

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE — REGIONS

**797. Ms R.S. STEPHENS to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented investment in transport infrastructure across WA, which supports local jobs and local businesses. Can the minister update the house on this government's investment in regional roads, including the Albany ring-road, and outline what it has meant for communities, workers and businesses across regional WA, and can the minister outline to the house how this government's record of investing in regions compares with the previous Liberal-National government?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

As we near the end of the parliamentary year, it is good to look back over the year and see what has been achieved across Western Australia. Of course, down in Albany, where we were a couple of weeks ago, we can see firsthand the incredible delivery of improved roads across WA. I do not have a big graph—it is just a little graph—but it shows that under the last year of the previous Liberal-National government, around \$650 million was spent on regional roads. In our last financial year, \$1.4 billion was spent on regional roads, members. What a transformation is happening throughout regional WA! Of course, we just have to look at the work happening on the Albany ring-road—a project that will not only deliver much improved safety and amenity in the middle of Albany, but, of course, will also help with the freight task and moving product to the port in a quicker and more efficient way.

We could go around the whole state. We were in the Pilbara, again, a couple of weeks ago, working to deliver in partnership with industry. The Hedland road and rail initiative will, again, improve safety and productivity for regional WA and for industry in that area. Of course, the massive investment in the Bunbury Outer Ring Road in the south west will do so much to reduce travel times into the south west, improve safety in the entire region, and, of course, link to the Bunbury port, improving the ability to expand that port and create further jobs and opportunities. Across the state, there is the regional road safety program. There are improvements to the Bussell Highway. Members will have noticed that. Works are underway along the Great Eastern Highway. There are projects through the Great Northern Highway and on the Brand and Brookton Highways. There are a number of projects across the state. Importantly, we are supporting local businesses and local workers in the delivery of our work. We have spent over \$300 million with local businesses, \$20 million of which was with Aboriginal businesses, for the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, for example. Across the transport portfolio, we are looking at awarding \$700 million worth of contracts and 3.5 million hours of work for Aboriginal businesses in the next five years. Members, we are delivering across regional WA. The demand is high because the previous government did not invest in regional roads. That is why we are investing a record amount, with the aim of improving safety and productivity.

We are also bringing road maintenance back in-house to support regional jobs. Our access and equity program will give disadvantaged young people in our regions access to a driver's licence so that they can enter the workforce and help contribute to building and maintaining our roads. Another project across the transport portfolio is our new regional airfares cap. That commitment is delivering hundreds of dollars' worth of savings to regional Western Australians. Regional airfares were neglected by the previous government. We are doing what we can to improve the affordability and accessibility of airfares across the state.