

CARNARVON FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECT

484. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Water:

The minister recently joined the Minister for Regional Development and me in Carnarvon to mark the completion of the Carnarvon levee banks—a project 40 years in the making. Can the minister please update the house on how royalties for regions supported Carnarvon in achieving this goal?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I am absolutely delighted to update the house on this project. It was a fantastic weekend for the Gascoyne, for me, for the Minister for Regional Development, for the member for North West Central and for the member for Mining and Pastoral Region Hon Jacqui Boydell. The community, we could tell when we were up there, was hugely appreciative of the efforts of the member for North West Central to make sure that this important project was kept on the agenda for government. His efforts were outstanding, and the feedback for the government and the member was really quite overwhelming.

Members would remember that December 2010 was a devastating time for the Gascoyne. Carnarvon experienced its highest ever flood in recorded history, and the flood ended after 600 days without overflow from the Gascoyne River. I actually went up there in my capacity at that stage as member for Agricultural Region and visited friends and family in the region. Where there once were beautiful plantations, infrastructure, roads and signs, there was nothing. It was devastating. There were just big gashes where water had driven huge holes into the —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms M.M. Quirk: This is a press release!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is exactly right, member.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Members of this community are incredibly appreciative of the fact that royalties for regions exists. In fact, they said that they knew full well that without royalties for regions, they would have been left out in the cold on infrastructure up there. Members will know, Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time. Hansard has to pick up your words, minister, so just address your comments through the Chair.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, Mr Speaker. Members will know that Carnarvon is an incredibly important area for growing food for the state; in fact it injects \$90 million to \$100 million in value into our economy. Seventy per cent of Perth's winter fruit and vegetables is supplied out of Carnarvon. These levees were a collaborative effort with the state government through royalties for regions and with \$15 million in funds from the commonwealth government. There are four levees in total of between one and five metres in height and totalling 16 kilometres in length. We held the opening ceremony on the levees. It was a quite amazing site to look out at this infrastructure. I think we actually talked about it being the eighth wonder of the world! The opening was a celebration for the community, as many members who spoke to us talked about going to bed in the aftermath constantly wondering whether they would have to clean up their lives again and again without this vital infrastructure protection for the town. From an engineering point of view, we needed to ensure that there was a balance between allowing the water to flow back into the aquifer and recharge it, because that is a very important part of the process, and protecting infrastructure as well. Quite a huge engineering effort went into this project. We are not finished. We need to ensure that beyond this, there will be continuing flow management, inspection and maintenance and a flood assessment after the next flow.

As I said, it was a collaborative effort. I would like to place on record the work of Mr Rick Bretnall from the Department of Water. He has been with the department for many years and the community thinks very highly of him. His efforts, input and experience made this project come to fruition. It was a complex project. I would like to put on record the Department of Water's input into this project, and Rick's in particular. It is also worth mentioning Main Roads Western Australia and MACA Civil because they delivered the project. There was some outstanding feedback from the community about the delivery of the project. It was a pleasure to be part of the celebrations up there.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Only four minutes, member.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry. I will repeat that. It was an absolute pleasure to be up there. It is an important part of the state's economy. We have protected \$90 million to \$100 million worth of the state's economy with these

levee banks, and royalties for regions played a huge part in that. Well done to the local member and the Minister for Regional Development.