

REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA — INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Motion

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [11.30 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this Council calls on the newly elected federal government to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia.

Last Saturday was a wonderful day. It started for me at five o'clock in the morning when I heard a nice light hail on the tin roof at the farm. That got the blood rushing a bit, because we did not take out crop insurance this year, so I was certainly a bit concerned. So the day started for me at about five o'clock, and one thing that we will not complain about is the rain the Agricultural Region received that day. As I said, it was a beautiful day. It started for me in the rain banging the drum for the Nationals at the polling booth at Bakers Hill Primary School. The day just kept getting a little better when we heard on the radio and through the internet on our phones that the Liberal coalition government would get up over the fairly well reported, dysfunctional federal Labor government that had been in place for three to six years. My WA Nationals colleagues maybe did not fare as well as we would have liked, but my spirits were buoyed by the fact that a federal coalition government would now be in place to allow significant spending in regional Western Australia on the projects that the state government, through the royalties for regions program, has spent significantly on over the last four to five years. We call on the Deputy Leader of the federal Liberal Party, Julie Bishop, and her newly elected members for Durack and O'Connor, Melissa Price and Rick Wilson, to go into bat for regional WA. There were some big promises from all three of them over the course of the recent federal election campaign. I truly look forward to them going across to Canberra, taking the fight to their eastern states colleagues and bringing back a fair and equitable share of spending for regional WA in road, rail and port infrastructure.

In my electorate, the Agricultural Region, the state government has allocated considerable funds to upgrade road and port infrastructure over the forward estimates. Just a small snapshot of that spending includes \$34 million to improve the 11-kilometre section of the Bindi Bindi curves. I am sure that Hon Brian Ellis is happy with that one! There is \$12.3 million in ongoing support for the Geraldton port, which includes a further \$3.8 million towards planning and blueprint development for Oakajee stage 1. There is \$80 million towards the upgrade and improvement of major sections of Great Northern Highway, which includes the Walebing waves section. For members who do not know it, that is the part between New Norcia and Walebing. It is quite a treacherous little piece of road; when very large oversize loads go up and down there, it becomes a bit of a goat track. It also includes the Pithara–Miling section, which is only marginally more improved than the Walebing waves section. There is \$17 million for the upgrade to Greenough River Bridge just south of Geraldton and widening of that section of the highway as well, which is another treacherous little piece of road that has a large amount of oversize traffic. There is also \$36 million for new passing lanes along Great Eastern Highway. Obviously, Great Eastern Highway and the wheatbelt section of my electorate have had a rather large increase in road trauma over the last few years. There is a bit of money in the budget to kick off the Perth–Darwin highway as well. Most of that is in the metropolitan area but it does extend into the Agricultural Region just south of Muchea.

There has also been funding in the state budget for other worthy regional projects that are not in my electorate that I think complement the infrastructure spending in the Agricultural Region. I will mention a couple of these. There is \$168 million for the Port Hedland section of Great Northern Highway and \$190 million for the upgrade to North West Coastal Highway from Minilya to Barradale.

I know that quite a few of the projects I mentioned have also attracted federal funding and that is fantastic. We all know that most of these big-dollar projects need to attract federal money to allow them to be initiated let alone completed. I will go back to some of my earlier remarks and reiterate my hope that Hon Julie Bishop and her newly elected colleagues will not forget that they too have to go to Canberra and stand up for Western Australia, rather than go along with the usual party politics of voting for what is best for the eastern states and leave WA to continue to look after itself. After all, who can forget the original Gonski proposal under which Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria were measured up for multibillion-dollar funding options for education? What did WA get? We were offered \$300-odd million. What did Queensland get? Queensland was offered \$3.8 billion. If we look at what Regional Development Australia spent in WA, we see that the last federal government actually spent decreasing amounts in WA on a proportional basis than had been spent previously. It was only really in the last federal budget that WA was able to garner any support for projects that we had been arguing for federal funding for so we were able to bring them to fruition. I will not get into why all of a sudden the previous federal government saw the benefit of finally investing in WA, particularly regional WA; let us just say that the blinkers had well and truly been on for a fairly long time. When the federal government did get around to funding a decent chunk of money for substantial regional projects, where was it spent? In Perth on the road between the city and the airport. The regional infrastructure fund was a \$400 million project that spent money in what the federal government considered to be regional WA; therefore, Perth is now regional WA, the

same as western Sydney is regional New South Wales. There were 42 projects Australia-wide in round 4 of the Regional Development Australia Fund. Five projects were in WA; \$28 million was spent in WA and \$10 million of that went to the development of the City of Cockburn. I am sure that some of my colleagues on this side of the house would be happy with that. That money went to the City of Cockburn and Dockers development. That was the biggest single spend of any project out of that fund.

Hon Phil Edman: Go the Dockers!

Hon PAUL BROWN: I agree! If Essendon cannot be there, I will back the Dockers any day.

Regional Western Australia received less than 10 per cent. A range of infrastructure projects will continue to require ongoing federal funding support, such as Oakajee port. That project will continue only if it can attract reasonable significant federal money. Some 450 potential resource projects have been identified in the midwest. Even if only 10 per cent of these projects come to fruition, it will enable the midwest to become the second money tree of Australia, rivalling the north west projects. It will also herald another significant construction and mineral boom in Western Australia. Geraldton port will probably be at capacity in four to five years and we will be looking for federal funding to bring Oakajee to fruition. Throughout the federal campaign, there was a lot of talk by the federal government and the state government about Ord River stage 3. To continue expansion of the horticultural and agricultural precinct in the Kimberley, again, we will need federal dollars. For Ord stage 2, we were able to use \$320 million of royalties for regions funding and \$195 million from the commonwealth.

Hon Ken Travers: I thought you said they didn't spend any money!

Hon PAUL BROWN: It spent a bit.

Hon Ken Travers: Did they? Good.

Hon PAUL BROWN: The federal government spent a little money, but a considerable amount of it was spent in other areas when it should have probably been mostly spent in WA. We are the money tree of Australia at the moment, so I hope that our newly elected colleagues in the federal government will go across to Canberra and well and truly bang the drum for WA.

During the recent federal election campaign, we attracted a wide variety of federal colleagues to WA to see firsthand the projects that I have already mentioned. This was ideal because it enabled them to get a greater understanding of what is required in WA. Our federal National colleagues will certainly go back to Canberra with a far greater understanding of the projects in WA that are of national and international significance that need to be promoted through funding. But, again, we need our Western Australian representatives going to Canberra banging the drum. Let us face it, without Western Australia's export dollars, the South Australias and Tasmanias of this world would not exist.

I wonder whether Julie, Melissa and Rick will have the political will to go to Canberra and do little more than just advocate on behalf of Western Australia. I certainly hope that is not true. I hope that they take a leaf out of Tony Crook's book and stand up for their electorate and for the state.

Several members interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: I am sure it will be hard for them. It has certainly been hard for experienced WA federal members to stand up for WA against their party machine.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order! Hon Paul Brown has the call.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Julie Bishop herself indicated during the Wheat Export Authority discussion that she did not really care about what the majority of Western Australian grain producers thought was best for them. She was thinking about what was best for her and her leader on the east coast in terms of votes. I hope now that she has the vote, she will stand up for WA and make sure that a fair share of funding is returned to us to allow these types of projects to continue.

I am sure members are all aware that royalties for regions has been one of the big drivers for investment in regional WA, and this has had governments from the other side of Australia looking over here with gleeful envy and, I suppose, with a sense of relief. The envy is obvious, of course, but the relief comes from the knowledge that RFR, along with the state government, has been doing the heavy lifting over here, which means that there has been more money to spend on east coast projects that they thought would have garnered votes for them but earned no actual income dollars for Australia.

Now it is time for the newly elected federal coalition government, in particular the deputy leader of the federal Liberals, along with her newly minted WA representatives, to stand up for WA and make sure that the fair share

fund is implemented in full and more. It would be nice to see—unlikely, but nice to see—that, at least once, more than a fair share comes over the border to WA.

In the little time remaining, I ask this house to call on the newly elected federal government to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [11.42 am]: Of course I support this motion, but I would like to say a few things about what has been happening and what were some of the promises. I cannot speak without acknowledging that the Regional Development Australia Fund has been putting funds into Western Australia, and Hon Paul Brown spoke of some of those rounds. Round 1 of the regional development fund backed funding for the Kimberley Land Council office project in Broome and the Karratha leisure complex. I do not know what the total was but I know the state put in some \$3 million towards the Kimberley Land Council office. They are good complexes and good achievements. In round 2, the Regional Development Australia Fund invested in Geraldton's West End and the north west regional office training and ambulance centre. These are not necessarily infrastructure projects or hardcore bricks and mortar, but funds were certainly contributed. One of the big items in round 2 was the Carnarvon flood mitigation works, of which some \$16 million came from the federal government, and \$45 million was state funding. That project is in progress now.

A whole list of items received round 3 funding, from the Corrigin recreation centre to the Esperance waterfront, which also received state funding, and the Kimberley Group Training skills centre. I will not name all of them. In round 4, as Hon Paul Brown mentioned, the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broome received funding. The feds put money into the development of the Ningaloo Cultural Centre, as, of course, has the state. I might add that that cultural centre has been established for a while. It is finally being amalgamated with the visitor's centre and it will be an asset to that town.

The big projects in the state that have received state and federal funding are in the Ord where some \$200 million from the feds was for what I call the soft infrastructure and some \$300-odd million from the state. That project is advancing very well. The Gascoyne irrigation pipeline received joint funding, as did the PortLink feasibility study. The feds and the state have worked together and can work together on many occasions, and I sincerely hope they will continue to work together.

One of the projects on my list is regional aged-care facilities. That has always been a federal responsibility and is one thing this motion could apply to; that is, aged-care infrastructure needs more funding throughout regional Western Australia. There are many items on which money can be expended.

I will give a quick summary of the Liberal–National Party commonwealth election commitments. There are heaps of them, but I would like to concentrate on the infrastructure as this is what the motion refers to. The promises were for \$622 million for the Perth Airport gateway, \$200 million for the Swan Valley bypass on the Perth–Darwin highway and \$33 million for the Outback highway. For those who do not know where the Outback highway is, it is a road of about 2 800 kilometres that heads out of Laverton through to Winton, Queensland.

Hon Ken Travers: The amount of \$33 million will seal it from end to end will it?

Hon KEN BASTON: Patrick Hill out there has been a great advocate for this road. He has probably attended every local government and Western Australian Local Government Association conference and left something about this road on everyone's seat. He does not let any politician go through his town without drumming their ears. I take my hat off to him for getting a promise on the agenda. Of course, I was a little disappointed not to see a commitment to funding for Tanami Road because that is very dear to my heart and has huge value for not only defence but also commercial aspects, given the Ord development. It has cut out some 277 kilometres from Kununurra through to Melbourne and South Australia and more than 1 000 kays generally from the Kimberley. That is one item I am disappointed not to see on this list. I imagine and hope it will be in the next budget.

The other project is \$600 million to fund upgrades to the Australian bridge network. That will very much be of value and it is intended that the state will contribute to that funding. Members will be well aware that a bridge is badly needed in Kununurra. At present, people are using the diversion dam, which was never designed to take the road trains that are on the roads today. Having been there and seen it recently, I believe, that is about a \$150 million project.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you know what has happened to that? The planning money was there from the feds; it was done, but it has just disappeared.

Hon KEN BASTON: Interestingly, I remember the costings announced in this place being around \$200 million. It has now come back to \$150 million, which is a rarity because normally —

Hon Ken Travers: The \$150 million is stage 1. It depends on whether stage 1 or 2 is built.

Hon KEN BASTON: Yes. It is badly needed if we are looking to the future of the north.

One of the other great promises I noticed was a white paper on the development of northern Australia. That will be very interesting. That white paper will consider the establishment of a northern Australia strategic partnership comprising the Prime Minister, the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. It will look at utilising northern Australia for food et cetera. It will also look at building on existing key urban zones such as Darwin, Cairns, Townsville and Karratha with the aim of substantially increasing the population. One could argue whether they are the right places to develop. I would certainly debate the merits of the towns that have been picked. The white paper will also consider establishing a cooperative research centre to help develop northern Australia. There are many opportunities in that region. It would also investigate the establishment of a water project development fund to support the advancement of water infrastructure across northern Australia, including dams and groundwater projects. That can happen in places such as Carnarvon and the Gascoyne, and include the La Grange aquifer. It is already happening with Hamersley Iron with mine dewatering.

The commonwealth has also committed to funding the exploration and development of resources and energy. We also have that incentive in this state. I assume that the extra \$100 million that the federal government is talking about will add to that, along with a very important project to encourage greenfield development and looking for minerals in the future.

The federal government will also create a minister for trade and investment. That is something dear to my heart. As the Minister for Agriculture and Food, I am certainly looking for opportunities for new markets for our produce and the increasing produce in the near future.

The other great issues include the abolition of the carbon tax, the abolition of the minerals resource rent tax and the cutting of red tape. I am sure that many pieces of infrastructure such as roads, airports and ports for container ships should be on everyone's agenda. These things will not just happen but they should continue to be on the agenda because if we are going to develop and export, we need those facilities, particularly for containers in the north. Darwin already has a container facility, which I looked at recently. We probably need more of those facilities in the north of Western Australia if we are going to continue to have those opportunities. I am sure that the newly elected members from Western Australia will represent Western Australia in the federal Parliament well, and I will certainly be watching very closely that they do.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [11.52 am]: I congratulate Hon Paul Brown for bringing this motion before the house today. It is very important that the whole house agrees that the federal government needs to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia. I agree with his comments about the challenges now faced by people such as Julie Bishop, and I would suggest Senator Mathias Cormann, in delivering a better deal for WA after listening to their rhetoric over the past three to four years. Hon Paul Brown did not explain how they behaved before the election when they were engaged in a process that saw a cut in funding to Western Australian regional roads and they tried to hide it from the people of Western Australia. I welcome the comments made by Hon Ken Baston. Finally, the Liberal government of Western Australia is starting to acknowledge the contribution that the previous federal government made to regional infrastructure in Western Australia. It is my intention to go through some of those projects in great detail.

One of the things I have learnt in my time in politics is that when we are in opposition, it is really important to ensure that the things we want to see money invested in are part of the election commitments of an incoming government. If they are not part of their election commitments, it is significantly harder to get them back on the agenda. The austerity targets proposed by the incoming Liberal–National coalition government—let us remember that; it is a Liberal–National coalition government—will make it harder. The Liberal–National coalition partners—Hon Paul Brown is a member of one of the parties in that coalition, both at state and commonwealth level—were asleep at the wheel in trying to get a better deal for WA as part of their federal colleagues' election commitments. They allowed WA to go backwards on what was being proposed and in the federal government's budget prior to the election.

The Liberal and National parties have collectively, not individually, failed the people of Western Australia. In fact, it was made worse because as their federal colleagues were throwing the crumbs to WA in terms of infrastructure funding, they were cheering them on. The Premier and the Minister for Transport welcomed the funding for the Swan Valley bypass but they did not secure a better deal and ensure that the \$307 million for the Great Northern Highway upgrade would remain in the Liberal Party's promises. They did not ensure that the funding of \$174 million for the North West Coastal Highway was a part of the package. They did not secure the money for rail in Perth in that package. They cheered when funding was announced for the Swan Valley bypass, which effectively matched a Labor government commitment, whilst watching \$1 billion go out of infrastructure that was committed to regional Western Australia. Chub Witham was cheering them on as well with the commitment of \$33 million for the outback highway but then was asleep at the wheel when trying to secure

money for the upgrade of the Great Northern Highway and the North West Coastal Highway, two of the most important road projects in Western Australia today. I continually said to the previous Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese, that he needs to make sure he funds those road projects. These highways are not in Labor seats and they are not in marginal seats but they are very important to the economy of Australia, not just Western Australia. Anthony Albanese heard those calls from Western Australia and put the money in the budget. The Nationals' mob federally stripped it out. It has been taken out—cut. The Nationals were so embarrassed about it that they tried to hide it. While they were cheering, money from WA was going out the door.

I could mention Tony Abbott, Joe Hockey and Warren Truss. Let us never forget that the member of the coalition who is responsible for infrastructure and transport in the federal Parliament is the leader of the National Party. He is Hon Paul Brown's federal leader. I assume he is the bloke who put together the infrastructure policy for the Liberal and National Parties going into the last federal election. What does that national policy do? It puts money into Brisbane, it puts money into roads in Sydney and Melbourne and it takes money out of roads in regional WA. That is what the federal leader of the National Party was a party to—\$19 billion. It is \$19.2 billion if we include the Swan Valley bypass and the Gateway WA project. Interestingly, before the federal election campaign commenced, the current transport minister proudly acknowledged that the Gateway WA project was underway and fully funded, with the majority of the money coming from the commonwealth government. If we take that out of the \$18.5 billion worth of commitments for road infrastructure around Australia, we are left with only one new project—\$615 million for the Swan Valley bypass. Only three per cent of national funding has been committed to roads, and we have 10 per cent of the population. Even if I give National Party members the benefit of the doubt and include the Gateway WA project, I can only get it up to 6.8 per cent. The Liberal and National Parties promised \$19 billion worth of road projects across Australia as a collective coalition group, yet at best it is spending only 6.8 per cent and I would argue it is closer to three per cent in WA. That is the federal National Party's record. Hon Paul Brown is absolutely right; the federal government needs to spend more money in WA. It is as if the member has been asleep for the last five years and tried to ignore the money spent by the immediate past federal Labor government on regional infrastructure in Western Australia.

Hon Ken Baston outlined some of the many good community projects, but let us consider the transport projects. One of the things I give Tony Crook credit for is that when he sat outside of the coalition, he actually secured some money for planning in regional Western Australia—planning for the Albany ring-road, money down in Esperance and planning for the Kalgoorlie hub. When he went into the coalition, it dried up and we saw, as we have seen since the federal election, money for important roads being stripped out of Western Australia.

But let us go around the state of Western Australia. Kununurra: absolutely correct, Hon Ken Baston; the bypass up there is an important project. About \$7 million of joint money was contributed by the commonwealth and state governments to do the planning. Where is that road project today? I doubt it was even part of the state government's submission to Infrastructure Australia. The state government ignored it. The Liberal-National government ignored the Kununurra bypass, but the federal Labor government had put the money in for the planning.

Let us go to Port Hedland. More than \$260 million has been spent on roads into and around Port Hedland, and the majority of that money came from the previous federal Labor government. As to the Dampier Highway and Karratha, there has been more than \$100 million worth of expenditure on roads up there funded by the previous Labor government. The tier 1 and 2 rail upgrades: \$167 million has been spent on rail upgrades in regional Western Australia, \$135 million of which came from the federal government and \$16 million from the growers themselves—very little from the Liberal-National state government. When I went to a Dowerin field day the other day, I noticed all the new lights at the railway crossings that had been funded by the previous federal Labor government. When members go to Bunbury, look at the bypass road and the access road to the port—funded by the previous federal Labor government. I think Hon Paul Brown represents Esperance?

Hon Paul Brown: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: He does not?

Hon Paul Brown: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Did Hon Dave Grills get Esperance?

All right, let us talk about Esperance. The Esperance access corridor was 50 per cent funded by the previous federal Labor government, and that was a \$120 million project. The Bindi Bindi curves project cost \$40 million, the majority of which was funded by the previous federal Labor government. We were going to go on and continue to do the work on the Great Northern Highway between Muchea and Wubin—gone, gone, cut, cut, cut by colleagues of members opposite. I could go on: money for Oakajee, money for Ord stage 2—it goes on and on.

One of the problems with this government is that in the past Main Roads Western Australia used to spend at least 50 per cent of its money on roads in regional Western Australia; under the Liberal-National coalition government in WA, that is no longer the case; it is less.

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [12.02 pm]: I do not know where Hon Ken Travers gets some of his ideas from. Yes, I do represent Esperance; it is part of the Mining and Pastoral Region, not the Agricultural Region, which Hon Paul Brown represents.

I congratulate Hon Paul Brown for bringing on this motion today. Having heard some of the rhetoric that has gone on today with regard to funding and what have you, I question some things that have been said, especially with regard to the regional infrastructure fund and Western Australia and the \$480 million Gateway WA project. I fail to see how a government—federal, state or otherwise—could argue that fixing roads around an airport in Perth will benefit regional WA by allowing regional people to access the airport better. I really wonder about that one.

Today I will touch on some of the things Hon Ken Baston spoke about that are happening in the north west, which forms part of my Mining and Pastoral Region. I will talk a bit about the intermodal freight terminal in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and PortLink, and I acknowledge the efforts of Tony Crook, who worked tirelessly to highlight the significance of the PortLink project and worked hard to ensure that it stayed on the agenda of the next government.

The intermodal hub will form an integral part of PortLink. We need to speak to and work with the federal government to ensure that that project in regional WA is funded, because it is anticipated that the facility will be funded by the federal and state governments and private industry, and it would operate as an independent body, similar to a port authority, on a not-for-profit basis. The project involves the development of rail sidings and rail unloading facilities, together with road transport facilities. The location of the hub needs to be able to cater for the development of nearby transport depots and warehousing. A lot of the stuff that goes through the railway crossing in Kalgoorlie–Boulder ultimately comes back to Kalgoorlie on the road system.

The Department of Transport is currently undertaking a community and stakeholder consultation process for the proposed intermodal terminal rail and hub realignment programs. The realignment program will ensure that the railway line is realigned through Kalgoorlie–Boulder and creates safer access and reduces the risk of vehicle-versus-train interaction on the roads, and will obviously provide a benefit that way. Other than that, many other benefits will be derived from the progression of this project. PortLink has the potential to introduce and increase opportunities for new mines in the Yilgarn and midwest region, by opening up new access routes to export ports. Also, it will hopefully attract more business to the Kalgoorlie–Boulder area through the new intermodal freight terminal, and link intrastate and interstate roads and railways to provide Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields–Esperance districts with an opportunity to diversify and look at other areas of operation; it may also mitigate the impact of the “boom or bust” cyclical mining industry. It will also introduce alternative freight and logistic options, because Perth is currently the central distribution point for interstate freight.

I was recently in the north west speaking to business owners, and I spoke to a fellow in Derby who has a quite a diverse business. He was telling me about the rigmarole he has to go through just to get freight to his business and what it cost. We would really like to see businesses in regional WA helped by having better transport options that enable better ways of doing business. I would hope that it is not beyond the realms of possibility to call on the federal government to commit to do that.

Hon Ken Baston spoke about Tanami Road, Kununurra and the Ord River, and the potential for agriculture and other businesses there. I agree with what he said, and irrespective of what we might have heard before, I hope the state government and federal coalition government will work towards that, because there is potential and it would benefit not only the Kimberley, but also everybody in that region. As Hon Steve Dawson would attest, opening up that area and spending some money on Tanami Road would mean better opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses. It is one of those projects that needs to be kept on the front burner, and people in the eastern states need to be reminded of it. I hope that Rick Wilson and Melissa Price stand up for regional WA, as they have said they will, and I hope they talk to their federal government colleagues and ensure that regional WA gets the funding it needs. I am sure all members do not need to be reminded of the day when Tony Crook and Bob Katter sat on one side of the house seeking a better deal for GST for regional WA—they sat alone. Congratulations to all new members of federal Parliament, and I put to them that they should honour what they said to the people of regional WA, and get up and support and shout for regional WA, no matter what side they are from. I believe regional WA really should do a lot better than it does out of federal funding.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [12.09 pm]: I congratulate Hon Paul Brown for bringing this motion before the house. What a noble idea for this house to call on the newly elected federal government to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia. I could not help but note Hon Ken Travers’ comments. He did not have nearly enough time to run through all the projects in regional Western Australia funded by the previous

federal Labor government. I could not help but think that there was some sort of attack by members opposite on the federal Labor government for not spending enough money in regional Western Australia when clearly, as highlighted in the comments on this motion, that has not been the case. I think Western Australia has done quite well in the funding arrangements from the previous federal government, as was pointed out by Hon Ken Travers until he ran out of time.

I note that Joe Hockey made some remarks during the election campaign about what he thought of the National Party at the federal level, and those remarks have been well reported. Once again, we heard from members of the National Party words such as “we hope”, “we seek” and “we ask”. That is about all the National Party is up for at the moment, especially at the federal level, but more so at the state level. What the people of Western Australia and the voters in regional areas want to hear is “we do”. As has been pointed out, the Labor Party’s record at a federal level is very good. I am concerned that we will now get less money, not more. When Hon Ken Travers put his points about three per cent of the road money coming to Western Australia, that was a lead for how things will be for us under the government that members opposite so craved. After five years of the current state government, the gloss has gone and people are starting to realise that the government they removed in 2008 probably was not so bad after all. The people of Western Australia are concerned about the increase in the level of debt. Although it has not been very long since the election, if another election were held soon, members would find that out for themselves. Although I am most disappointed with the result of the election on Saturday, because I think it will be a blow for regional Western Australia, I think it will end the blame game that we hear from the Barnett-Grylls government that everything that goes wrong in Western Australia is the fault of the federal government. That will not happen anymore. Members opposite will have to realise that the things that will happen in regional Western Australia through this government’s cuts to schools, infrastructure and other programs will be their fault, and people will start to understand that fairly soon. When cuts are made, as they inevitably will be, it will be Tony Abbott’s fault. There will not be any three-word slogans that Tony Abbott can use, because it will be his fault; it will not be the federal Labor government’s fault. That is an important point to make. Of course, we all call on the newly elected federal government to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia. That is what we are calling for, but let us see what the reality brings.

As Hon Ken Travers ran out of time, I asked him whether there were any other things that he wanted to mention. One of the things he passed on to me that I think is a fascinating read is a document titled “The Coalition’s Policy to Deliver the Infrastructure for the 21st Century” set out in September 2013. It is readily available for those who are interested. I will list a few of the projects. Members can see whether these projects ring any bells for them and back up what we are saying. We are talking about infrastructure in regional Western Australia. The document states —

We have committed:

- \$6.7 billion to fix Queensland’s Bruce Highway;

That is not in regional Western Australia —

- \$5.6 billion to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway from Newcastle to the Queensland border;

That is not in regional Western Australia —

- \$1.5 billion to get Melbourne’s East West Link underway;

That is not only not in regional Western Australia, but also not even in regional Australia —

- \$1.5 billion to ensure the WestConnex project gets underway in Sydney;

Once again, that is not even in regional Australia —

- \$1 billion to support the Gateway Motorway upgrade in Brisbane;

That is not in regional Western Australia or regional Australia. Here we go —

- \$615 million to build the Swan Valley Bypass on the Perth to Darwin Highway;

Great! The coalition has rehashed Labor’s position on that! Fantastic! Good on the coalition for duplicating a Labor initiative! That project is on the edge of Perth but we will say that it is a regional Western Australian project.

Hon Ken Travers: You’re being generous.

Hon DARREN WEST: Yes, I am being generous, because regional people do come to Perth and a lot of the freight that travels along that very busy road goes to regional Western Australia. It is a stretch, but we will call it a link to regional Western Australia. The document continues —

- \$686 million to finish the Perth Gateway without a mining tax;

I think I heard some criticism about that project a moment ago, but that is \$686 million to finish it —

- \$500 million to support the upgrade of Adelaide’s North-South Road Corridor;

That is not in regional Western Australia or regional Australia —

- \$405 million to get Sydney’s F3 to M2 started by late 2014, ...

Once again, that is not in regional Western Australia or regional Australia —

- \$400 million to upgrade the Midland Highway in Tasmania; ...

That is in regional Australia, but it is not in regional Western Australia —

- \$300 million to finalise plans, engineering design and environmental assessments for the Melbourne to Brisbane inland rail.

That is in regional Australia, but it is not in regional Western Australia. It is no wonder Hon Paul Brown moved a motion asking the house to call on the federal government to invest in infrastructure in regional Western Australia.

That brings me to another point. I used to laugh at *The Comedy Company*. I am old enough to remember *The Comedy Company*. It had skits about how the National Party was a little behind in matters of policy and events of the world. It has happened again. As Hon Ken Travers pointed out, we on this side of the house worked very hard with the previous federal Labor government to get money into Western Australia. I point out to members opposite that the time to ask for these commitments was before the election. Clearly, both sides wanted to win the election and they offered sweeteners and made promises, which the Liberal Party is very good at. It is excellent at making promises and commitments, but not a lot of them have been kept. It is all very well for members to stand in the house now, beat their chest and say “we seek”, “we hope” and “we ask”. They had their chance, but it has gone.

I am not picking on Hon Paul Brown—I think he has put forward a great motion—but there are a couple of things in his comments that require some level of clarification. It was said that South Australia and Tasmania would not exist without Western Australia. I get the member’s point that Western Australia is the powerhouse of the national economy and has been for quite a few years. It probably deserves more than three per cent of its projects and it probably deserves to have a greater representation of projects on this list. I accept all of that, but I will give members opposite a history lesson. New South Wales was settled in 1788. Tasmania was colonised in 1825. Western Australia was colonised after Tasmania, in 1827. I think it is a silly notion to suggest that Tasmania would not exist if it were not for Western Australia. South Australia was duly colonised after Western Australia, but that was in 1836 and I do not think we had a lot of input into the colonisation of South Australia in 1836. New Zealand was pushed off from New South Wales in 1841, Victoria was colonised in 1851, Queensland was colonised in 1859 and the Northern Territory was colonised in 1863. It is true that we are powering the national economy; it is true that we are punching above our weight in generating revenue; and it is also true that that is not recognised by the federal colleagues of members opposite, as this document is testament to.

Hon Ken Travers: They were silent before the election.

Hon DARREN WEST: They were silent before the election. They had the chance, but now they come into the Legislative Council after the election and say “we seek”, “we hope” and “we ask”. We did that. When we were in government, we went to the federal government and we were successful in bringing so much funding to Western Australia that Hon Ken Travers did not have time to list all the achievements of the previous federal government.

Another issue I throw into the debate is that we do not know what is in the submission of the Barnett-Grylls government to Infrastructure Australia for the second phase of the Nation Building Program. We do know that submissions were made for funding for Great Northern Highway and for North West Coastal Highway, but they are no longer on the table; they are gone. I think there is a level of embarrassment in members opposite that there were no submissions to Infrastructure Australia for Nation Building 2. Once again, we got the narrative and the action, and they are very different under this government. It is easy to talk the talk, but we really want members opposite to walk the walk. We want them to go over to Canberra and see whether they can do as well as we did.

HON MARK LEWIS (Mining and Pastoral) [12.20 pm]: I rise to support this motion and congratulate its mover. I have spoken before about northern Australian stuff, and after Saturday’s result I will probably just repeat a lot of what I have said before because it is now a reality. The state government will be working with the federal coalition government to roll out its 2030 vision for developing northern Australia. It is our role, particularly for members of the Mining and Pastoral Region, to work with the new federal government to realise that vision. For the benefit of members, I will go through the key areas or activities that we will support the new federal government in rolling out.

Before I do that, however, I point out my difficulty with the definition of “northern Australia”, which draws a line north from the tropic of Capricorn. Our first job should be to get the federal government to change that boundary to include Carnarvon, which is just south of the Tropic of Capricorn.

I remind honourable members that the northern Australia vision includes the development of a food bowl, as Hon Ken Baston mentioned, and things such as growing tourism and building the energy industry. Additionally, it includes looking at developing world-class medical centres, centres of excellence, creating educational hubs and vocational and higher education campuses, and growing Australia’s export of technical skills. The federal government intends to do this through a white-paper approach. For those not aware of what a white paper is, it is a fairly detailed plan that involves a huge amount of consultation and expertise. Those plans are drawn down to detailed projects and they are costed as a line item, and, for those members who are not aware, it will be analogous to the defence white paper.

What I want to ensure is included in this white paper are ways to reduce red and green tape, something that costs northern Australia project by project on a daily basis. One thing we can do is bring together the environmental approvals process. One of the most ridiculous things in Australia is the state-based and federal-based environmental approvals process. I will actively work with the feds and, given my background in this stuff, I will hopefully have a fair degree of input to bring these two processes together to align them so that we can streamline and get businesses going quickly. I have seen projects fall over because of this very problem, and it costs northern Australia dearly.

We will also be looking at joint venture investment with Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans, to encourage investment of the vast amount of money in Asia. A lot of that money comes from the Middle East, and is channelled through Asia in places like Malaysia, which are screaming out to do agricultural-related projects. We need to be investment-ready. The coalition’s 2030 vision for northern Australia will include that active program.

Another thing the program will be looking at, and I will be keen to be involved in, is increasing the population in major regional centres such as Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome and Kununurra. We can start looking at these things and suggest to the feds things such as relocation, personal and business tax incentives. I do not need to remind anyone that we need taxation zones and allowances in not only the Northern Territory but also right across the north.

We need to work with the feds and assist them to target Infrastructure Australia funds. I envisage an audit and cost-benefit analyses on a rolling list of priority projects across the north. We want to be a part of a push to establish cooperative research centres for northern Australian development. I note here that the state has not announced that it will be putting up some money for the development of the beef industry and, as the minister said earlier, for a range of water development projects in the north. We want to make sure we line up very closely with the feds when they review this area. If there is to be a cooperative research centre, we can be there with matching funds and a targeted and focussed approach to moving the beef industry ahead, and also establishing significant water resource development projects. I will come back to that later, if I have time.

The state government also needs to work closely with the feds to accelerate bilateral trade and encourage the establishment of a greater consular and trade presence. Hon Ken Baston, as the Minister for Agriculture and Food, is keen to do that and is working closely with the feds. Now there is a federal coalition government, that can be tightened up and we can make better use of it. However, we do need a strong consular and trade presence in Asia. As I said, with the joint venture investment projects coming through, those trade and consular centres are key in developing and bringing that funding to us.

There are also joint trade missions. We have Austrade and the WA trade desk, so there should be room for better collaboration and synergies in that area, where investment-ready projects can be targeted to investors either in the north or wherever they may be around the world. That is another thing we can actively engage in and be a part of, to guide the new federal government to help us develop the north.

I would also like to encourage and assist the feds’ focus on using foreign aid to advance tropical health and medical research. This is a potentially major new industry for the north. Queensland has done that through James Cook University, but there is no reason that Western Australia cannot establish a major medical research centre in tropical health.

The state government could also assist the new federal coalition government to relocate some federal departments to the north; bodies such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service. That ties in with my earlier comments about a cooperative research centre. We could closely match up the synergies of our resources and departments and develop positive programs for the north.

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 12 September 2013]

p3959b-3968a

Hon Paul Brown; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Darren West; Hon Mark Lewis

As I said earlier, we should also ensure that private and public education facilities and service providers develop technical skills for education in northern Australia. A range of private providers do and can work in areas such as the resource industry, agriculture and tourism. That is the whole future now we have a federal coalition government to work with, and I would love to work with them.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.