

GOLDFIELDS REGION

Statement

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [8.33 pm]: That is Barry House: H-O-U-S-E!

The PRESIDENT: I am sure Hansard will have correctly picked that up.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Mr President, like other members, I am very pleased to be present at a regional sitting of Parliament. It is appropriate that we are sitting in regional Western Australia and it is very appropriate that we are in Kalgoorlie. Like a lot of other members, I also have had an association with Kalgoorlie-Boulder, because as a new teacher straight out of teachers training college, my first teaching post was Kalgoorlie. I taught for a year at the old Eastern Goldfields High School, which is now the camp school. At that time, along with 10 or a dozen other teachers, I arrived in Kalgoorlie with no accommodation organised at all. I spent the first two weeks sleeping on the lounge room floor of the house of a teaching colleague whom I happened to know from previous years. I then spent two weeks in the Agricola Residential College at the School of Mines before the start of their year. I was then lucky enough to organise to bunk in with four or five other guys in a house in Campbell Street, Lamington. That was my introduction to Kalgoorlie. I certainly hope the Government Employees Housing Authority situation has improved since then. I quickly established that I was in a very different place because, while I was sleeping on the lounge room floor at my mate's place, one night there was a huge explosion about two doors up in Egan Street when a house got blown up. Some bloke involved in a domestic dispute -

Hon Kate Doust: About gambling.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Was it gambling? Whatever it was, he stole a couple of sticks of gelignite and blew the place up. That was a pretty rude introduction to Kalgoorlie. A couple of weeks later I was playing cricket at Cruickshank Oval, just east of here, and had been fielding at square leg for a big part of the day. That night there was rain, and in the soggy ground an old mine shaft opened up right on the spot where I had been fielding for most of the day. I knew I was in a different sort of place. I thoroughly enjoyed my year in Kalgoorlie, and in many respects I was sorry that it was not for much longer. I captained Hannans Cricket Club, and still have an association with that club, and I got involved in coaching the high school football team and taking it to Country Week. I met a lot of fascinating characters along the way, but I will not go into that.

I want to mention two points. I hope that, as a result of the regional sitting, a lot of members, particularly the city-based members, take away an appreciation of the difficulties that country members face every sitting week of the year. People who live and work in the country, and have their electorate offices and homes in the country, are dislocated every sitting week. I am sure city-based members do not appreciate that. We have seen all the logistics of setting up the Chamber in Kalgoorlie, which have been quite enormous. That does not have to be repeated every time, but I certainly hope that from this sitting comes a thorough appreciation of how difficult it is for country members to be continually moving from their homes, their offices and their electorates to the city, with files and clothes all over the place in homes and electorate offices, and no support staff in Perth for opposition members and government backbenchers. That is a major issue for country members, and if the Labor Party pursues its foolish notion of trying to move eight members out of country Western Australia into the city, it will only make that situation a lot worse, because there will be less representation along the way.

Another important aspect of parliamentary work was introduced yesterday to Kalgoorlie through a hearing of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance. We have terms of reference for an inquiry on water services in Western Australia. We are using the goldfields as a case study, and we heard some valuable evidence from the City of Kalgoorlie, the Chamber of Commerce, and United Utilities Ltd, which has made a proposal to move water from Esperance to the goldfields.