

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [5.07 pm]: Prior to question time I had been speaking about a couple of projects that are currently underway in the East Metropolitan Region. Prior to the break I was specifically referring to the Forrestfield–Airport Link project and indicating that this landmark \$1.86 billion rail project, which is jointly funded by the state and commonwealth governments, is continuing to progress and that works are now commencing near Perth Airport. I was out that way just last week and there is certainly plenty of movement out there, which is fantastic. This significant rail project was a key initiative of the former Liberal–National state government and once completed will dramatically improve public transport options in the East Metropolitan Region. The project, for those members who are not aware, will create an 8.5 kilometre rail line from the spur on the Midland line east of Bayswater station to Forrestfield. Preliminary works began last year at the Forrestfield end of the project and a construction site has now been established to create the airport central station. When it is completed, this station will provide direct access to terminals T1 and T2, and is one of three being built along the length of the railway line—the others, of course, being at Belmont and Forrestfield.

With all that in mind, members will not be surprised to learn that I was somewhat bemused to read a joint media statement by the Premier and the Minister for Transport dated 28 May 2017. I will quote from a couple of elements of that statement. It states —

The Forrestfield–Airport Link is a step closer to reality with a construction site now established and work underway at the Airport Central Station.

It goes on to refer to the construction site and the tunnel boring machine, which we used to hear a lot about from the former Minister for Transport of the Liberal persuasion, and explains that the works will coincide with works and redevelopment plans for Perth Airport. What was of interest to me were some comments attributed to the Premier —

“This important rail link was the number one priority of the METRONET vision.

“With work now underway, this project will deliver a significant jobs boost for Western Australians and help improve connectivity across our suburbs.”

I support the Premier’s second comment, but the last time I checked, it was the Liberal–National government that funded and started building this project, yet it was apparently the Labor Party’s number one priority of its Metronet vision. The last time I checked, the Labor Party was not in government when this project was approved, announced and got underway. Was there any mention of the commitment the former Liberal–National government made, the investment it put in and the fact that construction commenced under the former government? Of course not because, apparently, it is all about Metronet and it was the Labor Party’s number one priority. It must have only started on 11 March 2017. It is just ridiculous, but I suppose I can expect to see many, many more media statements from this government talking about these wonderful initiatives that are underway in the East Metropolitan Region. I will support many of them, absolutely, because many of them actually started and had huge investments made under our government. I will continue to follow with interest the various statements made by this government about initiatives that were actually Liberal Party initiatives.

Of course, it does not end with the East Metropolitan Region. I think everyone would agree that our city, over a number of years, has been absolutely transformed. One element currently under construction is the new Western Australian Museum. Again, I read with interest a press release dated 22 May titled “Groundbreaking new museum to create jobs, boost economy” and again I quote some comments attributed to Premier Mark McGowan —

“The McGowan Labor Government recognises the important role played by the cultural industries sector in supporting WA’s economy by creating jobs, attracting tourists and promoting a vibrant and cohesive community.

“The development of a world-class destination that provides excellent visitor experiences and learning opportunities for children and adults will be a great resource for all Western Australians, particularly families.

“Importantly it is expected to create 3,300 jobs during the construction phase, 1,800 being in the construction sector.”

Again, I support the Premier’s comments but I remind the house that time and again when we were in government and the Labor Party was in opposition, the opposition would have a crack at the government about our priorities, particularly the new WA Museum. Indeed, the Premier, who is now saying how important and fantastic it is and how it is going to create all these jobs and be wonderful said in 2012 that it was a misguided priority. Now that he is in government and can go out and get a shovel and it is all very exciting, and he can put

out press releases as Premier, all of a sudden it is really important. Yes, it is really important, and we knew it was really important, and that is why we funded it and got it underway.

In discussing the city, I also want to pick up on some of the comments that were made by Hon Martin Pritchard in his speech on the Address-in-Reply. I do not mean to single out Hon Martin Pritchard, but it gives me an opportunity to discuss the issue that I will now raise.

Hon Peter Collier: He's a pretty good bloke!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Yes.

Hon Peter Collier: The kiss of death!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It is always a worry when that happens!

During his speech, I noted in particular some of his comments about the value of Elizabeth Quay, whether it was really warranted and all those sorts of things. I have to say, we heard a lot from the Labor Party in opposition about the value or otherwise of Elizabeth Quay and even now the Labor Party still carries on about Elizabeth Quay in not the most positive sense.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They're not going to move it, are they?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is one thing the government cannot move! Hon Simon O'Brien is digressing from the topic!

Hon Martin Pritchard talked about the cost of Elizabeth Quay and whether it was warranted. I want to indicate to the house that I think Elizabeth Quay has not only proved to be an enormous success as a landmark destination for locals and visitors, both interstate and overseas alike, but also become a destination point for events pretty much every weekend, 52 weeks a year. At the time of the original decision by the former government, it was projected that the state would receive around \$170 million in revenue from land sales, which would be set against the government's commitment to investment in the project of \$440 million.

When we left government, the projections for revenue from land sales actually exceeded all expectations. I am not aware of whether the final block has been sold, but expressions of interest had certainly gone out while I was still minister. We were seeing well over \$300 million in land sales, obviously offset against the initial investment by the government of \$440 million. We exceeded expectations in that regard.

It is not just the money received from land sales; sitting alongside that are the other economic and tourism benefits. Last year an independent report by Deloitte Access Economics was released that forecast that Elizabeth Quay would have a direct economic impact in excess of \$2.9 billion in private construction and tourism expenditure and would create hundreds of jobs each year. It was predicted in the report that Elizabeth Quay would create an average of 543 jobs across Western Australia each year, and that would reach a peak of 962 jobs in 2022–23. It was also estimated that Elizabeth Quay would contribute a cumulative \$637 million to gross state product by 2025–26. Modelling estimated that Elizabeth Quay could boost tourism expenditure in Western Australia by a total of \$348 million by 2025–26.

I just put those figures out there because often it is easy to criticise the former government and talk about Elizabeth Quay and say that it was a waste of time and all that sort of thing, albeit if one talks to anyone who goes there, they think it is absolutely fantastic. However, it involves much more than the land sales, albeit they have exceeded expectations. It is about the visitor experience and it now being truly a destination point for local, interstate and international visitors. As I say, the events held every week are fantastic. I have been to a number of them and I have been to many family events and the number who attended has exceeded expectations, and it will only get better. I look forward to seeing Elizabeth Quay continue to develop and grow over the coming years.

There is a range of other initiatives that I point to in the context of my former role, albeit a short role as Minister for Planning, and that I look forward to seeing progress. Yagan Square will be absolutely fantastic when it is open to the public. Significant progress had been made prior to the election and I think that will be a key destination for people as they arrive in the city. The events and activities that will centre around Yagan Square will be held in what will become the new meeting place for people when they come into the city. There is also the Scarborough Beach redevelopment, something the former government in partnership with the City of Stirling has always been a very strong supporter of. I note that the government has decided to abandon the plans for the roads. I will be interested to see how it addresses traffic issues in Scarborough, because it is a key issue. I am pleased the government supports the redevelopment there because it is an important redevelopment. Scarborough is a wonderful part of Western Australia and I think it needs to meet its full potential, and certainly the work being undertaken by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority is fantastic and I look forward to seeing it completed early next year. There is of course a range of other projects within the planning portfolio and the Department of Planning. I take this opportunity to thank the director general, her senior staff and all the officers

who briefed me on initiatives across a range of areas within the Department of Planning. I also thank the staff who were in my office from both the MRA and the Department of Planning. They taught me many things, such as plot ratios and all that we need to learn as a planning minister. There is a level of complexity around regional planning schemes and the like, and I want to place on record very much my thanks to each and every one of them and the officers within the Department of Planning, and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority in particular, for their support and advice during my time as minister.

I turn now briefly to a topical issue at the moment that relates to one of my former portfolios; namely, Disability Services, particularly the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The minister has made a ministerial statement in this place about the state of play.

Hon Peter Collier: What is it?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is a good question, Leader of the Opposition. The state of play is interesting. A lot has been said, particularly by those who have been opposed to the position taken by the former Liberal government about decisions. I will not go through all of that, but I will say that there has been criticism that an announcement was made just before we went into caretaker mode. Yes, a bilateral agreement was signed just before the caretaker period. But I want to place on record in this place that when I became Minister for Disability Services at the end of March last year, one of the key issues raised with me across the disability services sector was the need for certainty and for, I suppose, a decision on whether we would move with a WA NDIS—called My Way—trial, if I can put it that way, or the commonwealth scheme. I took over the portfolio at the end of March and a decision was made to extend the trials with the commonwealth. I remember quite clearly making that announcement with the federal minister, Christian Porter. We said that we would work towards a decision about what model we would go with. I think September–October was the time frame. We were very clear that that was what we were working towards because that is what people wanted. We worked incredibly hard to get agreement with the commonwealth. An announcement was made at a major event by National Disability Service WA in the lead-up to the International Day of People with Disability. Hon Stephen Dawson, the then shadow minister, was there. I made the announcement in November, that an in-principle agreement had been made with the commonwealth that we would adopt the WA NDIS in this state. It was subject to us meeting 11 clear conditions set by the commonwealth, which we released publicly. Everyone knew where we were heading and we said that we wanted the agreement to be in place so that the rollout could commence on 1 July. We gave absolute certainty way back in November that that was what we were seeking to do and we needed to just finalise the arrangement and meet those commitments. Once that had been done, the agreement was to be signed and people would have certainty that the full rollout—we would move beyond the trials—was to commence on 1 July. The rhetoric from members opposite that there was no consultation is absolutely incorrect; ask the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability and the Disability Services Commission. It is incorrect to say that. I have always held and still hold the very strong view that disability services is far too important to be partisan. It is an area in which we need to make sure we work together for people with disability, their families and carers. I have held that view since I came into this place and when I was lucky to be the shadow Minister for Disability Services when in opposition and I continue to hold it. I think it is important to reflect in the house today that it was not a decision made by the former government at the last minute. I still hold, quite sincerely, that the WA NDIS is the best model to deliver the NDIS in this state. I say that quite sincerely based on all the information presented to me from my discussions with many people in both metropolitan and regional WA. Indeed, part of the minister's statement reads —

These considerations include the specific challenges for people living in rural and remote parts of Western Australia; ensuring scheme design meets the needs of people who require exceptionally high support; the importance of localised decision-making contact points and genuine choice and control; and the need to safeguard and develop WA's disability sector workforce.

With that, I say that is why the WA NDIS, which is the NDIS just delivered locally, is better suited to our vast state—and ours is a vast state. I will always take the view that decisions should be made locally and that people with disability and their families and carers should have local support and be able to call local people who are close to them on the ground, particularly in rural areas. That was raised with me by a number of families in rural areas. Often, the local coordinators are a key part of their communities. That in itself is one of the key reasons that the WA National Disability Insurance Scheme remains, in my view, the best option. I appreciate the government has wanted to look at this again. I am disappointed that the government will not be able to come to a decision prior to 1 July, and I say that with great sincerity, because I think the delay in the rollout will continue to cause concern. This also affects the service providers, many of which have to work under three different models—the current model provided under the Disability Services Commission and also the models provided under the trial sites. I see from the minister's statement that the trial sites will effectively still continue, so there are the commonwealth National Disability Insurance Agency trial sites and the WA NDIS trial sites. I sincerely hope that the minister will make a decision soon one way or the other. People with disability, their families, their

carers, service providers and everyone who has an interest in this issue want to know one way or the other what scheme will be put in place in this state and they want the certainty that comes with that. I say that with a great deal of genuineness. I really hope that the minister will make a decision very, very soon for the sake of everyone who is impacted by the NDIS. Disability services is too important a portfolio for us to leave hanging.

When the current minister was the shadow minister and I was the minister, he knew that in my view disability services was an incredibly important portfolio. I was incredibly proud to be the minister. I said this often at disability services events and I am sure that the current minister would agree with me if he was not out on urgent parliamentary business. When I was named the minister and became Minister for Planning; Disability Services, people would sometimes refer to me only as the Minister for Planning; they would not refer to me as the Minister for Disability Services. In a public sense, it was perhaps seen as a much smaller portfolio and perhaps not one that was as important as planning. Planning is obviously a very large portfolio, but both those portfolios were equally important to me for different reasons. I can see Hon Alanna Clohesy nodding and I think she would agree with me that we are dealing with incredibly vulnerable people who are under really difficult circumstances—not only the person with disability themselves, but also their families and carers. As a collective, we all need to always provide as much support and care to them as we can. I just wanted to say a few words about the NDIS.

Within the short time I have remaining, I want to talk about my role as shadow Minister for Education and Training. Hon Peter Collier has passed the baton to me. He was an outstanding Minister for Education and left a wonderful education system in this state. I think his legacy will live on for years to come. I am delighted to be shadow Minister for Education and Training. Those who have been in this house with me for the past 12 years know that I have often talked about issues in the education and training space, particularly education as it relates to the early years of childhood, the importance of early intervention and ensuring that children are given all the resources they need to develop to their fullest potential. We need to make particularly sure that students who might be struggling or having some challenges get those supports early on, because, as we all know, when supports are provided early, it can make an enormous difference to the outcomes of that child as they progress through primary school into secondary school and beyond. Things might have changed now, but I think the maxim was that for every dollar invested in the early years, there is a return of \$9 as those children head into the senior years. It is an area I am particularly passionate about. Over the last three months, I have had the opportunity to meet with many organisations and groups across the three portfolios I look after. Although the minister is out on urgent parliamentary business, I want to thank her for enabling me to have a number of briefings from the respective departments. I want to acknowledge and thank her for that. I know that she had a good relationship with the former minister and she has certainly continued that with me. At times we have our differences in this place, but I think all of us collectively want to make sure that we have a strong education system. I will agree with the minister when good decisions are made and, as I say, her providing the briefings thus far has been very good.

I will not say much more today about Perth Modern School and the Education Central policy. There was debate about that in this place that was finalised today. I want to place on the record the thanks of the Liberal opposition that good sense has finally prevailed with the Education Central policy and Perth Modern students can go back to doing what they do best, which is being exceptional students and future leaders, no doubt across a range of areas in the state and beyond. By saying this, I also want to particularly recognise the parents, students, the Perth Modernian Society and the many others who worked tirelessly to ensure that the Education Central policy was disbanded, if I can put it that way. I did not reflect enough on that in my closing remarks to the motion today, but I want to recognise their efforts, and they were relentless. Every day letters were published in *The West Australian*, and there was the rally held outside Parliament House and the petition signed by over 8 000 people right across the length and breadth of Western Australia. Such was the depth of concern from all those people that they need to be commended for really putting forward in a very constructive way those deep concerns about that proposal, so I acknowledge their significant role in ensuring that the policy was overturned. As I said, we as a Liberal opposition will continue to focus very strongly on the government's decision to now move the school to Subiaco, most particularly the decision about Kitchener Park as opposed to the former government's position on the western suburbs schooling strategy. From the perspective of the former Liberal government—I know Hon Peter Collier raised this in his contribution—I think that the former government and, indeed, the former minister can be very proud of a number of key initiatives, such as the independent public schools initiative, which has been a fantastic success and really led the way, and is now being taken up by other states across Australia. There is the wonderful chaplaincy program, and the other day I met with YouthCARE, which is a wonderful and important program in our schools. It provides important pastoral care. It also provides mentorship and other important services for not only students who are in need, but also, increasingly, teachers and principals. That is the value of an organisation such as YouthCARE and the services it provides across many schools in our state.

Some issues have been raised with me—the minister would well know these—about the proposed merger of the various departments, particularly the protocols that need to be put in place for data storage, privacy of information and the like. I am fast running out of time so I will say more about that at another time.

I am also the shadow Minister for Women’s Interests, which is another important area. As a woman who came into this place at the age of 29, I believe it is incredibly important that we provide opportunities for young women to excel in whatever field they have an interest. We need to ensure that women know from a very young age that they can do whatever they want to do so long as they put their mind to it. Sometimes there will be challenges along the way that may prove difficult. No matter whether we are male or female, there will always be challenges that are put in our way. I grew up in a family in which my parents said to me, “Donna, provided you put forward your best and you work hard, you will succeed.” It was the same thing at my school. I went to an all-girls school in my latter years, and it was instilled in all of us that there is no reason why we as young women should not be able to succeed in any area in which we have an interest.

Just today, I met with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and heard about its Inspiring Girls project. I am very pleased that the CME has embarked on that project, which has been in place for a few years. That project is run in tandem with its Women in Resources Awards. The objectives of those projects are to increase students’ awareness of the range of diverse and existing career pathways; promote the benefits of and opportunities for females working in the resources sector; dispel the myths about the industry image and its employees; and build networks and mutually beneficial partnerships between industry and school communities.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It sounds like that would be useful for the Liberal Party—it would be very useful!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I appreciate Hon Alannah MacTiernan’s contribution. I am trying to have a useful discussion here. I appreciate that the minister started here, she has gone all the way around, and now she has come back into this house again—a house that she actually wanted to have abolished. But it is great to see her back here.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I know it really grates on you that I have had experience in somewhere other than this place. I know you find it really a bad thing.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It really does not bother me. If the minister wants to have a crack at the Liberal Party, I am a Liberal, I am a woman, and I am standing up right now.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You’re the only one! You’re on your own! We’re trying to help you!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I stand tall, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, so the minister should let it go, go back to whatever she was doing, and let me finish my speech.

I will go back to what the CME is doing. I have to say from what I heard today that it is having good success, not only in the initiatives that it has underway and the various seminars that it holds for young students, which obviously has a benefit from an education perspective, but also in providing advice and information to career advisers and others. The people who are working in this space are very important, because students can be very strongly influenced by career advisers, teachers and parents in the choices they make in their future lives. Therefore, it is important that we make sure that people are equipped with all the knowledge that they require.

I am fast running out of time. I indicate that I am looking forward to the next four years and to holding this government to account, particularly for the various policies and initiatives that it has announced for the East Metropolitan Region. I again thank the people of the East Metropolitan Region for putting their trust in me to represent them in this place as a member of the Liberal Party. I recognise those members on both sides of the house, and members from other parties, who were not returned to this house. The Legislative Council is a small house. We can have our banter, but when we go outside this place, we can often have a good chat. I particularly think of people like Hon Lynn MacLaren, who was a great person to have in this place. In the ebb and flow of this house, people will come and people will go. However, we all seek to come into this place to make a difference. We are the lucky ones who are sitting in this place for the next four years. I will certainly use my time as a member to continue to advocate very strongly, both in this house and outside this house, for the people of the East Metropolitan Region.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [5.46 pm]: Can I once again congratulate you, Madam President, on your role as the first female President of this chamber. I want to follow on from the motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot and commend the work of Her Excellency, Hon Kerry Sanderson, as the Governor of Western Australia. Hon Kerry Sanderson is an excellent Governor. When I was the Minister for Agriculture and Food, she took a keen interest right across the Mining and Pastoral Region in particular and in what it represents. We all recognise that the Mining and Pastoral region has been a powerhouse for Western Australia, and Australia for that matter, for a long time.

I now wish to make some comments about my electorate. The previous few years has been a time of great challenges for the Mining and Pastoral Region. This is nothing new in this part of the world. As the Governor pointed out in her speech, the people of Western Australia have proved more than capable of meeting these challenges. In many cases, some of which I will outline today, people have not only withstood these challenges but in many cases thrived in their wake. Resilience is a character trait essential to life in Western Australia's regional areas. Huge distances, an unforgiving climate and an increasingly volatile economy based on global demand for our resources are just some of the challenges that towns and communities in the Mining and Pastoral Region need to overcome in their efforts to grow healthy families and prosperous businesses. The Mining and Pastoral Region is a hugely diverse region with many different industries. However, one thing each community has in common is a desire for good services and opportunities for the people who live there. In order for this to happen, communities require affordable housing, access to health care and education, and, above all, job opportunities. I welcome the new government's focus on job creation and its commitment to the continuation of royalties for regions. This commitment will be closely scrutinised by the opposition to ensure regional communities continue to benefit from the transformation policy. The previous government worked hard to soften the blow of the economic downturn by helping to incubate new industries, investing in new infrastructure, supplying land for residential and commercial development, and encouraging private investment in the regions. Diversification is absolutely the key to creating resilient communities that are able to withstand constantly shifting conditions. Anyone who has spent time living in a small town or even one of our vibrant regional centres will understand the difficult decisions people have to make when their personal circumstances change. It might be losing their job, facing a health scare, or even a happy occasion in welcoming another child into the family. Often circumstances will dictate that a person must leave their town to ensure that they receive the support needed to cope with the changes. I believe that the government's role is not to insulate people from challenges, but to help ensure our communities are structured to allow people to move through them in various stages without having to retreat to the metropolitan area, as is often the case. I have to say that from travelling through the Mining and Pastoral Region, I note that the main reason people are leaving that area is education. Of course, health follows closely behind, particularly in smaller towns such as Denham, which has a population of only 600. Interestingly, Denham has been in a time warp for some time. I do not say that in a derogatory manner. When Shark Bay was World Heritage listed in the early 1980s, the community was made a list of promises that never came to fruition and it has battled ever since. The community continues to have World Heritage listing and to be restricted.

Over the previous few years I have seen regional Western Australia cope with the end of the construction phase of a number of major projects. The effect of this was felt particularly hard in places such as Port Hedland and Karratha, which have experienced huge growth in population and housing and rental prices. The difference in price between when people first purchased their homes and now is enormous. There are now stories of people writing off millions of dollars and walking away and handing the keys to the bank. Efforts by the previous government to invest in these centres with infrastructure and new housing opportunities will go a long way towards absorbing some of this decline and ensuring these centres are ready for the inevitable upturn, which will happen. Although it could be argued that there have been some deficiencies in rolling out the royalties for regions program, no-one could deny that this program has made huge improvements to lives in many regional towns.

Numerous LandCorp developments and revitalisation projects have given new life to towns such as Port Hedland and Karratha and provided countless families with the opportunity to build their own homes. During a time of unprecedented population growth, the previous government worked hard to address housing throughout the state. Developments such as Broome North, Baynton West in Karratha and Pretty Pool in Port Hedland have allowed hundreds of families to invest in their future and create homes for themselves. The affordable housing strategy delivered over 25 000 housing opportunities across the state with Keystart loans, shared equity homes, discounted private rentals and 6 200 social housing properties. It is my hope that the incoming government will continue to invest wisely in our regions by continuing the previous government's legacy of encouraging sustainable regional communities. Broome and Derby both been buffeted by economic conditions that are largely out of their control. Although undoubtedly controversial, the James Price Point project would have delivered a strong basis for the Kimberley economy and provided countless opportunities. It would be fair to say that the loss of this project took many by surprise and it has been very interesting to see how the town is bouncing back.

The recent Master Builders Association of Western Australia awards held in Broome showcased the depth of talent, ambition and skills in the construction industry. Locally owned businesses took out most of the awards. The building works that were nominated and recognised in these awards demonstrated that there is a growing confidence in the region and that families and private businesses are still keen to invest their money in the area. In fact, the Royal Flying Doctor Service engaged a Broome-based company to build its new hanger at Jandakot Airport. That is the opposite of what usually happens; companies are coming and building here, which is fantastic. It is a testament to the capabilities and competitiveness that can be found in our regional businesses.

There also has been a more focused approach on encouraging tourism in Broome and getting in touch with the town's unique heritage. The annual Shinju Matsuri Festival has been going from strength to strength and there has been a huge effort from the ground up to encourage cruise ship visits and a better visitor experience overall. It is important to have the infrastructure for when the cruise ships arrive and berth to allow the passengers off. Exmouth is another case that comes to mind with regard to tourism. I was there only recently and it is also looking at cruise ships. At present, they have to anchor offshore and then ferry in people on small craft. Most of them are whale boats, I think. Of course, when the sea is rough, people cannot get off the ships. That is a problem for that side of tourism but it is very important. These cruise liners are carrying in the order of 2 500 people and the logistics of bussing the visitors from the end of the Broome jetty into town are difficult. By the time they have been offloaded, they have to start getting back on again.

Heading north, Derby is a great town with a tight-knit community. The shire president is a fierce advocate for the people of her town and surrounding communities. I am sure that many people in this place have met Elsa Archer, OAM. Hon Simon O'Brien mentioned in his speech earlier that he had met Elsa Archer, OAM, and consumed some of her famous sausage rolls, which she always supplied at every council meeting. She was relentless at knocking on doors in the pursuit of opportunities in service for West Kimberley and, of course, Derby in particular. I take this opportunity today to recognise her contribution to West Kimberley and congratulate her on being awarded a much-deserved Order of Australia in 2016. I am pleased that Derby and Broome will both benefit from an up and coming mineral sands resource project of Sheffield Resources. This project will be one of the first major mining projects on the Dampier Peninsula and will utilise facilities in both towns. The Thunderbird mineral sands project is located about 60 kilometres west of Derby, 25 kilometres north of the sealed Great Northern Highway and approximately halfway between Derby and Broome. The Thunderbird deposit is the first major mineral sands deposit to be discovered in the Canning Basin and one of the largest mineral sands deposits to be discovered in the last 30 years. The deposit is understood to contain zircon, high titanium and ilmenite. It is expected the project will deliver globally sufficient levels of production over its 40-year mine life. To have that mine is a fantastic link and everyone is quite excited about it. Sheffield has indicated that its preference is for a drive in, drive out workforce based in Broome and Derby for the operational phase of the mine. This will mean approximately 140 long-term permanent jobs in the region.

Further south is Ashburton Salt. That project is inching closer to reality. It is undergoing environmental assessment and, if approved, a final investment decision will be made by the proponent K+S Salt. If the project goes ahead, it will create 200 jobs during the construction phase and up to 75 permanent jobs once in production. By the way, K+S Salt is a German company that has some 125 years' experience in handling salt. Its credentials are very good, I am told. It is vitally important that the government makes good on the promise of promoting jobs by facilitating long-term and sustainable projects, such as the Ashburton Salt project, wherever possible. That is not trying to get the government to push on with it, but I think red tape can get in the way at times. An example of such facilitation is the creation of the Kimberley aquaculture development zone. This zone was developed to create a streamlined assessment and regulation process for potential aquaculture businesses by significantly reducing the amount of time and resources required to seek environmental approvals. The Cone Bay barramundi farm run by Marine Produce Australia is located in the Kimberley aquaculture zone. For those members who have not been there, I highly recommend they visit. This zone allows for the production of up to 20 000 tonnes of finfish a year. The advantage in the Kimberley, of course, for aquaculture is that it has a huge tide variance, with up to 10-metre tides. That is the top of the range and is certainly a very big tide, thus, all the cages are flushed and cleaned daily by the tides. A couple of years ago, I visited the Huon salmon farms in Tasmania, which are an enormous success and will give members an idea of what we can do in the Kimberley with aquaculture. Huon Aquaculture's production is worth something like \$287 million a year and is still run by the family that started the business, even though it has been listed on the stock exchange. Its original aim was to produce salmon for the export market, but the domestic market consumes its total production and it does not have to export.

Landline produced a program on Cone Bay and, interestingly enough, as I was flying out of there I realised that we should not be producing 20 000 tonnes of finfish a year; we should be producing 200 000 tonnes a year. One of the major Japanese trading companies saw the program and came to me and said that it would be interested in 200 000 tonnes. When I looked out of the aeroplane over the area that was producing those 20 000 tonnes, it was a pinhead in the water. It may surprise many members to know that Australia imports 70 per cent of the seafood we consume. Cone Bay barramundi farms produce very high quality fish aimed at the top end of the market. Cone Bay is 106 kilometres north of Derby. The barramundi is harvested directly from sea cages into the harvest port, where the fish are packed and transported fresh to markets around Australia. They are packed in ice and sent to Sydney and Darwin, which are the two main directions, and of course to Perth.

I will go back on land. I hope there will be continued focus on the Tanami Road. It is not the first time I have mentioned this road and it will certainly not be the last time. It is nothing short of a nation-building project, stretching between Alice Springs and Halls Creek. The Tanami Road is impassable during the wet season, but when it is passable it can shorten the journey from northern Western Australia to the south eastern states of

Victoria and South Australia by 1 000 kilometres. Also, by taking the Tanami Road, the travelling distance to Kununurra is shortened by 270 kilometres. Sealing the Tanami Road will increase the viability of mining projects, make it easier to transport fresh food from the Ord River region to southern states, and open the area to more tourism and resource exploration. From talking to exploration companies and associations, it is clear that where there are good roads, there will be more exploration and more minerals found, creating more wealth for Western Australia. Sealing the Tanami Road will also improve our nation's northern defence capabilities. Sealing the Tanami Road and ensuring it is an all-weather road will open up numerous opportunities for some of the most isolated and impoverished communities in the country. I do not know whether members have been out to Balgo, Billiluna and places like that, which are nearly 400 kilometres from Halls Creek, but they would be great beneficiaries of this road. The Shire of Halls Creek should be commended for its strong advocacy for upgrading the Tanami Road. I will continue to push for greater recognition of the project and its potential to transform northern Australia.

The Gascoyne region has faced a number of natural disasters in the last decade—bushfires, flooding and cyclones have been very testing. However, the region continues to push forward to produce an outstanding array of fresh fruit and vegetables. A less spectacular, yet devastating threat to the Carnarvon region is the Mediterranean fruit fly. This pest can have a devastating effect on a range of crops and orchards in horticulture, but Carnarvon's isolation has allowed it to get assistance from the Department of Agriculture and Food. I hope the minister will continue with this. Royalties for regions funding has implemented a number of measures and pilot programs designed to eliminate this pest.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Good program!

Hon KEN BASTON: I am pleased to hear the minister say that. From memory, something like \$2.5 million went into that program and, as a result, Carnarvon can export its produce. One of the problems in Carnarvon is that it has been a supplier of fruit and vegetables only to the domestic market. To enter the export market, the fruit fly level has to come down to an acceptable level. With three roads into that town—from the north, south and east—it would be easy to set up roadblocks and get totally serious about it. It is a good program and I look forward to the minister continuing to support it. This is an example of a small, carefully planned investment by government gaining a significant return. Eliminating those pests will encourage more investment and provide greater certainty for producers, who need to build on their economy of scale. It will also create a bigger economy for the town, which will attract investors into the town because of its closeness to Perth.

The Carnarvon region has faced more than its share of natural disasters in recent times, most recently Cyclone Olwyn in 2015. The cyclone decimated many crops, with banana growers hit particularly hard. I have to say that one of the advantages for Carnarvon growers is their trust fund, which is one of the very few that I know of that covers fruit affected by a disaster. Of course, it does not pick up their total loss—only the current loss and not the next couple of years. It takes about two years before they get back into production, but they are fortunate in that sense.

I have long advocated that the Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements funding should allow local governments to use their own resources to repair damage. I am pleased that the incoming government has made a temporary exemption for the local governments of Lake Grace and Ravensthorpe, which were affected by flooding in January and February this year. I know that federal funding is involved in that as well, and I could never understand why local government virtually had to swap labour from one business to the next business so it could say it had been contracted, even though it was doing their work and they were doing its work. The shires were not allowed to do it and had to bring in contractors. It is important that this provision is included in any new policies developed around disaster recovery. It is a measure that will help local government develop skills and resources and better cope with natural disasters and hasten recovery from these events. Very few people would disagree that local knowledge is vitally important in overcoming any natural disaster, especially bushfires. People who have lived their lives in a particular area have a deep understanding of local conditions; they know all the backroads and trails and in many cases have faced catastrophic events previously. I actually experienced one of these events back in 2015 when a bushfire was burning in the west Gascoyne. It had started in the Kennedy Ranges and came right down and threatened the plantation areas. It certainly burnt the Gascoyne. After a bit of help I was able to get hold of a helicopter to look at where these fires were. I met the incident manager and attended some of his briefings. He came from Manjimup to fight a fire in the Gascoyne. That fire had been burning for two weeks. I suggested he come with me in the chopper. When he got up in that chopper with me, he looked out the window and asked, "What are they?" He was referring to gigantic claypans. He had never seen a claypan before. He did not even recognise the vegetation.

The vehicles used to chase the fire included bulldozers, graders and small water trucks. They all had GPS and they were all measured, but every time a tongue of fire went out, it would be chased like a dog would chase a rabbit! Once the incident manager got up in the helicopter, he said, "This is easy. There is a line down here, back-burn it and it will all be over." That is exactly what happened. Because so many people had come to help

from the south west, which was very much appreciated, it was foreign country for them to fight that fire. Local people understand local conditions. One of the most important things is to make sure that we are able to use that local knowledge.

This is why I support the recommendations of both the Waroona special inquiry and the Esperance fire review. It is important to inquire into implementing an independent rural fire service that can work alongside the State Emergency Service. The new government is now in the driver's seat and it must make difficult spending decisions, but it cannot disregard the recommendations of at least two reports and numerous submissions by local governments by refusing to implement a rural fire service.

Local knowledge and know-how is never more important than during a time of crisis and emergency. Tactics that work in one location could be ineffective in another. For this reason I would like to lend my support to local governments that are requesting ongoing funding for bushfire risk planning coordinators. There has been no guarantee from this government that these roles will receive ongoing funding, despite the valuable work they do in mitigating risk to lives and property.

I quote from the concluding remarks of the "Report of the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire". Page 263 in volume 1 states —

At the centre of all this is the community. If individual citizens, families, neighbourhoods and interest groups strive for understanding, self-reliance and empowerment, then they will develop social capacity and cohesion to cope better by themselves.

That probably sums it up very well. Although these remarks in their context relate to the ability of a community to respond to an emergency situation, I believe they can also be seen as guiding principles for building more resilient regional communities.

Western Australia is a remarkable state. Many governments have come and gone. Its vast size and isolation, though challenging, has not stopped Western Australians from developing great communities and producing exceptional commodities that are in high demand around the world. It is essential that government policy supports the innovators and private enterprises that are willing to take risks and overcome the many natural barriers to success that exist in a state of this size. Governments should ensure that they do not implement unnecessary artificial barriers such as excessive red tape, bureaucracy and regulation. It is important to see successful Western Australians as the drivers of employment and prosperity rather than a resource to be tapped for revenue whenever the government sees fit. The new government may have inherited some debt—no-one will deny that—but it has also inherited a state that is ready for the future.

I will now make a few comments about tourism. Singapore Airlines announced the other day that at the end of this year its subsidiary SilkAir will fly to Karratha. Broome is trying to link up with that as well. It is important for the development of the north to have better air carriers to bring people from Singapore to Broome and Karratha and maybe on to Sydney and Perth. That linkage is really important for the development of tourism in this state.

I also mention the berthing facilities for cruise boats in Exmouth and Broome. Broome is looking at a safe boat harbour with floating pontoons so that ships can easily access the wharf. There has been demand in Broome for a small boat harbour. When the former government was first elected, it promised to build that. It was going to cost \$5 million. At the time I thought \$5 million was far too much. It quickly rose to \$15 million; it very quickly rose to \$50 million; and then it very quickly rose to up to \$70 million before we decided it was absolutely crazy. It was only going to be a recreational boat ramp. It would have been nothing like the one that was built at Coral Bay, Hon Alannah MacTiernan. I visited that the other day. It is still looking very solid. Anyone from Broome would be jealous of that one. I cannot remember the cost of that, but I think it was in the order of \$9.8 million.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I cannot recall. It was somewhere around there.

Hon KEN BASTON: It was reasonably cheap in comparison. Costs are very high in Broome because rocks have to be carted to it. There are no rocks around town. People virtually have to travel to Derby before any rocks can be picked up. That is the first thing. The second thing is that when the piles are driven down, there is no base. The pile just keeps going down. There are some logistical problems. Rather than a loch for a small boat harbour, such as in Darwin, I think there is an opportunity for some dredging into the deep, because Broome is fortunate enough to have a natural channel that is about 100 metres deep; therefore, a pretty hefty ship can be sailed in. It is just a matter of getting it to the wharf. There are some fairly advanced drawings of that. I am hopeful that that will be successful.

I would like to raise one of my other favourite topics, coming from the rangelands of Western Australia. I think at one stage I might even have served on a committee with the Minister for Regional Development. I think it was the finance committee of the Gascoyne–Murchison rangelands. Gascoyne muster was its name.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Yes.

Hon KEN BASTON: I remember that we had a very big night.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Those pastoralists like to party!

Hon KEN BASTON: I was actually referring to the minister!

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN BASTON: Anyway, it was a very fruitful two-day workshop. I guess we have moved on a bit since then but not as much as we would have liked to to ensure that those rangelands assets can be productive.

At present there is a bit of a dog fence being put around the lower Murchison. There is about 370 kilometres to go. About \$3.5 million is required to finish that. That dog fence is imperative if we want to do anything with that small stock area. It is only small stock country; it is not cattle country. I have been out to Rawlinna and seen the results they have achieved with properties being dog-fenced since the late 1960s. That is a property that runs 60 000 sheep, cuts 1 760 bales of wool and turns off a whole heap of —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Is that a cell fence?

Hon KEN BASTON: No, that is a total boundary fence.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Your mate Barnaby says that cell fencing's the way to go.

Hon KEN BASTON: Well, it depends how big one wants to make the cells, I guess.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.