

MARGARET RIVER EDUCATION CAMPUS

Statement

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [5.31 pm]: I express the pleasure and privilege I felt at attending the official opening yesterday of the Margaret River Education Campus, which incorporates a wine centre for excellence. The opening of the centre reflected its joint federal and state funding support, as it was opened jointly by Geoff Prosser, the member for Forrest, representing Brendan Nelson, the federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, and Hon Alan Carpenter, the state Minister for Education and Training. Both ably described the event. This new facility is located next to Margaret River Senior High School. It is a magnificent facility that will serve the community well into the future. This subject is worth a special mention here tonight because of the nature of the facility. There has been a truly cooperative, collaborative effort in getting it built and in getting its operational principles established.

Curtin University of Technology is one of the groups involved in this facility and has already moved its viticulture and oenology faculty to the new education campus in Margaret River. Eighty students have already been absorbed into the community and have started that course. The prediction is that the number of students in this course will grow rapidly in the next few years. Edith Cowan University is also involved. That university already has a presence in the south west through its campus in Bunbury. Edith Cowan University runs innovative courses throughout the south west, such as the surf science degree, which involves the area that I am talking about. It will conduct, among others, hospitality courses at this campus. This is also now the Margaret River campus of the South West College of TAFE. TAFE has been involved in this project from the outset. Its activities in Margaret River and surrounding areas have grown rapidly since the 1980s. It was previously housed in unsuitable space in the industrial area, and will now run a huge variety of courses from the new facility, especially those pertinent to hospitality and wine tourism.

The group that catered for the opening yesterday is worthy of special mention. They provided flavours from the south west, including yabbies and all sorts of different delicacies. They did a great job. Tony Ashbolt and his crew at the South West College of TAFE deserve special mention.

Margaret River Senior High School plays a vitally important part in this new facility, which is located in its grounds. It fits in superbly with the site. It retains the integrity of the school farm and the green heart of Margaret River. Incidentally, the wine produced by Margaret River Senior High School is called "Green Heart". Most importantly, this facility provides opportunities for interaction and a seamless link between secondary and tertiary education for students in that area.

The south west now has a unique, modern facility that is totally in tune with the local community. It brings tertiary opportunities to local students and will attract many others not only from within this State but also nationally and internationally, especially given that the Margaret River brand name has such a huge appeal internationally. Coincidentally, the opening of the facility coincided with an international wine tourism conference that was held at Leeuwin Estate over the past few days, and last Saturday a wine industry field day was held in Cowaramup. That is reputedly the biggest such field day in Australia.

From my point of view, one of the best aspects of this whole exercise is that it actually grew from the local community. It started with the vision of a group of local people who got together and started to create their concepts and visions of where the town and the region should go. Two people deserve special mention - Ray Stocker and Peter Gleed. Others were involved, but those two took a primary role. This idea quickly gained acceptance by Curtin University and others, which ensured its success. The development was originally envisaged to occur in the eastern part of Margaret River, in the Darch Road area. However, as that area has not yet come together in terms of planning and construction, it did not happen there. Services were more readily available at the Margaret River Senior High School site. This ultimately became the campus site, thanks to a cooperative approach being taken by everyone involved.

Hon Kim Chance: Is there room for growth on the existing campus site to do the things that were envisaged a few years ago?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Yes, there is room for growth. However, it has been locked into a five-hectare region of the original school site, so that the integrity of the school farm, whose nature has changed over the years to incorporate wine production in particular, is retained. The growth will be limited to a five-hectare site, but a lot can be done on five hectares.

Hon Kim Chance: The plans for the Darch Road site were quite ambitious.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: They were visionary. I am sure that some ancillary facilities may be developed at other sites in the future. There was some reluctance and concern about what this development would do to Margaret

River Senior High School, and particularly the farm school site. However, I commend people like Principal Ray Harwood and long-serving Deputy Principal Merv McKillop. This idea was constantly driven by the parent group, headed brilliantly by Brian Middleton, who was a long-serving president of the P&C. They always kept their eyes clearly focused on the positives that would come out of this exercise and not the negatives. They deserve special commendation. I know that I am name-dropping a little, but while I am on my feet special mention must be made of some of the people who were the movers and shakers over the years in making this vision become a reality. Constant support was given by the hierarchy of Curtin University, led by Vice Chancellor Lance Twomey. I make special mention of Tom Crossen, who was involved in discussions right from the start. In the past two years Peter Browne, who is well known to many people, came on board and lent his expertise and coordination to developing the details of the campus and seeing it come to reality. At the opening yesterday, he was very appropriately likened to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for his diplomacy skills.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: I am sure Peter would enjoy that.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I think it is very appropriate.

Edith Cowan University had the support of its vice-chancellor, Millicent Poole and, on the day, Professor Patrick Garnett, who spoke very well. Locally, Professor Elizabeth Hatton from the Bunbury campus was involved all along the way. In the early days Robert Smillie was the managing director of the South West Regional College of TAFE, and in the past 12 months the role has been taken over by Wendy Burns, and there was long-term involvement from Graeme Atkins.

At the local community level, I have mentioned many people at the high school. We should add David Garnett, who ran the farm school. They were assisted by other people in the community who played valuable roles along the way - Barbara Maidment, Fran Temby, Terry Merchant and Gil Hardwick - as well as the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River. The day was capped off by Dr John Lagen and his family dedicating a scholarship to be awarded to the new facility. I recommend the campus as a role model for the future. A few years ago I went to the Napa Valley in California, to compare Caltech's facility, which was supposed to be the international benchmark. From what I saw, it was a very outdated facility, and I came back positive that we could not only do much better than that but also that we could do much better on an international scale. We have already achieved that, and it will get better as the years go on.