

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Amendment to Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON BARRY HOUSE** (South West) [5.41 pm]: As I said before question time, the planning portfolio is a stark example of the chaos that exists in certain parts of the administration of this State at the moment. I have referred to the fact that the Planning Appeals Tribunal legislation passed this Parliament in August. However, nothing has happened since. There is no excuse for the minister to not set up the new body and get the new appeals system moving. I understand that an optimistic time frame has been set for January as the start-up date. I am told that the delays are due to things like a shortfall in the budget, decisions and conflict about the siting of the new body, and the fact that the personnel have not yet been finalised. There is also a concern about the cost of setting up the new body. That cost will, of course, be passed on as an increase to people who submit appeals down the track. If that happens, and we sincerely hope it does not, it will bring home to many people many of their fears about the cost and accessibility of that new body. In the meantime, the minister has dealt with appeals that have been made to her office at a trickle at best. Ministerial appeals that used to take about three months now take in excess of 12 months. The minister is simply not doing the work. She has anticipated that she will be able to flick pass to the new appeals tribunal all of the current appeals on her desk.

Hon Kim Chance: How do you know that? My information is that the number of appeals before her is actually reducing. She had a huge backlog to start with, but she has reduced that.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I do not think that matches the fact. The fact is that the minister can resolve the situation simply by sitting down and doing some work.

Hon Kim Chance: You have got it wrong. You have produced no evidence to support that.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I have not got it wrong. I made an inquiry the other day, and 139 appeals are sitting on her table.

Hon Kim Chance: How many did she have before? She had thousands.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No, she did not.

Hon Kim Chance: That is not right. You have got it all wrong.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No. The fact is that the minister halted investigations, which we know take place on appeals, when the new legislation was introduced to this Parliament, in the anticipation that they would all be flick passed to the new body.

Hon Kim Chance: I do not know how you can know that. You are just idly speculating.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: My colleague has just said that there is a ministerial statement to that effect. It is also common knowledge in the community and in the planning industry.

Hon Kim Chance: It is common speculation.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No. It is common knowledge, not speculation.

Hon Kim Chance: I do not think that is correct.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The fact is that the minister is now not initiating investigations into appeals because if she does and they are subsequently passed to the new body, they will come to nothing. Nothing is happening. As I said, I am told that 139 appeals are in the queue. That is in addition to other documentation on simple matters that require the minister's signature, such as rezonings and simple amendments. The effect is that many people are in limbo and their lives have been put on hold. That is causing a massive cost to many individuals in terms of dollars, emotional trauma and time. To give one example, one constituent has come to see me about his appeal, which I am happy to support. His appeal relates to the subdivision of a 125 hectare property that is half of what was previously a 250 hectare property. That property was divided in half when he and his wife split up some years ago. His ex-wife then proceeded to subdivide her 125 hectares into two separate lots of 75 hectares and 50 hectares. He wants to do the same, because he wants to support a rural lifestyle for his son, and that is the way he wants to live. However, he cannot afford to do that without subdivision approval. There are numerous examples of agricultural justification for what he is trying to do, and numerous precedents, one of which, as I said, is right next door. The appeal has already been with the minister for many months and I am told it is not likely to be dealt with for at least another six months because of this situation. He simply wants to get on with his life and organise his affairs. There is a good chance that he will not survive that distance either monetarily or

emotionally. That is in addition to all of the other relatively minor rezoning and amendment matters that it appears are not being dealt with.

Previous ministers Lewis and Kierath, and I think the same could be said for previous ministers David Smith and Kay Hallahan, held regular weekly meetings to deal with planning appeals and other documentation. The current minister appears to hold no regular meetings to pursue these sorts of matters, and I am also reliably informed that scheduled meetings with staff to progress many of these matters are often cancelled without notice. That is an example of one aspect of government administration that is in chaos.

Another important aspect of government administration is water availability. A couple of weeks ago I was very pleased to attend the opening of the new Harvey Dam. Everyone at that opening will attest to the fact that that is a magnificent new facility that will provide many ongoing benefits for Western Australia. I was very interested in the Premier's statements on the day; they were good statements and good rhetoric. He particularly emphasised the partnerships inherent in that project; namely, between the city and the country, and between a government agency and a private water body, Harvey Water. I also followed closely the comments of councillor Jim Offer, the President of the Shire of Harvey. Councillor Offer emphasised the importance of the project to the local area. That is a valid comment. He noted also that a potential benefit lies in the fact that an extra 40 gegalitres of water will be available for the Harvey irrigation scheme. His comments highlighted a challenge for the future, which is to ensure that there are productive partnerships in this project for everyone. It means that ensuring that city water is available does not always take priority over other needs. The water is derived from the south west hills. The point that Councillor Offer and many others have made is that the gains must be local gains, as well as gains for the city and the goldfields water schemes. The Administration of this State needs to understand why many people in the country feel this way and why many are sceptical about the commitments and promises they hear about such matters. They have seen numerous examples of the rhetoric not being delivered.

Hon Nick Griffiths: I think you are misleading the members of that community. They were very grateful for the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been spent there.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is money well spent; I have not disagreed with that. The community has seen many examples of good words in the past, but the country always misses out in the end. That is what I am alerting the Government to.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: We thank other members for their contribution to Hon Barry House's speech. Now we return to Hon Barry House.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Many people in the country point to examples such as the reuse of waste water in the city compared with that in the country. In the country 40 per cent of water is reused; whereas in the city the figure is three per cent.

Hon Nick Griffiths: What did you do about it?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: What is the minister doing about it? He is the minister, or has he forgotten that already?

Historically, country residents use their water much more efficiently than their city counterparts, and they certainly could teach the city a thing or two. Harvey Water - the private organisation that runs the irrigation scheme - is a shining example of a very positive approach from innovative farmers with a controlling interest in the plant and equipment used in that irrigation scheme. It is a shining example of a community representing private enterprise to achieve an outstanding result for that community. We must note where these farmers have come from. They took over a very tired, run-down irrigation system. However, they believed in its future and invested their own money, time and expertise to make it work. In fact, over the couple of years during which the operation has run, they have been dubbed terrific quiet achievers. In a short time, a substantial proportion of the system is already in underground pipes. We can compare that with the Pratt plan for the eastern States, which we have heard a lot about. That proposal is to cover many of the open irrigation channels on the Murray-Darling system, where the benefits have been trumpeted. The fact is that people are still talking about it. Harvey Water has rolled up its sleeves and has done it. I can understand the organisation's frustration when it sees a magnificent facility such as the new Harvey Dam producing vast quantities of fresh water on its doorstep, but it cannot access much of that water. It is forced to take saline water from the Wellington weir. The levels in the Wellington weir are too high for irrigation purposes. Harvey Water must watch as the best quality water is taken from the Harvey, Stirling and Harris Dams for the Perth and inland systems. The irrigation system in the Harvey area, which can be dubbed the food bowl for Western Australia, needs good quality water for its agricultural pursuits. We all know that that area produces a vast array of outstanding fruit, dairy, beef and fresh produce. The organisation becomes frustrated when 70 per cent of this good quality water, which is on its doorstep, is used on Perth's gardens and lawns, but it cannot access as much of that water as it would like to.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Are you sure of your facts?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am positive of my facts. The minister can check them; he is the minister. Harvey Water is very concerned about the proposal -

Hon Nick Griffiths: Are you aware that currently the south west irrigators are not using all of the water notionally allocated to them by the Water and Rivers Commission? Of course it must rain, but there is a surplus allocation to what they have used to date.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Is the minister aware that they require a lot more water? They would love to be able to access a lot more of the fresh water that has now become available as a result of this new scheme. They are concerned about a proposal to pump water from the Wellington Dam into the Harris Dam to shandy the water to acceptable levels, and I use the words "shandy" and "acceptable" in inverted commas.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Are you opposed to that?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am very sceptical of the proposal.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Is the Liberal Party opposed to that?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The minister should listen. It would be better to fix the source of the salinity in the Wellington Dam. In technical terms that is relatively easy to do, because 40 per cent of the saline water comes from 10 per cent of the intake into the Wellington Dam. I hope the minister is aware of those statistics. From an engineering and technical perspective, it would be relatively easy to divert that water into many of the disused pits from the Collie coalfields to allow the Wellington weir to freshen up over time. Of course that must be funded. I am very hopeful that the funding agreement for salinity that has been reached between the federal and State Governments in the past few days will allow this project to be accepted as one that will deliver lasting benefits to Western Australia.

In summary, it is terrific to see great infrastructure such as the Harvey Dam in the country. However, the country wants its fair share of the benefit. It does not want the city to get all of that benefit.

While I am talking about water, and while the minister is in the Chamber, I will refer to a future proposal to take 60 gegalitres from the deep Yarragadee aquifer. This proposal also raises some questions for the Government to consider. At the moment there are not many answers.

Hon Nick Griffiths: Where do you stand on these issues?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I understand that there can be some side benefits to this proposal by freeing up some of the water currently used for urban purposes in towns such as Bunbury, Busselton and Dunsborough, and then using that water for irrigation in areas such as Jindong, which is now relatively short of water.

The Government also must be very careful about the future of some extremely efficient proactive organisations such as the Busselton and Bunbury water boards. They have served this State and their communities extremely well for many years and will continue to do so. I am alerting the minister to the fact that whatever he does, he should not override those very efficient and caring local organisations, which rely on volunteers to a large extent.

Another issue associated with the proposal to take some of the deep underground water is that the community at large wants some solid assurances, backed up by research, about the effect of possibly lowering those water tables on the Scott coastal plain. The minister has said that I am alarmist. I am not trying to be alarmist; I am just posing a very real possibility. If those water tables are lowered and the acid sulfate soils are exposed, there will be an environmental disaster in the Scott and Blackwood Rivers.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm*

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Prior to the dinner break I alluded to three examples of administration in this State that could be improved. Two of them are related directly to portfolios controlled by ministers in this House, and the other to portfolios controlled by a member of the other House. The Government may ignore them, or arrogantly dismiss them as rumour or innuendo - whatever it likes. It is up to the Government, but I urge it to give them some consideration, and not arrogantly dismiss them. If these matters receive consideration, the State of Western Australia will be better off, and the Government will be politically better off. If they do not, the Opposition will be the political benefactors. These issues need some attention.

I have only a few minutes left to deal with a couple of other issues, and one in particular. Earlier this year, I asked a question of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in this place about the speed limits on some roads around Mandurah. I do not want to claim any credit here, but somebody in the system has done the right thing. The speed limit for the Dawesville deviation has been increased from 90 kilometres an hour to 100 kilometres an hour. That is a marked improvement. I had outlined the absurd situation in which the Dawesville deviation, one of the safest stretches of road in the universe, had been opened with a 90 kilometre-an-hour speed limit, and at the end of it, where the road narrows, and the four-

lane road becomes a two-lane road, suddenly the speed limit increases to 110 kilometres an hour. It did not make any sense whatsoever. I am pleased that Main Roads has done some sort of review to assess that situation and has come up with a very sensible compromise. The parliamentary secretary, when I asked the question, promised to come back to this House and report, but I never heard a word out of him. If he had something to do with it behind the scenes, he should take credit for it. Hon Graham Giffard: The answer told you that the matter was being reviewed.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I received letters saying that the matter was being reviewed, and I put in a submission. I do not know what part I played -

Hon Graham Giffard: I did the right thing in spite of what you said.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I do not know what part I played, and I do not know what part Hon Graham Giffard played, but in terms of the process -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order, members! Hon Graham Giffard, Hon Barry House has the floor. I have a headache. We were all here late last night, so let us not overdo it.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Thank you, Mr Deputy President, and I commiserate.

The process finally delivered on that minor matter. I am prepared to give credit where credit is due, and that is great. That, unfortunately, is where I must end my compliments for the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and Main Roads, because one major section of road has been completely and absolutely neglected by the current administration - the Peel deviation.

Hon Ken Travers: This is the same speech you gave last time.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Hon Ken Travers might take a bit of notice this time.

Hon Ken Travers: You were wrong then, and you are wrong now.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is not actually the same speech. If Hon Ken Travers would care to listen, I will outline a few details. The Peel deviation is an absolutely essential piece of roadwork in this State's infrastructure, and needs attention. Prior to the last election, there were discussions about the Serpentine and the Peel deviations. The Serpentine deviation seems to have disappeared from the vocabulary altogether, and I am just hoping that the Government's rhetoric on the Peel deviation incorporates both, because both have to be done. A *Bunbury Herald* article dated Tuesday, 5 December 2000 reporting the previous Government's position on the matter reads -

The State Government has yielded to community pressure over the urgently-needed Peel Deviation road and has vowed to complete it by 2006 - four years ahead of schedule.

Premier Richard Court said on Friday the dual-carriage road would slice 40 minutes off the Bunbury-to-Perth travel time in peak periods.

At the time the road was not in the 10-year forecast for Main Roads, but the previous Government put it in there, as a Government committed to delivering a piece of urgently needed road infrastructure to the south west. If members are remotely interested in receiving it, I seek leave to table the "Serpentine and Peel Deviations Funding Submission". Government members may not have even seen it, but I suggest they get on and do something about it.

Leave granted. [See paper No 534.]

Hon BARRY HOUSE: The submission documents very comprehensively the history and background, and the need for the road for the south west. The south west is a vital part of this State's economy, in the areas of mining, agriculture and tourism. Let us not forget the mining infrastructure in the south west. The south west contains about 28 per cent of the mining infrastructure in this State. That fact is not widely known or appreciated, because people associate mining with the goldfields or the Pilbara and forget about the south west. However, the south west has coal mining, mineral sands mining, and a whole host of other industries which require good road access to the city. This document highlights the importance of the Serpentine and Peel deviations. It reads -

Within Western Australia the Peel and South West regions contribute over nine percent of the State's Gross Domestic Product, and are the largest regional contributors to the states GDP.

This road is vitally important. The document goes on to outline the economic, safety, social and environmental benefits of the road in travel times. Yesterday in the debate about the railway from Jandakot to Perth we heard how important travel time was and how important it was to save 12 minutes for the people of Mandurah travelling to Perth. These travel times are calculated from the Kwinana Freeway-Safety Bay Road to Lake Clifton. In the "Do nothing" scenario, the travel time in 2001 will take 62 minutes, in 2011 it will take 72

minutes, and in 2021 it will take 103 minutes. In the “Preferred strategy” scenario, by constructing the Peel deviation and the Serpentine deviation, the travel time in 2011 will be reduced to 38 minutes, and by 2021 it will be reduced to 39 minutes. That will be a huge potential benefit to the south west and the Peel regions. Members can choose to ignore that information if they like, or they can take some notice of it. The document continues -

Crash statistics for the section of Perth-Bunbury Highway between Pinjarra Road in Mandurah and the intersection with the Old Bunbury Road, for the five years to 1999 are;

- 10 fatal crashes . . .
- 47 serious crashes (where someone was either killed or hospitalised) . . .
- 699 crashes at a rate of 138 crashes per 100 MVKT.

Whatever that means. The document goes on to outline the strategy and the time frame. We were committed to building the Peel deviation by 2006 and the Serpentine deviation by 2011. So far I have seen precious little administrative action or policy from this Government to get that road built. We all know that the sections of the road around Mandurah are becoming increasingly difficult to traverse, and that alone is reason enough for this road, along with other road infrastructure, to become a high priority.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Bruce Donaldson.