

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [10.00 pm]: I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Blackwood Basin Group - Adjournment Debate

HON W.N. STRETCH (South West) [10.00 pm]: It is not my wont to delay the House at this time of the night, but it is worth bringing to the attention of the House the remarkable success of the Blackwood Basin Group that recently won a worldwide award for its work in attempting to reclaim the Blackwood River from the degradations of salt, grazing and other management over the years. The group has worked for more than nine years on the restoration of the riverbanks and water quality.

By way of background, the Blackwood River begins well east of Dumbleyung in the wheatbelt in some of the more salty country and picks up a huge salt load as it travels towards the sea and ultimately emerges at Augusta. Not only did this group win in Australia but also it beat a worldwide field. It beat Israel's Alexander River Restoration Administration, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority for its work on Canada's Humber River, and New Zealand's Christchurch City Council for its care of three local rivers. Its win therefore was no small feat. The Blackwood Basin Group was runner-up last year in Queensland and this year it finally won the crown. This is a great credit to the group, and I will name a couple of people involved. The current chairman, David Chadwick, is a farmer from Broomehill, and he has a group of senior people working with him. This is very much a community project which involved people with landholdings along the river - not all farmers but a lot of community people and small block holders - all of whom took on board the challenge and achieved this remarkable result.

I also pay tribute to the early pioneers of this scheme. "Pioneers" might be a misleading term, but these were the people who actually got the group going nine or more years ago. Probably the main moving force was David Reid, a former member of this Parliament and also a former federal parliamentarian. He gathered a group around him and, having lived on the Blackwood River all his life, was able to assess where the current threats to the river were coming from. He went inland up the river and recruited another very notable person, Owen Dare of Dumbleyung, who I believe at that stage was chairman of the Dumbleyung Shire Council. If he was not chairman at that stage, he certainly served there for many years. He was a public-spirited and hardworking person. To a great extent, these two drove the group in its early days. This little-known group has now gone on to achieve what I regard as a remarkable feat on the biggest river system in the south west of the State.

The Blackwood River was carrying 1.26 million tonnes of salt to the sea in a year and this is increasing by an estimated 37 000 tonnes annually. There is still a big task in front of these people, but at least they have taken it to heart; they have brought it to attention of the world; and they have shown the work that they have done in bank restoration and fencing off degraded areas. They have kept livestock off the riverbanks, where possible, and there has been restoration of not only the river foreshore but also the water quality. The Blackwood River is an interesting river in that it gets fresher as it flows towards Augusta, and as it gets near the mouth it meets the estuarine waters from its ocean proximity. It therefore goes from being very salty in the Dumbleyung area to being a little fresher through Nannup, and when it gets near Augusta, it starts to get salty again through natural ocean causes. However, it also acts as a huge conduit to drain the inland salt that is so much of a challenge in those areas.

I bring this issue to members' attention. If any member feels like dropping the group a line, I am sure it would be appreciated. That small group has won great credit for Western Australia. I pay tribute to its members, and put this on the public record of Parliament.

Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne - Adjournment Debate

HON DERRICK TOMLINSON (East Metropolitan) [10.06 pm]: Before the House adjourns, I want to put on public record my gratitude to the Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne. Members should not look surprised; I sincerely want to put on record my gratitude to him.

Two weeks ago he arranged, in his capacity as minister, for me to accompany him to a law and culture festival at Fitzroy Crossing. The festival at Geikie Gorge was a very profound experience and I was grateful to the minister for giving me that opportunity. I was also grateful to the minister for including me in discussions that he had with Aboriginal communities on that day. I made the remark to him, and I make the remark now, that I have been in this Parliament for the life of three Governments and never in that time has any minister shown me the courtesy that Hon Tom Stephens showed to me that day. I said that to him at the time and I want that to be on the public record. He went out of his way to include me and to help me understand the issues faced by the indigenous people in the Kimberley. I was able to observe at first hand not only the minister's genuine affection for the indigenous people but also his real concern for their continuing welfare and development.

I also want to put on the record that by way of gratitude I framed a question this afternoon which was intended to be a dorothy dixer. I indicated that one of the great problems faced in these communities is the incidence of kidney disease. This grave and serious problem was brought to my attention during that visit to Fitzroy Crossing with the minister. I listened - perhaps I was not supposed to - and participated in the discussion at the Fitzroy Crossing hospital about the need for renal dialysis and the hardship caused by the lack of renal dialysis facilities in the Kimberley. Unfortunately, those persons who are on haemodialysis or suffer end state renal disease have two options - a kidney transplant or death. Therefore, many persons who are afflicted in the Kimberley are in fact suffering from a terminal disease. It saddens me to say that. What is even sadder is the fact that those people must travel to Perth for their haemodialysis. Bearing in mind that the end of haemodialysis is either a kidney transplant or death, it means that many of those persons who leave their country to travel to Perth for haemodialysis are in fact leaving their country to die. There is no greater way to make the death of indigenous people more miserable than to do that to them.

When I asked the minister whether he was satisfied with the budget provision in response to that problem, I anticipated that he would jump to his feet and recite from page 1256 of budget paper No 2, volume 3, which reads -

A review will be undertaken of the statewide renal dialysis program against its stated objectives and a five year service plan will be developed for improving renal dialysis services in Western Australia. Work will continue for the establishment of satellite dialysis services in Broome. In the meantime, an interim renal dialysis service will be established in Broome to make these services available to residents of the region who currently have to come to Perth to receive treatment.

I believe that where credit is due, credit should be given. We have a serious and pressing human problem among the indigenous people in the Kimberley who unfortunately have a high incidence of kidney disease and end stage renal disease.

Hon Tom Stephens: Thank you for your comments. Your Government was responsible for starting that.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I was about to make that point. The Government has responded. As Hon Tom Stephens has pointed out, this is a continuation of a program. Given the urgency of the program, the budget says "in the meantime"; that is, during the life of the review of that continuing program and the establishment of satellite dialysis services in Broome, an interim renal dialysis service will be established in Broome. I commend the Government for that. I sincerely hope that the House will join in giving credit where credit is due.

I do however wish to give credit also to the Howard coalition Government in Canberra because the minister in his answer talked about another dimension of medical treatment or health education that is needed to diminish the incidence of these diseases among indigenous people; that is, teaching them about diet, giving them the opportunity to procure, produce and consume better and healthier foods, improve their housing and its infrastructure and make sure that there is clean water and sanitation. The Howard Government in May of this year brought down a budget expanding the supply of healthy indigenous housing. There was a \$75 million program over four years to provide for just those needs of housing and infrastructure as a move towards improving the living conditions and therefore the health of Aboriginal persons. The responses from the Howard coalition Government in Canberra, and the WA Government to the need for renal dialysis facilities in Broome are together making a commendable contribution to the welfare of indigenous Australians.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.15 pm*_____