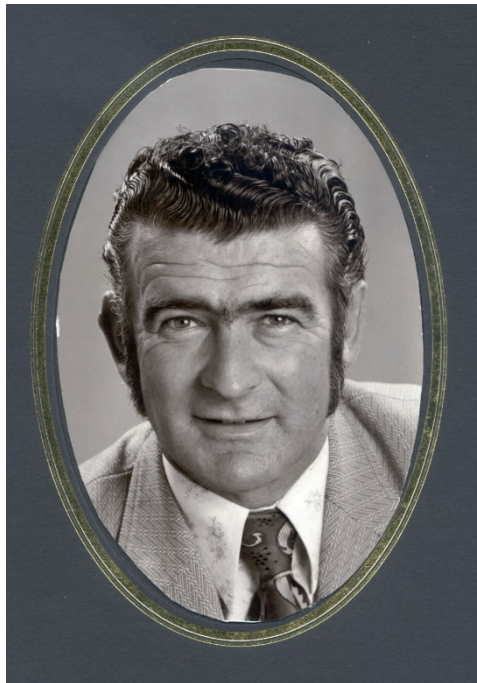




PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Thomas Knight, MLC
(Member for South)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply: Fourth Day

Wednesday, 7 August 1974

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 7 August 1974

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FOURTH DAY

Motion

THE HON. T. KNIGHT (South) [5.39 p.m.]: Firstly, Mr President, I would like to extend to you my congratulations on your appointment to the deserved and esteemed position of President. I extend my congratulations also to our leader (the Hon. N. McNeill), the Leader of the Opposition (the Hon. R. Thompson), and to all members who have been appointed to positions of responsibility within this House.

I would like to pass on my thanks to all members and to the staff for the way in which they have received and welcomed me to the House. Many thanks also go to all the electors of the South Province who have honoured me with the position of representing them. I shall honestly and diligently work to show their trust was not misplaced. Last, but by no means least, I thank my wife who helped me in so many ways to bring about my victory. Her understanding, loyalty, encouragement, and love were of tremendous assistance at all times and I am proud to have her support in this venture of helping in the governing of our great State.

I welcome the opportunity afforded me at this stage briefly to outline problems within my electorate and I hope that in the future I can be instrumental in alleviating some if not all of them. I believe the Legislative Council to be of the utmost importance to rural people, as this is where their voice is as great as that of city dwellers on a show of numbers. This is a House of Review and I intend at all times to support motions, resolutions, and Bills according to my conscience and the hopes of my electorate.

I wish to speak not only on my own province, but on all areas of the State outside the metropolitan area. Representing a country province makes me aware of the anomalies that exist for the people in country areas. Firstly, I believe that the small country town must be maintained at all costs to allow country dwellers the chance of having any service similar to that which exists in the city. We must see that the country hotel, store, garage and machinery dealer remain to give a service to the housewife, farmer, and worker. Without these necessities the country family must travel to the city for all requirements, yet we are killing the existence of these facilities by high freight rates and surcharges on goods to the country.

The State Government must look at ways and means of overcoming these anomalies either by subsidising freight or by insisting that the big firms charge that little bit extra in the city to alleviate the higher charges in the country. With 70 per cent of the State's population in the city, it would mean an increase of only a few cents for city people, but it would allow country dwellers to purchase commodities such as a packet of cigarettes, a packet of weeties, a bottle of beer, etc.—the type of goods that are essential to normal living everywhere. How can we decentralise and ask wage earners to pay more by moving from the metropolitan area to the country unless we can offer them some incentives?

For instance, some months ago a bottle of beer cost 40c in Perth, and at that time it cost 55c in Albany. To enable that commodity to be purchased in Albany at the same price as it may be purchased in Perth, working on a 70 per cent–30 per cent population differential, would mean that Perth people would pay 5c more in order to allow country people to save 10c a bottle. In the case of a 10c per article differential, this would increase the cost in Perth by only 3c in order that the price in Albany could be the same as that in Perth.

At the moment these small centres are struggling to exist because the country family decides to go to Perth for the weekend to buy its groceries, clothing, cool drinks, and a couple of cartons of beer. It will also purchase the petrol for the trip in Perth. Yet we expect the small country storekeeper, hotelier, and garage proprietor to give credit during the next bad season, because the big stores in the city will not give that credit to country people. I believe it is our duty as parliamentarians representing this great State of Western Australia and its people—not only in our own little electorates—to see that a reasonable standard of living exists for those country people on a footing equal to their city cousins.

Some small country towns are still waiting for electricity and water. Hopetoun, on the south coast, has no SEC power and no water. The people at the hotel, caravan park, and shops, and the local residents must cart water from a Government bore four miles from the town. I have now been told by the water supply authorities that this water cannot be reticulated because it is nonpotable. In effect this means that Hopetoun will lose its tourist trade because tourists will not suffer the inconveniences that we, the Government, expect the residents of Hopetoun to suffer. Many

other small centres are suffering in similar circumstances. I refer to Nyabing, Pingrup, Munglinup, etc. Hopetoun in particular, as it is a coastal town offering beaches, has the necessary ingredients to make it a tourist and recreation centre for the area; but this must be forgone because the necessary services to make the tourist trade possible in the main are power and water, and Hopetoun has not those services.

How would the residents of Scarborough, City Beach, Cottesloe, and other metropolitan beach areas take this sort of treatment? I believe the Government has to show a more responsible attitude towards areas such as Hopetoun and make every endeavour to supply the necessities of life.

It is commonly said: Attract industries to a country centre and population will follow. I believe that by increasing the population of a country centre industry would follow the work force. I am told that the Indonesian Government is moving the population of complete villages from one area to another, and industry is following the new population in these built-up areas. It is my belief that if 10 000 people were lifted in bulk from the metropolitan area and landed in a town such as Albany, the extra homes, shops, services, and roads that would be required would employ the worker supporting a family for 12 to 18 months. By this time industry could be made aware of the situation of a regional port with all facilities and a population of some 25 000. At present the population of Albany is 15 000. I am sure the existing industries would expand and new ones would be encouraged to move in.

In the case of Hopetoun the provision of power and water would attract population. More land needs to be opened up in Lake Grace, Newdegate, Ravensthorpe, and Jerramungup to increase population and to make their shires more viable to allow major works, such as road construction, etc. to be carried out.

It is up to the Government to sponsor and encourage decentralisation, and I believe the establishment of Government regional offices, as suggested by our Government, will help tremendously to increase population and services in country areas.

I should hope that Albany and Esperance would be designated as regional ports and afforded the trade of imports and exports through these ports to support the region that they serve. As Albany has become a major wool-selling centre over the past few years, I believe we should recommend that all wool sold at sales conducted in Albany should be shipped through the Port of Albany.

Another suggestion I support, due to the fact that wool is railed to Fremantle for shipment overseas, is that if all wool for Europe were shipped from Fremantle, after being railed from Albany, then all wool exported to, say, Japan, should be railed to and shipped from Albany. This would make the shipment of such wool more viable for shipping companies and the railways, as trucks carting wool to Fremantle for shipment to Europe could backload to Albany wool that had been sold in Fremantle for shipment to Japan.

Another industry based in Albany—the only shore-based whaling station in the Southern Hemisphere—has from time to time been threatened with closure by pressure from groups claiming that in the name of conservation whaling should cease. This is a viable industry employing 100 employees on an annual wage pay-out of approximately \$750 000, of these 100 workers approximately 30 are family men, and to close down this industry would result in great financial hardship not only to families but also to the town's industries which are supported by some \$380 000 a year as payment for work done for the whaling company. The International Whaling Commission has carried out full-scale research into the question of whaling and has adopted a whaling quota which it maintains will not deplete the world stock of whales. We must therefore be very careful that a viable industry such as whaling is not closed by a group of emotional misguided people from other parts of the world.

The Albany Woollen Mills must be supported, as our Government has done in the past, to ensure that this important industry remains in Albany, as it has now become, under new, decisive, competitive, and progressive management, a viable industry.

I intend to support the concept of the Esperance meat exporters' proposed new abattoir at Esperance which will become a major industry in that area, serving farmers and residents alike. Esperance also has a great future as a regional port serving the goldfields, the nickel mines, the pastoralists, the graziers, and points north. The Government, through the Minister for Works and Water Supplies, has offered to supply sufficient water on the site for the works' operation at a cost of some \$250 000.

We must make sure that the great southern comprehensive water scheme goes ahead, firstly to help in the establishment of industry in the Albany port area, and secondly—but equally important—the provision of a water supply to Denmark, Mt. Barker, Cranbrook, Tambellup, Frankland, and Rocky Gully. These areas, particularly Cranbrook and Tambellup, during the drought of a few years back, suffered drastically due to water shortage, and many people were subjected to undue and impossible hardship. This must not be allowed to happen again and therefore we must press on with this most important project which is estimated to cost some \$17 million.

We have at the moment the nucleus of a wine-growing industry in the Mt. Barker–Frankland area and the first batches of wine produced in the area have been highly commended by experts. This industry must be fostered.

There are many problems to be solved throughout the vast area of the South Province which I represent, and it is my intention to endeavour to assist in the solution of all of them within my capacity.

I thank you, Sir, and members, for affording me the time to say my piece and I hope that in the future I will be able to bring forth issues that will benefit the electors of my province and the State of Western Australia in which it lies. I support the motion.
