

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 13 November.

HON NIGEL HALLETT (South West) [4.45 pm]: I am very pleased to speak to the motion moved by Hon Helen Morton. I acknowledge the address by His Excellency the Governor, Dr Ken Michael, AC. I also express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency and Mrs Michael for the warm and genuine manner in which they attend to their duties and their dedication to the interests of the people of Western Australia.

I was listening recently to His Excellency being interviewed on Radio 6PR by announcers Millsy and Tony Mac. One of the topics of the interview was what each person did when they had friends over for dinner. It was an amusing interview about what it would be like having a barbecue at Millsy's place as opposed to dinner at Government House. It demonstrated His Excellency's natural rapport with anyone at any time and on any subject. I look forward to further meetings with His Excellency and Mrs Michael in the future.

I will comment on some of the issues that the Governor raised regarding the election and election results and his view on where Western Australia is at. He acknowledged that the 2008 election on 6 September was the earliest election in 105 years, and only one man knows why it was called then; it certainly was a surprise to many people. It was the first election based on the new boundaries that were determined by the Labor government's election reform legislation or, as it is sometimes referred to, the one vote, one value legislation. Members opposite thought that legislation would give government to the Labor Party for many terms, particularly if the proposed legislation involving the Legislative Council could be passed.

The Labor government that contested the last election failed to listen to the people of Western Australia and, yes, as some people have said, as did the Court government. People picked up on that fact and voted against the Labor government because of its inability to listen to what the people of this state wanted; that is, for it to lead and represent them.

I trust that the Barnett-led government will be a true people's government. The Liberal Party is being well led and guided by a Premier who has excellent credentials and real experience in management and policy. He also has a true understanding of the great state of Western Australia and its people.

I am sure that members will remember the advertisement that appeared during the election asking people to name three good things that the Labor government had done in the previous four years. It was a question that was not answered. I suggest that many members are still scratching their head and asking what happened.

I have said on many occasions in this place that rural and regional Western Australia was forgotten by the Labor government, and this was reflected in the election result. Obviously the majority of the population live in the metropolitan area and the Labor government had its focus fixed on that fact. Of course, this is where the votes are. As history shows, it did not turn out that way. The Labor government spent up big and made lots of promises that it was unable to keep.

What is the Labor government's legacy to rural and regional Western Australia? Many times I have posed this question in this place: why has there been police station closures, police, teacher and nurse shortages, downgrading of country hospitals and increased cost shifting to local government? I must acknowledge the Rudd government's recent commitment to local shire councils throughout Australia. I think it is a great initiative and one that the previous government should have implemented. Why did we have the indifference to stage 2 of the Ord River scheme? That is another project that should have been completed many years ago. We should now look at the Gascoyne region, which is another food bowl waiting to be developed.

We have a responsibility to the people of the state and to the nation to continue to be at the cutting edge of agricultural science and production, because the Murray-Darling basin will never deliver the same outputs again. Many changes have occurred as a result of drought and water legislation changes et cetera, but the Murray-Darling will never deliver the same amount of food products to this nation.

I pose the question: what did Labor do to meet the challenge presented to us as a state? It imposed water legislation on growers in the south west of this state, it increased costs to producers, it gave us more committees to investigate these problems, and it put a lot of these growers out of business. We saw an act of political bastardry in the planned closure of Logue Brook Dam to recreational users. It was a ridiculous assertion by the minister when he said that the water in that dam was critical as a future water source. I believe we witnessed a period of bad water management and policy. This was driven by people who showed a great deal of contempt in getting their own agendas forward. Now, thankfully, commonsense has prevailed, and the Liberal government Minister for Water has declared that he will reopen the dam for recreational purposes and will look at other dams for dual purpose use. It is a matter that we have raised in this house many times. This is quite common in the

eastern States. I remember Hon Robyn McSweeney asking several questions on this issue. Why is it not done in Western Australia? This is something that we hope will now come to fruition.

Still on the topic of water, the Yarragadee project was another classic example of the previous government failing to listen to what the people of the state, and the south west in particular, wanted: they did not want water taken out of the Yarragadee.

Hon Adele Farina: We didn't take water out of the Yarragadee.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: No, but the previous government wanted to. That is what I am saying. The previous government failed to listen to —

Hon Adele Farina: The Water Corporation put up a proposal.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Yes, and the minister was backing it. The minister would not make a decision.

Hon Ken Travers: Can you guarantee that the new government won't take water from Yarragadee?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: It is not on this government's agenda. The member knows that.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you guarantee it?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I am not a minister; I cannot guarantee that.

Hon Ken Travers: So it is going to happen.

Hon Ray Halligan: Can you guarantee you're going to be here tomorrow?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: We could not be so lucky.

Hon Ken Travers: Yes, just to make you happy, Hon Ray Halligan—I'll be here tomorrow.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Nigel Hallett has the call, and I want to see all members here tomorrow.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: That would be good. Thank you, Mr President.

Successive education ministers failed to realise the importance of ensuring that the next generation of young farmers were equipped with the skills to remain at the forefront of agricultural technology, efficiency and production methods on a worldwide scale, as are Australian farmers today. One previous minister went to the WA College of Agriculture, Harvey, had a look and drove out. Agricultural colleges in Western Australia are in dire need of upgrade, particularly, as I have just mentioned, the Harvey Agricultural College and also the WA College of Agriculture, Narrogin. Thankfully, Hon Peter Collier has made a commitment that in this period of government, \$25 million will be committed to relocate the Harvey Agricultural College to Wokalup. That was started under the Court government and was then forgotten about by the previous Labor government.

The former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure had to be pushed, kicking and screaming, to get the Peel deviation, or Perth-Bunbury highway, started. I must acknowledge the work that Don Randall, the federal member for Canning, did on this issue. Without his huge effort and push, I wonder whether that would have got going. However, finally, the former minister gave in, and it now looks as though the project will open some time in mid-2009.

The Office of Shared Services is another classic failure. It is a project that was supposed to cost about \$90 million in order to save about \$55 million per annum by streamlining the financial functions of approximately 100 government agencies. It was started in 2003 and was supposed to be finished by 2006. The cost blow-outs were between \$400 million and \$500 million, and the completion date is now 2013. It is just another example of a common thread, with projects being committed to by the previous government, many projects being relaunched and the previous government failing to deliver on time—let us not talk about being on budget or failing to be on budget.

The loss of the Inpex project to the Northern Territory is an absolute disgrace. I must acknowledge a recent speech in the Senate by Hon George Cash's daughter, Michaelia Cash. I quote —

... how an incompetent former state Labor government in Western Australia managed to effectively destroy an LNG export project that would have brought massive economic and social benefits to the people of Western Australia.

... The project had an estimated construction value of about \$23 billion, an economic life of 40 years and would have generated significant royalties to the Western Australian community and the wider Australian community over the life of the project.

The loss of this project from Western Australia to the Northern Territory will have some long-term ramifications for Western Australia. As a person who believes in decentralisation, I look at towns such as Wyndham and

Kununurra. With the Ord stage 2 project now going ahead in Kununurra, there could have been the possible upgrading of the Wyndham port. Let us not forget the number of cruise ships that go into Wyndham, which has very inadequate facilities. Will those ships now look at shifting to Darwin and going out of the port there? Will the produce that goes out of Kununurra be trucked straight through to Darwin, which is a distance of only some 800 kilometres? These are questions that will be answered down the —

Hon Ken Travers: That's what Mr Moore wants to do with uranium—ship it out of —

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: The member probably would not know where Kununurra is. It is nice to see him in the chamber today actually learning, because normally he is outside. It is good; I am very pleased to see him.

Hon Ken Travers: I heard you were speaking. That's why I'm in the chamber.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I am so pleased that Hon Ken Travers will be in here for the rest of my speech, because I am sure he will go away much wiser and want to come back tomorrow.

Hon Ken Travers: Can you guarantee that?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I can always guarantee that Hon Ken Travers will benefit from a speech that I deliver on regional Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Nigel Hallett should be addressing me. I know that he and Hon Ken Travers are the best of mates, and perhaps they are going to get together and have a good chat later today, but it will not be in here.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: It is through inaction by the previous government that this project got away. I am sure that the Premier will do everything in his power to try to get it back to this state. Before Parliament was prorogued, I had an urgency motion listed for debate, and the subject of that urgency motion is part of what my speech is about today. That motion read, according to my notes —

That this state government be condemned for its continued neglect of key infrastructure and service issues for the people of rural and regional Western Australia.

Hon Kim Chance: When are you moving that?

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: No, I said that was prior to the government proroguing Parliament.

Hon Kim Chance interjected.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I know that Hon Kim Chance has his heart in the right place. Obviously, I did not have the opportunity to debate that motion. However, the question I was going to ask was: how many more times do we have to put these sorts of motions on the agenda of this house before the government will listen? I had come to the conclusion, as had many others in Western Australia, as evidenced by the results of the election, that it was as though the Labor government had decided that rural and regional Western Australia had ceased to exist, despite the fact that the majority of the state's wealth is drawn from those areas. An example of this can be seen in a Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia report from this year that stated that south west businesses and industry generated almost \$8 billion in output. That was 14 per cent more than the Pilbara and also eight per cent more than goldfields-Esperance. I do not say this to make one region look better than the other, but merely to highlight how much our regions actually generate. This is the wealth that the Labor government planned to use for key infrastructure projects in the metropolitan area, such as the stadium, the museum, the foreshore redevelopment and the grossly blown-out hospital projects that are still plans on paper.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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