

GREAT SOUTHERN REGION — DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

174. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Great Southern:

Given the success of the recent Albany cabinet meeting and community forums, will the minister outline some of the many achievements and commitments of the Gallop and Carpenter governments—this is a good news story—in the continued development and promotion of the great southern region?

The PRESIDENT: Leader of the House, you have been asked a question that invites a ministerial statement, which I know you are not going to give. I ask you to answer the question in accordance with our standing orders.

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

Of course, Mr President, and thank you so much for giving me the call. I thank Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm for asking what is clearly the best question of the day.

Mr President, noting your admonition, over the past two weeks we have listened to three solid hours of Hon Ray Halligan telling us what the government is doing wrong. Hon Ray Halligan basically said, “You have built the southern rail transport system at a cost of \$2 billion, but apart from that what else has your government done?” Well, there is the desalination plant and, of course, the Perth Arena. “But apart from that, what has the government done?” There is Fiona Stanley Hospital, which is just down the road—it is not far away. Apart from that, he asked, “What has the government ever done for us?” There is the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.

I invite Hon Ray Halligan to travel out into the regions, where he can see where the other 47 per cent of allocated capital expenditure is going; no more so than in Albany. The capital works program is more than \$25 billion over the term of this government. That can be seen on the ground in Albany. Although we had a cabinet meeting in Albany last week, not only the members of the cabinet, but also the entire state Parliamentary Labor Party went to Albany. It was the forty-third regional visit by cabinet since the election of the Gallop government.

Hon Simon O’Brien: No wonder the bush is so cranky with you!

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is no wonder the bush is so cranky with us. It was the fourth time we have been to Albany.

An opposition member interjected.

Hon KIM CHANCE: We have actually had a Parliament in Kalgoorlie.

It is just wonderful to be able to see what is going on in Albany. I will skip through, very briefly —

The PRESIDENT: I will give some direction to the minister. When Hon Ray Halligan finishes his introductory comments on that motion, it is my intention to give you the call, if you seek it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Thank you, Mr President, and you do not know how much I appreciate that.

The observation that I will make before I go through the figures is that this is not just about money and seeing things happen; it is about the confidence that is being built in the Albany community. It is something that Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm and Peter Watson, the member for Albany, have played a large part in.

One of the largest capital works programs in the area is the Albany Entertainment Centre, a \$49 million project. It is not without some contention in Albany. It is tremendous to see the way that is playing out in the Albany community. People actually have the confidence to say, “We know what you are doing here, but we would like to see it done another way.” There is an openness about the Albany community. It is great to see this kind of confidence. I, like Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, remember very well what Albany was like in 2000-01. The playing of favourites, the distrust and the suspicion that went on in that community have all gone. This is now a region with confidence. That was the strongest thing I could see.

I promised to tell the house a couple of things about what is happening in the region. There is the Albany waterfront project, which will cost \$40 million, and there is \$49 million for the entertainment centre. It is not happening only in Albany. In Mt Barker, the northern bypass is almost completed, at a cost of \$11.8 million. The first stage of the Mount Barker Community College is underway. It involves a \$20 million expansion. There is also an \$18 million hospital in Denmark. Currently, there is some enormous expenditure in the area, including an undertaking for a \$50 million redevelopment of the Albany Regional Hospital. The list goes on. Mr President, on a later occasion I will be happy to give a more detailed version of this. The important thing is to note that big things are happening in Albany, and it is symptomatic of what is happening in the regions of Western Australia. It is something that Hon Ray Halligan should take note of before he finishes his introductory comments.