

GREAT SOUTHERN MOTORPLEX

Statement

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [8.49 pm]: I rise briefly to talk about the Albany motorplex. I have mentioned it a few times in here and I want to give a bit more depth to the story. Since I was on the Albany council more than 20 years ago, the community has been looking for a new place to race its vehicles. There is a current racetrack, but the spread of housing out there is getting very close to it, so the community needs to find a new place. Everywhere they go to put a new motorplex, the residents around it all say, “No, not in my backyard. I don’t want it here. Put it somewhere else.” I recognise that there are people who like to race vehicles and the community should get to put it somewhere, but this has gone on for 20 years. To race these combustion engines makes a lot of noise and they have a lot of fuel spills, and there are other issues that go with them.

Multiple possibilities have been put forward, but, as I said, the community has opposed these. Recently, a council member who was also a candidate for the Nationals WA became very involved in finding this spot. I am not sure to what extent his interest is included, but he found a place on Down Road in the industrial area. We would think that an industrial area sounds good, but this industrial area still has a few places. It has CBH, the woodchip mill, the Sandalwood Shop and a place that seems to have been a bioenergy sort of enterprise a couple of times. The area is not too developed yet, but the area that has been chosen at Down Road is in the water catchment for the city; it goes into Marbelup Brook. It is a designated water catchment area, which we want to keep clean. An active group, the Torbay Catchment Group, of which I am a member, has been trying to keep it clean. It is unfortunate, because there seems to have been very little looking into this. It seems to have gone through the processes very quickly. It went through the council with the councillors’ support for it. It went to the Environmental Protection Authority and it said that there was no need for an assessment, even though it is in a water catchment area. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation put in some advice, but it did not really have a say in what happens with it. The area also has native flora and fauna and some endangered species.

It is interesting that it already appears on Google Earth as the Albany motorplex. That is interesting, because it is still just farmland. Jump the gun; get it on there. It was passed through council easily and no EPA approval was necessary. But, unfortunately, there are a lot of issues with it, including the noise. There is a house less than half a kilometre away from the site. There are many houses within a couple of kilometres and I know how noisy this can be, because I live about seven kilometres as the crow flies from the current motorplex—or whatever they call it. On Saturday nights it gets a bit noisy in the summertime, so I have to close the windows to continue watching television or whatever. That is the noise from seven kilometres away, so we can imagine what noises will come out of the new Albany motorplex. It will not be only Saturday nights. They will have seven-day racing, through the day and into the evening, so every day the people living near there, within seven or 10 kilometres or so, will hear the racing engines. It does not seem to be right.

It is a difficult decision. I recognise that people still want to race internal combustion engines and that until we, as a country, support the electric vehicle industry and move on to racing faster electric vehicles, we will still have to put up with this polluting, noisy and damaging sport. My concern is that we really need to look again at this issue and ask, “Is this what we need? Is this good long-term planning? Do we need to put the motorplex at Down Road? Is there somewhere else we can put it?” I do not know the answers, but this place seems to be the wrong place.

To branch out from that, I would like the government to think about this and see whether there is some way that it can step in, listen to the community there and find the right spot. The airport is not too far away; the airport already has some noise. Maybe it should be closer to that area. It would be out of the water catchment area and, chances are, there would not be too much flora and fauna. Maybe that has already been looked at. That is not my role, but I am raising this issue. Members have to realise that Albany is my home and I will be back there a lot, so they will hear a lot more from me, outside Parliament, fighting for the people of Albany and what we need down there.

Members might remember that I mentioned Down Road, which is where Co-operative Bulk Handling and the woodchip industry are located. When the woodchip industry started there, it spent money on building a rail line straight from the woodchip mill to the port to get the woodchips to the port by rail. It was very forward thinking and it worked well until someone decided that the trees could be chipped onsite and not at the mill. The woodchips could then be trucked to the port, which meant more trucks on the road and a \$175 million road for the trucks to travel the extra 10 kilometres to get to the port. The woodchips could have been taken to Down Road and put onto rail. CBH is also at that industrial area. It is located just a couple of hundred metres from the end of the railway line. CBH was looking to extend that rail line to its hub and make it another place where the grain trucks could store the grain at the Down Road industrial site before putting it onto the rail to send down to the port so that there would be no need for the \$175 million road that adds 10 kilometres to the trip for those trucks just to get them out of going through the roundabout. The trucks would not go to the top of the roundabout at Albany if they could just go to Down Road. I think what I am getting at here is that given it is in my own patch and that I will be down there a lot more soon, we really need to look at planning. I look at it from the point of view of what we need in Albany,

but it also applies across the state. If I get the opportunity to represent a wider area of the state when we change the composition of the upper house, maybe I will be able to look more widely at the tier 3 rail line issues again, because more still needs to be done there.

It was pleasant to see that the federal government recognises that we need more infrastructure. Unfortunately, in its \$10 billion plan, it is road, rail and freight, which does not make sense because I thought that freight was on road and rail. I get what the federal government means, but I hope that we continue to consider the options for freight into the future and that we look at long-term planning involving the communities in the area so that we do not do long-term planning just for the best financial outcomes and the people who are developing them, but for the communities. If we have community buy-in, it lasts a long time—a lifetime—and it keeps people happy and voting as we would like them to vote because they can see that the government has their interests at heart. The more widespread that is, the more votes we will get. Keep the people happy and involved in the decisions and make long-term plans that benefit all of us.