.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order! For the sake of Hansard, I think members ought to back off a bit, because when half a dozen members are yelling across the chamber, no-one can be heard. Hon Ken Travers has one and a half minutes remaining. I think he should be heard in silence.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** We know that not only has the government not put in money, but also government members' federal colleagues have the very same approach to roads that this government has, and that is to cut funding. Joe Hockey's solution is to have toll roads. The state government's solution is to not build roads and to let roads deteriorate. Members opposite talked about the road trauma trust fund money, but the problem is that that money is not expensed in the budget at the moment. There is \$180 million of road trauma trust fund money that is not expensed in the budget.

In summary, it is important to talk about roads. That is why Mark McGowan, as the new leader of the WA Labor Party, made it very clear in his budget reply speech this year that a future Western Australian Labor government will make roads, in particular regional roads, a priority. The reason we have said that is that we understand the importance of regional roads. If members opposite want to talk about investment in regional Western Australia, I can tell them that Labor spent \$125 million on the Karratha–Tom Price road. Can Liberal–National government members tell me when their government has spent that kind of money on a regional road? I will tell them what this government spent on capital works for roads last year. In 2010–11, the state government appropriated \$114 million in total for capital works. Labor spent more on one road than the current government spent in a whole year on all roads across all of Western Australia.

**HON MAX TRENORDEN (Agricultural) [12.14 pm]:** I want to thank the two Kens. I thank Hon Ken Baston for moving the motion and Hon Ken Travers for providing a bit of entertainment, because I do not think we get enough entertainment in this chamber!

**Hon Ken Travers:** You're on your feet, so we're sure to get some now!

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** I am happy to continue in that vein.

I have been a member of one chamber or the other for 25 years and the Labor Party promised it at every election, but it never built the Tom Price–Karratha road.

**Hon Ken Travers:** That \$125 million is more than you appropriated for roads in the 2010–11 financial year.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** It has still not been built.

Recently I travelled to Mt Augustus and Karijini National Park with a person who will remain anonymous. I was really disappointed in the trip.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Now you've got us intrigued about who it was!

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** The person is a very bad driver.

It was extremely disappointing. I love Australia. I have been to Uluru three or four times, but Mt Augustus kills Uluru. There is much more to see at Mt Augustus than there is at Uluru. Uluru is a well-defined icon of Australia. I am not knocking it at all; I would go back tomorrow. My point is not to knock it; my point is to talk about Mt Augustus. I have driven to Uluru and I have flown to Uluru. It is almost impossible to drive to Mt Augustus on the inland road. The road is terrible. Mt Augustus should be a major icon for the Western Australian tourism industry, but it is very difficult to get to. A little later on the same trip, I went to Karijini National Park. It is a good thing I do not have false teeth, because I would not have had any teeth left after driving to Karijini! A considerable number of international tourists go to Karijini, but the road access to Karijini is abominable. We are promoting Karijini, as we should, because it is a superb place. Those members who have never been to Karijini should do so as constituents. Even though it is nowhere near my patch, I went up with an interest.

I go to Kalbarri a lot. I love Kalbarri as a location, but it is at the top end of the Agricultural Region. Kalbarri is a town in trouble. Tourist numbers have dropped alarmingly in Kalbarri.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Since the bus stopped running there on Hon Simon O'Brien's watch?

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**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** It is not the bus that is the problem. The grey nomads keep that place running. On the same trip, I went to Exmouth. I went to the shops and the hotel and had meals at the restaurants in Exmouth. I could say the same thing about my home town of Northam. It is outstanding to have backpackers work in the businesses in town. They are refreshing and they provide an outstanding service. I could see a place such as Exmouth on fire. There were very few vacant places in Exmouth. There was a clear attitude of prosperity in the business area of Exmouth.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Oil and gas is underpinning that, though.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** The resort is probably down a bit, but the rest of the town —

**Hon Ken Travers:** Did you try the highway down to Coral Bay?

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** No, I did not get down to Coral Bay.

**Hon Ken Travers:** That road needs fixing. It's too narrow and road trains come up it.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** I agree. Coral Bay is an icon. We had the opportunity to change the town site of Coral Bay and we should have. Maud's Landing is where the development should happen at Coral Bay so that the reef can be protected.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Brian Ellis):** Order, members! Hon Max Trenorden is delivering his speech.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** And making a very important speech! These are important issues. Why I mentioned Kalbarri in the same breath as Exmouth and Karijini is that it demonstrates the wide range of tourist activity in Western Australia. Kalbarri promotes itself as the first of the nor'-west towns, which is probably a bit of a push, but nevertheless once one gets to the Murchison River that is out of —

**Hon Ken Travers:** You are north of it.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** Yes. The product is outstanding, but the infrastructure to support that product is not good. If a person is in the grey nomad process, not flying in, Karijini Road would shake—I will not use any rough adjective, but it is a very difficult road! If not driving a four-wheel-drive vehicle on the inland road between Mt Magnet and Mt Augustus, do not attempt it.

**Hon Ken Travers:** It is a good thing you drink wine and not beer!

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** It is a beautiful drive. Has Hon Ken Travers tried it?

**Hon Ken Travers:** What—the wine or the beer?

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** No; the drive from Mt Magnet to Mt Augustus.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Unfortunately I have not. I would love to.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** If Hon Ken Travers goes back to his own speech, it is not easy—it is 300 kilometres. That road is extremely rough. It is a beautiful drive. Tourists to Australia, or even Australians who do not get to that part of the world, will see a unique part of Western Australia by driving that road.

**Hon Ken Travers:** I am still suffering after driving the Kellerberrin–Shackleton Road. That shook me up.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** Hon Ken Travers will not get an argument out of me on that issue.

The issue of infrastructure is really important. The decline in tourism is difficult; it is hurting a lot of regional communities. My brother recently went through Onslow with a car towing a caravan. The grey nomads told him not to go there. He was told the facilities for grey nomads in the community were so poor that people should not go there. That sort of advertisement is so damaging to people who are moving around the state, particularly grey nomads. That is why I argued about the road into Karijini National Park. Karijini is outstanding. It is a world-class product. I hate to call it a “product” but I notice the tourism industry calls it that. It is a magnificent location, a magnificent place to be, and it is a place that we need to promote.

**Hon Ken Travers:** A natural Disneyland.

**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** It is fantastic.

If we look at Mt Augustus' natural pools—the near-permanent pools around it—the history of the goldmines and the tavern on Cobra station, we see that those places are pretty unique. Such places do not exist around Uluru. Uluru and the Olgas are unique—we should be promoting them; it is fantastic that Australians go there—but Mt Augustus is at least equal, in my opinion.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Why doesn't your government spend some money on roads then?

**Extract from Hansard**

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 16 August 2012]

p5093b-5102a

Hon Ken Baston; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Max Trenorden; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm; Hon Alyssa Hayden

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**Hon MAX TRENORDEN:** That is a good argument; we will get into that. Let us talk about one of my favourite roads. I recently travelled to Kulin. There are two roads that go there—Hyden–Norseman Road and Lake King–Norseman Road. Even though the road is called Hyden–Norseman Road, it does not exactly go to Hyden. It is just the title of the road. The volume of traffic on Lake King–Norseman Road is increasing. The Shire of Kulin would like a small amount of money to spend on that road, which I support. The shire is not seeking to have that road sealed. It just wants to have enough in the budget to service that road, as I was talking about with Karijini. About 100 vehicles a day use that road. In terms of counts, I agree that is not high. The shire is not pushing for a sealed road, but a lot of people from the great southern area want to head to Norseman without going through Esperance and without going through Kalgoorlie. That will be a growing aspect. Those two roads are in competition. A group of people supports Hyden–Norseman Road, but Lake King–Norseman Road has more traffic using it.

**HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (Agricultural) [12.24 pm]:** First of all, I very much acknowledge Hon Ken Baston and thank him for moving this motion during private members' business. I have certainly enjoyed the discussion thus far. A number of very relevant points have been made by both sides. I prepared a number myself, but I really wish to address some of the issues that have been raised so far by various members. If I have any time left over, I will get to the crux of the issue, which, to me, is all about government spending priorities.

For starters, Hon Ken Baston talked about infrastructure being either hard or soft in nature. Hon Phil Gardiner also talked a little about that when he referred to social versus physical infrastructure. I got the impression from Hon Ken Baston that he was almost dismissive of the need for this sort of “soft” or social infrastructure; or at least that is the picture I got from listening to him. He mentioned tourism and the movement of grey nomads in justifying the expenditure on greater road infrastructure. Hon Ken Baston mentioned agricultural and mineral discoveries leading to the establishment of the various transport links we have around the state. After listening to this plethora of roads and networks that Hon Ken Baston believed were appropriate, I get back to the point Hon Ken Travers made; with the amount of money currently being spent, it is a bit of a pipedream that the vision Hon Ken Baston holds would ever come to fruition. At the end of the day, the funding is not there now and I do not think it ever can be. The promises are there and we let people know these sorts of issues are out there, but nothing ever seems to happen.

I take on board what Hon Max Trenorden said. I have not been to Mt Augustus. I have been to Uluru and the Olgas. Every year, I sit down and think where I might like to head. I do not have any false teeth, by the way, at this stage. Maybe if I head up to Mt Augustus, from what Hon Max Trenorden said, that may well become a reality! I hope not, because I intend to go there anyway. It is important that we look at the tourism opportunities we have in Western Australia. Better road infrastructure does not just service the sorts of industries that move minerals and transport grain and the like; we also have to remember people. That point is certainly one that I always bear in mind.

Hon Philip Gardiner talked about the importance of infrastructure for the continued advancement of our state. I do not think anybody would disagree with that. He certainly had a broader understanding of infrastructure and talked about ports, rail and airports. He also talked about social infrastructure issues such as health and education. He made one very good point: there needs to be access. People across the length and breadth of Western Australia genuinely and generally need to have equal access. That was a particularly pertinent point as far as I was concerned. Hon Philip Gardiner talked about the need to get more from inputs, in relation to productivity funding, and the ability for us to provide better infrastructure across the state. That is a point that the government definitely needs to take on board: how will it improve productivity? Without improvement in productivity, in essence, in an economic sense, we are wasting significant resources and minimising our capacity to deliver better outcomes for Western Australians. Hon Philip Gardiner talked about the need for the government to be the catalyst here, which I thought was another excellent point. My contention would be that, yes, that is spot-on, but are we seeing that particular catalyst in place? If what Hon Ken Travers said about the amount of money being spent on roads in Western Australia is correct, and I am sure it is, that catalyst is not with us at present; it is not a priority. At the end of the day, this motion of Hon Ken Baston's surely has to do with how government will prioritise what it does with its limited resources. I thought the point about the government needing to be the catalyst is ever so true and I commend Hon Ken Baston on that particular point.

I think Hon Ken Travers's point was well made, despite the fact that the graph had a few kinks in the curves. The spending on infrastructure, and roads in particular, in this state is skewed very much downwards when it should perhaps be going in the other direction. Hon Ken Travis made the point, which was relevant to me as an Agricultural Region MP, about rail and I think he alluded to the tier 3 grain network. If we want a priority from people who produce the wealth in Western Australia apart from the mining industry, we should look at the agricultural sector in this part of the world where tier 3 freight lines are now under serious threat. I, like a lot of



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the members in the Agricultural Region, drive on some of these less frequently used roads. One I went on recently was Cunderdin–Quairading Road. A bit of improvement is being done here and there, but I stopped and took a heap of photographs of certain sections where shoulders had been broadened, and the very point Hon Ken Travers made was something I saw. Pieces of bitumen and blue metal can actually be picked up off the road where the improvements have been made.

At the end of the day, if we go down the pathway of putting money into road infrastructure and that is the bang we get for our buck, I think it is high time we took another long, hard look at tier 3 rail lines. We are still waiting on a ministerial response to the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. I think the Deputy President (Hon Brian Ellis) is chair of that committee and it will be interesting to hear the minister's response, because funding for those sorts of issues is, as Hon Ken Travers has indicated, certainly a significant issue that we need to deal with. I am very much an advocate of putting as much grain onto rail as is physically possible. Again, it is a priority and, again, I suggest members opposite need to perhaps lobby their minister to put more of the priorities into tier 3 rail.

Hon Max Trenorden, I have made a couple of points about going to Mt Augustus, so I might have to chat with the honourable member about that afterwards. The point I have to make about Hon Max Trenorden's comments is that if we add those particular promises, commitments or intentions to what Hon Ken Baston has said, the issue, fairly obviously, is that at the end of the day there is just not the money to do what this motion hopes we will be able to do.

I mention again Cunderdin–Quairading Road. I just make a couple of points about that, because I have a brother, Phil, who lives in Quairading. He is heavily involved in a lot of volunteer work and one of the things he frequently has to do is to go out and assist at accidents and the like. His comment to me recently, when I attended the opening of the Bruce Rock recreation centre, was that the condition of the roads in these tier 3 rail areas is absolutely appalling and contributes in no uncertain terms to the issues that he sees as a volunteer in his particular community. At the end of the day, if we look at how we will improve infrastructure spending in Western Australia, the priorities perhaps need to be a little closer to home.

**HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan)** [12.35 pm]: I note that I have three minutes to speak, so I hope I do not disjoint my speech too much! First of all, I have to comment on the banter between Hon Max Trenorden, Hon Ken Travers and now Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm. If the members all take to caravans and explore our beautiful state as they have been saying they will, I will say to the grey nomads, "Look out! Your campsites will be very interesting!" I congratulate Hon Ken Baston on raising a very worthy motion and for highlighting that we need federal government assistance to improve and upgrade our Western Australian road network, especially when it is WA and our road network that supports the whole nation's wealth. I go back to a brief comment I made in my contribution to the budget debate earlier this year. All members on the other side have said that there is simply not enough money to cater for the roads that we need to improve and upgrade. They are right; there will not be enough money, especially when we are squeezed so tightly with our GST share. We have lost \$662 million, with a forecast of up to \$15 billion by 2014–15. If we keep getting squeezed with our GST return, we will not be able to spend money on road infrastructure and, more importantly, although I am a metropolitan region member, I believe the money needs to be spent on national highways to support our mining, resource and agriculture industries that support the whole nation's wealth. Again, I congratulate Hon Ken Baston for raising this motion.

I have spoken many times in this house and in the community about the two trips I have taken up north as a passenger in a truck. While on my second truck trip I wrote to Hon Ken Baston about the North West Coastal Highway. I understand that the severe floods that happened in Carnarvon and along that stretch through December 2010 and January 2011 were the worst that the region had experienced since 1960.

I have only 50 seconds left, but I point out that without federal money, the state will not be able to continue to hold up the rest of the country and all the other states that rely on our mining and resources industry to keep the nation afloat. If I could ask anything of the opposition, I would ask them to stop asking us for money that we do not have, and to go to their federal colleagues in the Labor government under Prime Minister Julia Gillard and ask her to put the money that we and all the residents and communities of WA have worked so hard to earn back into WA. Give it back to WA so that we can improve our roads and so our truck drivers, our general motorists and our tourists are safe when travelling around our state.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.