

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT — GOLDFIELDS

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the National Party seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [2.53 pm]: I move —

Mr S.A. Millman: The Leader of the National Party is trying to pinch Kyran's seat!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We are a party of regional Western Australia and I have raised concerns about issues right across the state. If the member pays attention, he will see that the member for —

Mr S.A. Millman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Having a good time, member for Mount Lawley? I call you to order for the first time. Leader of the National Party, when you get up, you explain to the chamber what you want to talk about.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I was just about to do that, and thank you, Mr Speaker, for your assistance on Tuesday. We had an issue to withdraw and resubmit, so we appreciate that you gave us the opportunity to do that. The situation was beyond our control. I move —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its failure to support communities of the goldfields, noting growing concerns about fly in, fly out work practices, workforce shortages and the lack of a comprehensive regional development plan for the region.

We do not raise this matter of public interest lightly. We know that the goldfields is a very important region for this state. It is a significant contributor to the state's economy. We believe that this government is failing the people of the goldfields. The communities of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Norseman, Menzies, Laverton, Leonora and Ngaanyatjaraku do not get a lot of love from this McGowan Labor government. Indeed, we saw in the media recently —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The media of the region has drawn the conclusion that the Premier must be reluctant to show his face in the goldmining capital of the state, and rightly so, given the attacks that the government has made on this very important industry. When the government launches an all-out attack on the gold industry, which sustains the jobs in those regions, its Premier would probably be a little sheepish about showing his face in the region. It is a year since the Premier has visited or shown his face in the region. I understand that he has made a decision to drag cabinet out there and expose its members to the wonderful people of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and no doubt the surrounding communities. We congratulate him on finally making the decision to visit the area with his cabinet. When he gets there, he will be confronted by some issues. The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and its surrounding communities are very proud of their heritage and their contribution to this state. They are very proud of the fact that it is a wonderful place in which to live, raise a family and invest one's business funds. Those people have been confronted by a number of issues that is making it very difficult for them to thrive.

This government has demonstrated a lack of leadership in supporting the type of regional development that gives them the opportunity to engage in the way they want to with the resource sector, the business community and their community at large to deliver on their aspirations for a positive future. A big part of the issue is that when they look at the priorities of this government, they see that more than \$4 billion is being spent on a single project in the metropolitan area, which outstrips the one program that is supposed to deliver regional development for the entirety of the state. They see Metronet absorbing the state government's attention and funds while they have been left high and dry in regional Western Australia, which is where those funds are actually generated. We have seen this government gut royalties for regions. It has shifted a raft of funds into royalties for regions that should never have been there. It has demolished the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the department of fisheries. There is nothing left.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Absolute hypocrisy!

The SPEAKER: Minister for Water!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No-one is left at the development commissions and morale is at an all-time low. When surveys demonstrate that 80 per cent of the people working in those departments are concerned about the welfare of their colleagues, something is seriously wrong. That is due to the changes brought about by this government. We have seen so much funding being shifted out of royalties for regions and a lack of planning for regional development

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right across the state. But at this very moment, the goldfields is struggling to find a path forward. When the likes of the Mayor of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder say that the council has been forced to look into programs and to run its own inquiry into how it can put pressure on fly in, fly out companies and incentivise organisations to have Buy Local policies that will deliver the growth that they are aspiring to, it is a marker that this government is failing those communities. It is absolutely due to a lack of leadership. Those community leaders are looking to the government for support. That is why we have brought this motion to the house today.

The government's priorities are all wrong and we believe that it is asleep at the wheel when it comes to regional development. There is no plan for regional Western Australia and no plan for the goldfields.

The issue that brought this to a head—I am sure that my colleagues sitting to my right have experienced this because I understand that they have also been in Kalgoorlie at various times; indeed, we on this side of the house have taken our parties out there to experience and interact with the people of the goldfields—is the debate raging in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the broader goldfields about fly in, fly out workers. Members would be absolutely under no illusion where the Nationals WA stand on this front. We understand that a remote mine site needs a fly in, fly out workforce. If a mine site is remote from a regional centre and remote from a community that can sustain a residential workforce, we understand that FIFO workers are a part of the Western Australian model given the size of Western Australia. What we cannot fathom is why this government is reluctant to show leadership to provide feedback, policy settings and any kind of guidance to the mining industry that it needs to do better on the fly in, fly out front and that a residential workforce for the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder would be a much welcomed policy setting. When we were in government, we sent very strong signals about this issue to the mining sector right across the Pilbara, and they are raising it in the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The city has gone so far as to commission its own report into the impact that a FIFO workforce is having on its community. We know what the response will be because we have seen what happens in other communities across this state.

Mayor Bowler has been quoted as saying that the city “should be burst bursting at the seams” given the state of the gold sector, but the town's population has stagnated. Businesses are doing it tough, with empty shops down the main street. There is a growing sense of despair and frustration in the community. They see this growing FIFO trend that is acknowledged and allowed under this state government as one of the major causes of the demise of their community and their inability to realise their aspirations.

A report tabled by the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder in May revealed that in the nine months to 31 March, airport passenger numbers continued to exceed expectations; 231 169 passengers moved through the facility compared with the 200 000 who were budgeted for, which is 30 000 more passengers than the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder expected. That is not 30 000 more tourists or 30 000 more movements of a residential population; rather, it is FIFO workers, people who are coming in, moving through and not contributing to those communities in the way that we think a thriving city such as the goldfields should be experiencing. Every member in this house has at one stage or another acknowledged that the FIFO practice should be minimised. We have all seen the parliamentary committee reports about mental health impacts on FIFO workers. We have all seen the multiple reports about the impact on families, communities, volunteers, the community in which FIFO operates and the communities from which the FIFO workers come. Every single member acknowledges that the practice should be minimised. Sometime in the future when Parliament looks back on this issue, members will want to be on the right side of this argument. Although we are painted as negative and anti-mining, what we are saying is that we should be looking after the welfare of the workers so that businesses and regional communities can thrive. That is where we come from when we raise these issues on behalf of those communities. FIFO should be minimised because it undermines the aspirations of regional communities that seek to be more than dormant towns.

The Minister for Transport recently visited Kalgoorlie and, as reported in some of the media during that visit, she conceded that the FIFO scourge is a massive challenge that can displace residents and hurt local businesses. She said that the government —

... did their best to encourage FIFO camps that were “in tune” with affected communities ...

The Minister for Mines and Petroleum also visited Kalgoorlie. For those who are not aware, the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum was just held in Kalgoorlie. The minister was quoted in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* on 12 August —

... while it was always preferable to have a residential workforce, there were dynamics at play that made it a “complex issue”.

In the same article, it was reported that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum did not want to get involved in a discussion about the state of the retail industry or the businesses down the main street because he was not the responsible minister. He did not have an opinion on something that is front and foremost at the attention of many people in that fantastic city. That does not wash with me and it does not wash with the people of Kalgoorlie. This government absolutely needs to show some leadership on this front. It cannot shy away from these complex issues. It will put the government at odds with the mining sector at times, but that does not mean that it cannot have

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a sensible conversation about what policies and incentives should be on the table so that regional residential populations grow. We in this place spend so much time talking about congestion-busting projects. We are all huddled on the corner of the metropolitan edge of the state of Western Australia. How about we spend as much time talking about how we can grow Western Australia's regional communities? That is what we did when we were in government. That is what royalties for regions was about. That is what the planning, funding and initiative put forward by our government was about. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder was one of the inspirations for that initiative. When people walk down the main street of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, they can see what happened at the turn of the century. They can see the investment and legacy that was left behind when there was a population boom and investment in the community. That is what we want to return to our communities. That is what we want to say to the people of regional Western Australia—that this government, and any government future, has a mind to regional development and that regional communities are deserving of a return on the investment of the royalties that they contribute to the state's coffers.

Under this government, FIFO camps are sprouting like weeds right across the Pilbara and the goldfields because ministers say, "It's complex" and "We try our best". It is not good enough. When we were in government, the mining sector was left in no doubt about our position on FIFO and our commitment to regional development. It does drive change and it does ask the mining companies to do better and step up. We support the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the communities of the goldfields when they call on these businesses and the government to do more. From what we have seen, the mining companies are being asked to foot the bill of what would have been invested through royalties for regions. The pressure is coming back on the gold sector and the mining companies. I think they should pay and contribute. They should have a strong social licence to operate in these communities. But when they are asked to contribute to programs that should be picked up by the state government and are not because those funds have been diverted elsewhere through royalties for regions and other priorities of this government, that is a problem that needs to be addressed.

I will read a letter that came into my hands. As members who have been to Kalgoorlie during Diggers and Dealers know, accommodation during that week is at a premium; indeed, there is no accommodation available in Kalgoorlie whatsoever. A lot of the residents vacate and rent out their properties. This letter was left to the person who rented their property for the week. I presume they did so under the Airbnb notion. The note tells them what cafes to go to and where to make dinner reservations and it provides important numbers, such as those for cabs, the police station and the hospital. It also provides the wi-fi password; I had better not read that out. The welcome reads thus —

The home owner would like to welcome you to our vibrant city and into our home for the duration of the Diggers and Dealers conference in the Goldfields.

We hope your time in Kalgoorlie is enjoyed and that your experience at Diggers and Dealers is a positive one. There's much to be discussed and fantastic networks to be created here and we in the Goldfields hope you feel welcomed and get an insight into our fabulous, family oriented community.

With this in mind, we ask that if you are in a position to influence your company's policy on FIFO workers and the balance between FIFO and Live in Town employees, you remember that this beautiful city survives on the back of the mining industry, but thrives on the back of its people and its community. Something to consider before you sign on another FIFO employee.

...

Kindest Regards

The Home Owner.

That is a direct appeal to the mining companies to make sure that they are aware of the concerns that are being raised within the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder but it also reflects the fact there is nowhere for them to go on this front. Their frustrations are starting to boil over and this is where governments should step in and provide leadership. This government is sorely lacking on that front.

It is time that the government showed some leadership, rather than just coming out and saying that it is aware of a state planning policy on fly in, fly out workers, which basically outlines all the things that government cannot interfere in. That is not the kind of policy that we are talking about. I put it on record again: the Nationals WA have stated time and again that fly in, fly out workplace accommodation should not be located within 60 kilometres of a major regional centre. I have started discussions with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy and others in the sector to discuss the need for a minimum number of fly in, fly out workers in the workforce. The Nationals will be accommodating. It understands the value of these industries and the sector to these communities. But you would have to be blind Freddy to be immune to the issues that we see emerging in the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. They go further than just fly in, fly out issues.

I want to touch briefly on health. We have raised this matter in the house previously, and the government's disinterest in attracting a residential workforce to the goldfields is evidenced in the Department of Health's

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approach. FIFO health workers are employed by the Kalgoorlie Health Campus. There are 12 FIFO staff on the books at the Kalgoorlie Health Campus. Currently, there are 21 vacant positions on the campus—in a community like the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The Minister for Health has said, “It is disappointing that the positions could not be filled locally”—disappointing!—“It is complex; it is hard; it is not my job.” These are the words of a minister and a cabinet that do not take the issues facing this community seriously. A trio of ministers have offered a very lacklustre response to the concerns that have emerged, and we have been pursuing that in this place.

I will say, however, that I appreciate the offer by the Minister for Health to me and Hon Jacqui Boydell to have a briefing with and an opportunity to meet staff of the Kalgoorlie Health Campus to discuss palliative care, but that is in the context of the voluntary assisted dying legislation. That is an ongoing issues outside the issues that are raised with us consistently. There are 12 FIFO positions and 21 vacant positions at the Kalgoorlie Health Campus, but all we see publicly from the Minister for Health are instructions from the WA Country Health Service to work harder to attract and retain medical staff in regional WA. When he has been asked further about this matter and when we have asked to see the written directives or briefing notes that identify how these issues will be dealt with, there has been no detail. It has been very challenging for us.

I will sit down now and let other members speak. I know that the member for Kalgoorlie wants to contribute to the debate. However, I point out to the Premier and the government that if they returned integrity to the royalties for regions program and started paying more attention to regional WA, they would not continue to hear from major community leaders in the goldfields. I know there are others outside the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder who also want to meet to discuss alternative policies, and that the city is trying to be proactive to deal with these issues, but it is coming up against a brick wall with this government and the lack of leadership that it is showing.

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [3.12 pm]: Acting Speaker, greetings. I, too, rise to speak on the motion —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for its failure to support communities of the goldfields, noting growing concerns about fly in, fly out work practices, workforce shortages and the lack of a comprehensive regional development plan for the region.

I would like to talk about the regional development plan and the “WA Labor: Plan for the Goldfields”, in which the Premier states —

I am proud to present to you WA Labor’s Plan for the Goldfields. It’s a plan that focuses on the things that really matter to local families ...

One thing that really matters is jobs. I would like to refer to jobs. The executive summary on page 4 refers to a “Plan for Jobs in the Goldfields”, but all it includes are things such as fixing this road and building that road, or putting \$60 000 into this and putting \$425 million over five years into that. It is casual work. There are no permanent jobs. When I turn the pages, I find there is something on page 7, again under the heading “Plan for Jobs in the Goldfields” and I think, “Oh, bewdy!” It refers to a feasibility study for a major solar project in the goldfields. If that comes off, that will be fantastic because 70 jobs will be created. That is not to be scoffed at; it is great. But that is it. For the past 18 months, more than 1 000 jobs have been available in the goldfields, and the figure is said to increase to 1 500. We badly want people to come to the goldfields to work. We in Kalgoorlie definitely do not want, as the member for Central Wheatbelt said, fly in, fly out workers. We already have fly in, fly out doctors at Kalgoorlie Health Campus. We do not want that. We do not want those people flying in and out; we want them living in our community.

I refer now to tourism and page 8 of the “WA Labor: Plan for the Goldfields”, which states —

Tourism is a key focus of WA Labor’s plan to create jobs and broaden our economy beyond resources.

That is great. It continues —

There are many opportunities to enhance the visitor experience in the Goldfields and the surrounding areas by investing in infrastructure to support an expanding tourism market ... to attract more visitors.

How is that going? It is not going very well. A document released by the Australian government’s Austrade and Tourism Research Australia shows that visitor numbers to the goldfields between 2017 and 2018 have gone backwards. There were 29 000 fewer visitors, 200 000 fewer overnight stays and spending was down by \$2 million. Things are not going well in the tourism sector or employment, and what is the government doing? The Wiluna–Meekatharra road is badly needed to link the goldfields with the north west. If we can get that done, it will be fantastic. Hopefully we will see more money for the goldfields and more money spent on the goldfields than in other regions. Maybe the goldfields can be first in the budget next year when it comes to spending money.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [3.16 pm]: I want to read the Labor Party’s policy on fly in, fly out in regional communities, which states —

279. WA Labor recognises the important role that fly in fly out work operations have played in the continued development of the State’s natural resources. WA Labor believes, however, that fly in

fly out work practices can also be detrimental to regional communities through the reduction of economic and social opportunities for development.

280. WA Labor will seek to limit fly in fly out work practices through policy and practice to:

- a) Identify suitable regional economic centres and assist those centres to develop their capacity to support industry;

That is Labor Party policy. The Premier is clearly captured by the resource sector. The Premier clearly wants to take credit for the resource sector and the jobs it is creating. Today in question time he said that 50 000 jobs have been created—created by who? They have not been created by this government, but by the resource sector. The issues that are confronting the goldfields are the same as those in Karratha. Investment through Pilbara Cities and royalties for regions was aimed at making sure that those communities would be able to survive through the boom and bust periods, so that there was enough water, power and sewerage services—the basics—to cater for growth, and so that companies could retain a residential workforce. That happened in Karratha. We have seen that. That is why the Premier is now telling the rest of Australia to look at Karratha. That is where the wealth is coming from. He is highlighting it. That happened not because of what this Premier has done, not because of the jobs created by the resource sector—50 000 jobs—but what the previous government did through royalties for regions and its plan for regional development. It ensured that FIFO would be limited, something that this government has increased, against its own policy. People expect that what happened under the previous government would happen under a Labor government, but it is not. All the good things happened under a Liberal–National government led by royalties for regions.

The Pilbara Area Consultative Committee recommended that prior to 2008, \$800 million should be spent in Karratha so it could cater for what is now going on. The government did nothing. I remember former Treasurer Eric Ripper saying in the corridor one day, “The Pilbara won’t get \$80 million let alone \$800 million.” Here we are, and goldfields is lacking a plan. The goldfields is going through a boom. They say there is a skills shortage, but there is high unemployment under the watch of a Labor government at the same time as migrants are coming to fill jobs. Perhaps the government should look at the way companies are behaving and at the employment contracts being offered to their workers. Is that having an effect on being able to get people to go to the goldfields to work and live? The Minister for Mines and Petroleum supports getting foreign workers into Western Australia. That is shameful for a Labor person! That is having an effect and is at the root of the problem; that is, these companies are able to do what they want. We are not against mining, but the government needs to rein in these companies to make sure we can benefit from them. As the Leader of the Nationals WA said, the government should look at the legacy that has been left in Kalgoorlie by each mining boom that has occurred in the goldfields. Why can the legacy of this boom not be the same? That is something that this government is not prepared to do, because it does not care about regional development or the goldfields. It certainly does not care about the workers who have to do the fly in, fly out work. Report after report has indicated that FIFO work creates mental health issues and family breakdowns. It is not natural. With the increasing numbers of FIFO workers in the goldfields, people would expect the cost of flights to go down. But the cost has gone up! What is the benefit of FIFO? As a warning to these companies, they have to play the game as well. When the gold price hits an extraordinary amount, people will ask where their cut is. Pressure will then be applied to political parties and they may change their views because the companies are not doing the right thing by the community. That is perhaps a shot across the bow of the companies, but the people of the goldfields are speaking loudly and saying that the government should stand up. This Labor government should fix the problems that it has highlighted in its own policies. Clearly, this government does not give a rat’s about people in the goldfields!

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [3.21 pm]: Apparently members opposite have run out of things to say! I was very interested to listen to the previous speaker talk about the challenges of Karratha, which is not in the electorate he represents.

Mr V.A. Catania: It was.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That was when he was a Labor member, was it not?

The member did not talk about his own electorate, where he complained about the removal of fly in, fly out opportunities. He complained that Rio Tinto withdrew flights from his community that allowed people to live in Carnarvon and work in the FIFO sector. That was his contribution about his own electorate. I remember that when he was in opposition, after he first changed parties, he complained about FIFO issues. He forgot, of course, that it was the former government that approved Chevron moving the FIFO camp out of the town and into an industrial suburb in his own community. It is interesting that he did not speak about the motion that is before us.

I do not know how many times I have been up to Kal since I became a minister. It is at least 10 or 12. The member for Kalgoorlie is not here, but perhaps he could let us know, because I say hello to him and dine with him whenever I am there. I certainly also see Hon Kyle McGinn, the member for the Mining and Pastoral Region, in his office. One of the challenges for the National Party is that it is now irrelevant in Kalgoorlie. The seat is held by the Liberal Party and if it changes at the next election, it will not be to the National Party; it will be back to Labor,

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because of the hard work of the Labor Party in Kalgoorlie, particularly of Hon Kyle McGinn. I go to Kalgoorlie on a regular basis as a minister. As the mover of this resolution pointed out, I was there last Wednesday. I had a pair from Parliament—thank you, Mr Whitby. I went to Kalgoorlie for the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum and took the opportunity to have some other meetings around the place at the same time. I understand from talking to Hon John Bowler, who is the Mayor of the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, that there are 1 000 job vacancies in Kalgoorlie at the moment. Let me make it clear: if people want to move to Kalgoorlie, they will get a job tomorrow. There are 1 000 vacant jobs. This is not a question of a FIFO workforce versus a residential workforce. There are 1 000 residential job vacancies in Kalgoorlie today. That is what the Mayor of Kalgoorlie–Boulder told me. This is not a question of the challenge of FIFO versus residential. If people want to move to Kalgoorlie, I urge them to do so.

As members may know, I married a Kalgoorlie girl. Hon Kate Doust lived in Coolgardie for the first five years of her life, then she lived in Kalgoorlie. Her family still lives there. Sadly, I recently had to attend my wife's grandmother's funeral in Kalgoorlie. Gloria Doust grew up in Albany, but from her twenties until her death she was a lifetime resident of Kalgoorlie. The Ian Diffen tyre business was owned by a Doust. Indeed, John Bowler's classmate was one of Kate's uncles. I do not remember how many, but three to five of her relatives are on the honour roll at the memorial at the mining museum in Kalgoorlie because they were killed in mining operations in the goldfields over the years. I am proudly connected through family to the goldfields. At the time of Federation, 40 per cent of Western Australians lived in the goldfields, and now only three per cent of Western Australians do. There has been a fundamental change in Kalgoorlie over that time. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures that have been provided to me, in 2011 there were just shy of 31 000 people living in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, and six years later, when the former government was defeated, there were 29 600 people, so the population dropped by about 1 200 people during the period of the former government.

I remind members of the former government that they had eight years, six months and five days to fix all these problems. What did they do? Zero—that is what they did! The member who moved the resolution talked about the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Airport. I remind everybody that the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Airport belongs to the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, and is one of its big profit centres. If it wanted to reduce air fares, one way it could do that is to rebate the landing fees for passengers who live in Kalgoorlie–Boulder directly to the residents. The city could still charge the airlines, but it could rebate that money directly to the residents. If a resident takes a trip to Perth, they could take their boarding pass for the flights there and back to the council to get a refund of the landing fees. That would be one way of bringing down the cost of fares. The city would not have to subsidise the FIFO workforce. In fact, it could put up the landing fees if it wanted to. That would, effectively, be taxing the FIFO workers and giving a rebate to residents. That is a way that it could help this issue.

I want to make a point about the need for work camps. I recently visited the Boddington goldmine, which is in the seat of the member who moved the resolution, and not in the goldfields. On the day that I visited, 1 800 people were there for the shutdown. The mine shutdown process was going to last six days. Frankly, it is not that people do not want it, it is not possible for 1 800 skilled trade workers to live in Boddington waiting for a six-monthly shutdown. It simply cannot happen. All these large industrial projects need to have shutdown workforces. It is simply not possible for those people to be ready and available for a shutdown other than by having significant amounts of FIFO work. I am sure we all have friends in the game, as I do. Some members will have friends who go around the place doing shutdowns at different plants and make a good living out of it because it is a highly skilled occupation. It is simply not possible to do that without a temporary workforce. Plants obviously use their normal workforce for that, but they always need some outsiders. Think about that—1 800 people coming into a small town like Boddington. It is simply not possible to have that workforce available in a town like Boddington or, indeed, Kalgoorlie. We would love to see companies place more emphasis on their local workforces, and that is why this government has policies to support local procurement.

The member for North West Central criticised the government's decision to encourage African migrants who have settled in Western Australia to move to Kalgoorlie. That is a bizarre criticism. Let us understand: he said this was encouraging foreign workers. We are saying that a large number of Africans have settled in Perth as refugees. Some of them have had significant dislocation in their resettlement patterns for a whole range of reasons. I am not going to get into the politics of it at the minute, but I think everybody understands what I am getting at—that they have to get temporary protection visas and they cannot get permanent residency. They could move to Kalgoorlie. This practice has been adopted in other states. Other states have found that when they invite these temporary protection visa holders to their communities, they become an incredibly deeply embedded part of the local community. Indeed, the town of Katanning is an example of that, where Burmese people —

Mr V.A. Catania: Do you support the federal government declaring a skill-shortage area?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I did not interject on anyone on the other side. This is typical—the member for North West Central has nothing to say when he is on his feet, but is happy to chip in when he is not. Maybe he is talking through something other than his mouth!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, do you seek to take interjections?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, I do not.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay; thank you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This has been a successful practice here in Western Australia in Katanning, which has a large settlement of Burmese tribal people, who work at the abattoir. These migrant workers who have settled in Katanning make an important contribution to the meatworks there. There is a genuine opportunity for Kalgoorlie to increase its residential population by encouraging —

Ms R. Saffioti: Australians.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: — Australians, or people with temporary protection visas in particular, to move and join the community. I do not understand the member for North West Central. Perhaps the fact that the member for North West Central never goes to Kalgoorlie contributed to him saying that. I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for not having the racist attitude of the member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. Catania: You are a fool. You look like a fool, you are a fool and everyone thinks you are a fool.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I am on my feet. I call you to order for the first time. Please do not interject on the minister.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The minister implied that the member for North West Central is racist, so I ask him to withdraw that comment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr T.J. Healy): Minister, I ask you to withdraw.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw. I have a point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The point of order is upheld; you have withdrawn. Members, the minister has indicated that he is not taking interjections. Thank you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I ask the member for North West Central to withdraw the comments that he made about me.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I did not hear them. I will seek advice from the Clerk. I did not hear them and I am not sure what they were. Do you seek to withdraw, member for North West Central? I am not going to ask you to, but if it is in the interests of the debate, you can.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am happy to withdraw. It was a response because he called me a racist.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I would also like the minister to withdraw his comment that the member for North West Central was not speaking out of his mouth but speaking out of somewhere else. I found that offensive.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you. The request to withdraw that remark is not upheld. That was said some time ago and the opportunity to raise it was then. Minister, continue your remarks. Please speak through the Chair.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We are happy to work with the Kalgoorlie–Boulder community, but we need to have a proper plan. Nationals WA members came in here and raged against the wind, but what did they say to do? If they had asked us to ban fly in, fly out, we could have a little respect for them, but they did not do that. They came in here and made outrageous commentary about how everything was perfect for the eight years, six months and five days they were government, when actually nothing changed. In fact, the population of regional Western Australia went down—that is what happened. The Nationals were so rejected in the goldfields that they lost the seat, and they lost the federal seat at the same time. That is what happened. Let us not rewrite history; let us tell the truth. FIFO is a complicated issue. It is not the ideal form of employment. That is why we have introduced a FIFO code of practice, which was recommended by the Liberal chair of the committee and which the former government did nothing about. It never even responded to that committee's report. We came to government and said that we would implement a FIFO code of practice to make things better for FIFO workers, and we have. Every time I meet a company, I tell them that

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companies should give their workforce the choice—they should allow them to make their own decision about where they live. Companies should not make it a condition of employment that it be FIFO; they should allow workers to make their own decisions. I think that is very important. There are 1 000 vacant residential jobs in Kalgoorlie. This is not a question of 1 000 workers being forced to take FIFO. These jobs are available to residential workers. The reason they are unfilled is that there are no workers. That is one of the criticisms that John Bowler makes when I go to Kalgoorlie. He tells me that the Labor government in Western Australia is too restrictive on immigration. He says that we should allow the reintroduction of the special migration zone that the Labor Party cancelled.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, Kalgoorlie–Boulder signed an agreement with the federal government to allow direct migration to the region. When we came to government, we got rid of all those skills on the occupation list for 457 visas. It was one of the first decisions we made. That decision was made by your mob, mate, not by us. The whole idea that nirvana somehow evaporated eight years, six months and five days after the National Party came to government is wrong. There was plenty of time to get these things right. The people of Kalgoorlie–Boulder rejected the National Party twice—in the state election and the federal election. That is the problem here: the Nationals represent nobody. They represent nobody in this debate. I will be in Kalgoorlie–Boulder again very soon. As minister, I am a regular visitor to Kalgoorlie–Boulder to make sure that I do my job properly.

I want to remind some people about some of the things we have done. We introduced an Aboriginal ranger program so that Aboriginal people can work on country—something that is never spoken about by the National Party. In judging the National Party's motivation, is it not interesting that it does not talk about that decision? It does not talk about the fact that this government introduced the concessional rate for the potash industry, so that new jobs can be created—residential jobs in the goldfields that will particularly suit Aboriginal people because of the nature of the work and locations. Every time I, as minister, go to Kalgoorlie–Boulder, I talk to the Goldfields Land and Sea Council to make sure that I listen to the needs of the local people and get a proper understanding of what they want. We have the FIFO code of practice. The Minister for Planning delivered lot 500 in Kalgoorlie. Let me make it clear: the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder had been asking for lot 500 to be made available for industrial land for five or six years before we came to government, and the former government would not do anything about it. It said to go out to that other industrial park where nobody is. The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder said it did not want to use that and that it wanted lot 500. The Minister for Planning and I fixed it within a month. Once we understood what the issues were, we fixed it. That land is now available for Neometals to build its lithium hydroxide plant. That will bring 300 skilled, high-value jobs to Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The future battery industry strategy will help Kalgoorlie–Boulder overall. The announcement by Lynas Corporation that it is looking at a site in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, next to the nickel smelter, is an opportunity for the processing of rare earths. That, again, is motivated by the Western Australian future battery industry strategy. The Plan for our Parks, which will create jobs for Aboriginal rangers across the goldfields, is another opportunity that we have put in place. We are the ones who are delivering for the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, not the National Party. I remind the National Party that John Bowler now supports an increase in the gold royalty rate. The National Party blocked that. While I was at the Diggers and Dealers Mining Forum dinner, the price of gold went up by \$13. The amount that the National Party was proposing as an extra royalty was \$14.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Minister, you do not have three minutes, but your side has three minutes in which to reply. The minister has indicated that he is not taking interjections.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is the thing: at last we have a government that is doing something to create employment in the goldfields. One thousand residential jobs, including jobs at the hospital, are available in the goldfields today. The member raised the use of fly in, fly out doctors. I make the point that the Department of Health is currently going through a selection procedure—it has closed interviews and is assessing applications for five positions that will replace FIFO providers. It is not that the government wants doctors to fly in and fly out of Kalgoorlie; it is that doctors are currently not available in Kalgoorlie. We need to find people who want to live in Kalgoorlie before we can fill those jobs with residential workers. The 1 000 jobs that are available in the goldfields can be filled only once workers become available. It is no wonder the National Party has come into this place and is running the same tired rhetoric about FIFO and this government. National Party members are embarrassed that in their eight years, six months and five days in government, they did nothing.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [3.41 pm]: I rise to reject the motion put forward by the Nationals WA today. Unfortunately, I was out of the chamber when some issues were raised that relate directly to my portfolio, so I will address some of these issues. More recently, there has been some media and discussion—a fight, really—about a particular FIFO camp located between Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. I visited Kalgoorlie recently—I think in the last three to four weeks—along with Kyle McGinn, and there was a bit of discussion about this. It was hot off a motion that had been put through the council a couple of nights previously, about the Shire of Coolgardie putting through a scheme amendment to facilitate some workforce accommodation close to, as I understand, the

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Kambalda centre. When I visit Kalgoorlie and surrounds with Kyle McGinn, I find that he knows a lot about everything that goes on in that town. As a local member, his knowledge of what is happening on the ground, and his engagement with all the key stakeholders, is very strong. The FIFO camp issue was put to me, and I talked to Kyle about it. I understood that it was not really a battle about FIFO; it was about who would get that accommodation.

Last week at Parliament House, I met with some representatives from the Shire of Coolgardie. It was at the end of the day, after they had gone to the Western Australian Local Government Association conference. We discussed a lot of things. For example, they needed funding to facilitate some road improvements to allow for a truck stopping bay, and we found that funding. However, their big issue was how to manage the impact of new mining developments on the volume of traffic on the roads. I have started to engage with the Minister for Mines and Petroleum about this issue more generally, because it is emerging across the state. The new mining operations that are starting up are very different from the Rio Tintos and BHPs, which will be there for a very long time and, in many cases, have made a commitment to significant road upgrades. This is an interesting issue. Approvals have been given for these mines, but we need to deal with the implications and impacts on the local councils. Sometimes councils that have no mining activity in their area are the most affected by these transport issues. I am keen to continue these discussions with the minister, particularly as the sector is continuing to change. In one instance—I think it was Carnarvon Petroleum—the company changed in nature. Companies get taken over, and we have a relationship with one, and then it changes. It is about how to get agreement about road maintenance and upgrades. Again, the approach varies. The Shire of Coolgardie engages quite early and is able to strike some reasonable agreements; other councils do not do it up-front and then struggle. This has always been an issue, but it is becoming a bigger issue because of the nature of the operations and the fact that there is now a lot of small to mid-size mining activity.

When I got to Kalgoorlie, the whole issue of FIFO was blowing up. I was there to turn the sod of another road project in Kalgoorlie—another election commitment delivered.

Mr P. Papalia: Funded by?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That one was funded by the state government. That was not a direct Perth Freight Link project, but thanks for the reminder!

I quickly got across the issue that Kyle and I were discussing. The issue is that the Shire of Coolgardie had put forward a scheme amendment to facilitate workers' accommodation in a rural and residential zoning. That amendment was advertised from 12 June 2018 to 31 July 2018. During that advertising period, only one submission was received—that was from DFES, which always provides submissions. There were no complaints or rejections. When I met with the Shire of Coolgardie more recently about that issue, because it had obviously seen my comments in the paper, it put forward a proposal to facilitate some accommodation close to the town centre. The shire wants to work with the company to ensure that that accommodation supports existing businesses and integrates more closely with the community.

The issue of workers' accommodation is challenging. The idea that somehow the National Party could have stopped it or would have stopped it is false. In eight and a half years, the National Party facilitated workers' accommodation that was a fair distance from town. Ashburton is a particular example. The National Party had over \$8 billion in royalties for regions. National Party members keep telling me how they spent that money. However, they did not stop FIFO; they accommodated it. National Party members continually try to pretend that they are something that they are not. They say we need to be tougher on mining companies, yet they opposed an increase in the gold royalty. That does not make sense.

The Western Australian Planning Commission has put out a position statement on FIFO and about how, in guiding this type of accommodation, we want to make sure it is developed in close proximity to a town centre. Some camps are administered and approved under the Mining Act, and some camps are approved under normal planning schemes. Local councils are increasingly making this type of accommodation work by ensuring that they and the local businesses benefit from it. In particular, it should be outward facing, integrated into the community and supporting small business. I agree that standalone camps in which people do not engage in the community are not good. I think one of the results from the inquiry into —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, the initial inquiry through the committee. The response is when there are closed environments without integration from the local community, it is not good for the workers and it is definitely not good for the community. That is why we are looking at making sure that when the camps have to exist, they are integrated into the community.

I heard some of the comments of the member for North West Central about overseas workers. I still do not quite understand his point. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Australian government reached agreement on the goldfields Designated Area Migration Agreement—DAMA—which was approved by the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, David Coleman, in March 2019. As the Minister for Mines and Petroleum outlined, when we won government we had a crackdown of overseas workers and we have been criticised about

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that by the opposition. We wanted to make sure that Western Australians got jobs first. I can assure the Nationals that every meeting he had with the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder with Hon Kyle McGinn and with DAMA the issue was raised about how we can do better in training local people and particularly how we can do more for the strong Indigenous communities in proximity.

The Minister for Education and Training has been there and we are undertaking new initiatives to support new training. I do not think the Leader of the National Party has any idea what is going on out there. She came in here talking about overseas workers and criticised the Minister for Mines and Petroleum about overseas workers when we are supporting the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, which has reached direct agreement through DAMA that came into effect on 1 July. Let us go through the trades: motor mechanic, sports development officer, welder, bar attendant, childcare worker, driller, earth moving plant operator, loader operator. The list is huge. As I said, it is something the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder has done. Hon Kyle McGinn has raised concerns about that a number of times. The Leader of the Nationals has come in here and said that somehow we are pro overseas workers when the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder has a direct agreement with the federal government on this issue and bypassed the state. Again, I do not think the member is quite across what is happening.

The issues that arose at Kalgoorlie–Boulder are a battle between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. Kalgoorlie wanted the camp and Coolgardie jumped it, to be honest. Coolgardie put forward the proposal. I met with the shire and it is very happy with the amendment. It is the shire's amendment. It is working to get benefits for its local community. If the Leader of the National Party wants me to rip it off the Shire of Coolgardie, I will not do that because it put it forward. As I said, we understand it is a big challenge. Members opposite did not stop it; they encouraged and facilitated it and to now pretend that somehow they are anti all of this is false.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [3.53 pm]: The goldfields–Esperance region contributes about \$19 billion of revenue into the economy. Just over \$10 billion of that, I think, is from mining. A large proportion of mining comes out of the Kalgoorlie region. That is obviously an older number. Given the current gold price, it probably dials up a bit more now.

Ms R. Saffioti: Can you believe how much it is now? If only we had that royalty!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It is not insignificant, and it is not insignificant to expect this government to deliver more to that region. One of the issues that has been talked about is the scourge of a fly in, fly out workforce and the pressure it puts on the local economy because of the economics being out of town, in effect. It is interesting that the member for North West Central has provided me with an article from the local paper that was written prior to the last election, headed “Negative FIFO impact an easy fix: McGowan”, which states —

Speaking at the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday about his proposed employment plan for jobs, Mr McGowan said encouraging companies to hire local, including Government department positions and hospital staff, was “pretty straightforward”.

Two and a half years later there are 21 vacancies in the local hospital and 12 positions are FIFO. It is pretty straightforward in the organisation responsible for government and government agencies in town —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Ministers!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: They are government agencies in town that the Premier has a direct influence on. This is not about mining companies; they are agencies within government. There are vacancies and FIFO workers that the Premier said before the election was an easy fix. He is not doing enough for the part of Western Australia that is delivering a pretty significant chunk to our Western Australian economy. I put to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum that he can take an easy step here. There are good mining companies out there that do the right thing. One in my electorate is Talison Lithium. The first step the minister could take is to ask the poor-performing mining companies on this front to step up to the level that the good mining companies are on. That comes straight out of the Kalgoorlie leadership itself. There is one step the minister can take that does not require bucketloads of money. It is simply a pressure point the government can keep in place to try to get the bad performers to come up to the level of the good performers. I would have thought it was not a big ask. The government needs a plan for a place like that. We had plans and blueprints when we were in government. We were investing on the back of significant work done on what the comparative benefits were for regions, what the drivers were for the economy and where investments should be made to make a difference. I still have a blueprint for the goldfields–Esperance region. We backed it with a revitalisation fund and members opposite did not; they need to do more.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr T.J. Healy) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 August 2019]
p5691a-5700a

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Terry Redman

Ayes (15)

Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr V.A. Catania
Ms M.J. Davies
Mrs L.M. Harvey

Dr D.J. Honey
Mr P.A. Katsambanis
Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic

Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms L. Mettam
Dr M.D. Nahan

Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr D.T. Redman
Mrs A.K. Hayden (*Teller*)

Noes (35)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
Ms J. Farrer
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms J.M. Freeman
Ms E.L. Hamilton
Mr T.J. Healy

Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mr M.P. Murray

Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr S.J. Price
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms C.M. Rowe
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson

Ms J.J. Shaw
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Mr D.R. Michael (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr R.S. Love
Mr P.J. Rundle
Mr K. O'Donnell

Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr R.H. Cook

Question thus negatived.