

**COALFIELDS HIGHWAY AND ROE HIGHWAY STAGE 8**

*Urgency Motion*

**THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House):** I have received the following letter —

Dear Mr President

Pursuant to Standing Order 72, I hereby give notice that at today's sitting I intend to move;

That the Council consider as a matter of urgency, condemning the Liberal National Government for its decision to cancel their election commitment to provide \$25 million over the next three years for the upgrading of the Coalfields Highway, while at the same time increasing their expenditure on the extension of Roe Highway Stage 8 from \$20 million to \$166 million in this year's budget.

Yours sincerely

Hon Ken Travers MLC

MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION

The member will require the support of four members in order to move the motion.

[At least four members rose in their places.]

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [3.42 pm]: I move the motion.

I welcome all new members to the chamber. I move this very important motion because, as a result of the last election, two political parties were elected to constitute the government of Western Australia, one of which was the National Party. The National Party was elected on its royalties for regions policy, under which it was promised that 25 per cent of royalties money would be spent in regional WA over and above existing expenditure. I could recite a range of regional projects that have been cancelled since the new government came to power, but there is one that stands out to me as an example of how this government has clearly changed its priorities in favour of the city over the regions. The project I refer to was the subject of a Liberal Party election promise to the people of Collie-Preston that the number one commitment in the Liberal plan for the Collie-Preston area was to provide additional funding of \$20 million towards the upgrade of Coalfields highway. To avoid confusion further on in my speech, I add that the Liberal Party later increased that figure to \$25 million in a number of its other election commitments.

In its policy commitment, the Liberal Party recognised that —

The Coalfields Road is the main highway running through Collie. It is now perhaps the most important industrial road in the South west.

It also stated —

Decent transport infrastructure is essential to Collie-Preston's long-term economic and social viability. That is why a Liberal Government will spend \$20 million to upgrade the Coalfields Highway.

That was the Liberal Party's promise. That promise was immediately reported in the *Collie Mail* on 28 August, with the headline "Big promises from Barnett". The article stated —

LIBERAL Party Leader Colin Barnett was in town yesterday to announce more funding for the Collie-Preston area, should the Liberals win next weekend's State Election.

He promised a \$20 million upgrade to Coalfields Highway ...

In the Liberal Party's transport policy, as I mentioned earlier, that commitment was increased to \$25 million, and even in its election costings, provided before the last election, it committed to providing \$10 million in 2009-10 and \$15 million in 2010-11 under its capital investment election commitments, which would constitute \$25 million. That funding was clearly earmarked for an upgrade of Coalfields highway over the next three years. Shortly after the Liberal Party was elected to government, it again allocated \$10 million for 2009-10 and \$15 million for 2010-11 in the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* for the purpose of the construction of Coalfields highway.

During the same period it made a commitment in its transport policy to spend \$20 million over four years on Roe Highway stage 8. I will go to the document that the Liberal Party produced at the time, in which it indicated in the funding presented to Treasury and everyone else that in 2011-12 it would provide \$20 million for the commencement of construction of Roe Highway stage 8. I understand that a number of Liberal-National government backbenchers thought that was about planning and investigative work to ascertain whether Roe Highway stage 8 would even be feasible; it was not actually about construction. That was the belief, as I understand it, of a number of the Liberal-National backbenchers. Again, that funding was placed in the midyear

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review that came out in December last year. That election commitment was implemented in the costings for the forward estimates of the new Liberal-National government.

Along came the budget that was handed down and the projects under the economic audit of the government. I suspect that it will be the first of many economic audits. What did the economic audit do? It took away funding for Coalfields highway. It has gone. The money has been deleted. If anyone wants to check on that, they should look at the economic audit on page 133 of budget paper No 3, and they will see that the money has been taken out of the budget for Coalfields highway. Some members who represent regional areas might also find it interesting to look at, on that same page, the item "Goldfields Highway — Wiluna to Meekatharra". That project is losing money in the economic audit. The Coolgardie-Esperance highway is also mentioned on that page. Hon Wendy Duncan will be interested in the Esperance port access. A significant amount is taken out of the budget in future years for that project. However, let us focus on Coalfields highway, because I believe it is very telling. What happened to Roe Highway stage 8 in that process? The \$20 million that was promised in the fourth year, 2011-12, during the election campaign will be increased over the next three years. It is no longer \$20 million. The funding has been brought forward. Next year it is \$8.8 million, and in the following three years \$124 million will go into Roe Highway stage 8. It is a total of \$166 million over the full four years, and that is for a project that is now worth \$550 million. At that amount, I suspect that this is about the minister going back to his obsession with the Fremantle eastern bypass. I suspect that Roe Highway stage 8 could not possibly cost that much. It must also include some form of resurrected Fremantle eastern bypass. However, we will find out about that in estimates hearings. Members on this side of the house all know about the obsession that the Minister for Transport has had over the years with Roe Highway stage 8—it has been an obsession.

There are many reasons why people might not want to build Roe Highway stage 8. I am sure that my colleague Hon Sally Talbot will talk about a few of the environmental problems that relate to it. Therefore, I will focus on the economic and social importance of these two roads. Let us look at the social impacts. If Coalfields highway is not built, it will result in people being killed. They are not my words; they were the words of Dr Steve Thomas, the Liberal candidate for Collie-Preston at the last election. I quote from the *Collie Mail* of 28 August 2008, which states —

The Coalfields Highway plan will involve an upgrade for the road from the Wellington Dam road turnoff into Collie. Liberal candidate for Collie-Preston Steve Thomas said this road was one of the most important and most used in the South West.

"If you observe the amount of traffic on Coalfields Highway today, there is no way you would be gambling with people's lives by denying these much-needed upgrades," Dr Thomas said.

That appeared in the *Collie Mail* on 28 August. He goes on to state —

"This is about keeping lives safe on the roads in Collie-Preston."

That is not what I am saying; that is what the Liberal Party's own member said at the last election. That is why the Liberal Party put it into its election promises.

What does this road do on the economic side? It carries heavy loads of traffic. In a three-hour period, someone counted for the member for Collie-Preston 1 800 cars, 45 trucks, 33 semitrailers, 38 buses, 16 B-doubles, eight road trains and six motorbikes going along that road. So it is a pretty busy road. However, members should think about the industry that resides along that highway. Worsley Alumina will go through a \$2 billion upgrade over the next four years. Muja A and B are about to be refurbished for \$100 million. Muja C and D and the coalfields there are about to be re-committed to for another \$80 million. Bluewaters power station phase 2 will be completed in the next 12 months. It is possible that there will be Bluewaters 3 and 4, at a cost of \$500 million. I have probably convinced the Greens to pull up the road at this stage. The Ewington mine, which will undergo an upgrade, the Perdaman Industries chemical and fertiliser plant, the \$3.5 billion urea plant that will convert coal to gas to produce fertiliser, and Shotts Industrial Park are all situated along this road. This is the road that produces royalties. This is the road to the royalty regions of the state. It is also an important agricultural, produce and supplies road, feeding the agricultural area with supplies and taking produce back to places such as the Harvey meatworks.

Let us compare that road with Roe Highway stage 8. Where are we up to with Roe Highway stage 8? There are numerous ongoing studies into the road requirements around the south west metropolitan area. Roe Highway stage 8 is a part of those studies. In a letter written by Mr Eric Lumsden some time ago, he mentioned that the Department for Planning and Infrastructure had completed one road network analysis but that it was going to carry out a further road network analysis of the roads throughout the south-western corridor of Western Australia. We also know that the Minister for Transport's grand vision that he released when he was the shadow minister, a vision for the port of Fremantle, would see the port of Fremantle closed down. Why would we need Roe Highway stage 8 if the Fremantle container facilities are to be closed down, making it a boutique port and putting all the traffic and the containers into Cockburn Sound? A document put out by the minister states —

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The decision to relocate container and livestock operations from the inner harbour to the outer harbour needs to be made now before further opportunity is lost and while we still have land use options available.

That was the Minister for Transport's great vision when he released this policy. He pointed out that there were constrictions at the existing container port around North Quay. In that document he also identified potential future routes for servicing the new container terminals in Cockburn Sound. I think the dots in the document are supposed to replicate Roe Highway stage 8. The minister provided a number of alternative routes and indicated that a number of route options have been identified, each of which will require further investigation. That was the document setting out the Liberal Party's grand vision before the election. The minister set up the Fremantle Ports Optimum Planning Group, which has the task of determining the road network that is required to service the ports in the southern suburbs. We do not even know whether Roe Highway stage 8 is necessary but the government is canning a road that will produce more royalties for this state, a key industrial road that the Liberal candidate for Collie-Preston said if we do not fix, it will result in lives being taken. There have been deaths on the road.

The minister is obsessed with bringing forward Roe Highway stage 8, not by a small amount but from \$20 million up to \$166 million. That is the sort of growth that we are seeing. We have a road ready to go in Collie. I understand that Main Roads has already commenced the survey work on that road. It will go to royalty-producing industries. It is a road to downstream processing and it is a road to the royalty regions of the state. It has been stopped dead in its tracks so that the minister can build his road—a road that is still subject to the strategic planning processes of government for the south west metropolitan suburbs, a road that will be redundant if the minister's grand vision is realised and a road that currently goes nowhere.

The minister had the audacity to say in an article recently in the *Collie Mail* that Labor had not spent enough money on roads. I do not have the time now but I will be happy to go through the roads budget later when I get back to my speech on the budget to show how appalling the funding for roads by this new government is, which results in \$31 million being the sole appropriation for roads other than the Road Traffic Act money for capital works in four years. It is an appalling state of affairs compared with the \$853 million that was spent on roadworks by the former government in 2008-09. That figure was almost halved by the end of the current government's forward estimates. I hope that the new National Party members in this house are able to call this government to account for expenditure in the regions, because this is an important road for the regions. If the National Party's royalties for regions policy is going to mean anything, its members should make sure that funding is provided for the Collie-Coalfields highway project and that Roe Highway stage 8 is stopped. The Collie-Coalfields highway project should not be canned so that the minister can build Roe Highway stage 8.

I note with interest the strong support that the new member for South West Region, Hon Colin Holt, received from the boxes in the Collie-Preston electorate area. I do not know whether the member is aware that 13.2 per cent of his primary vote came from the Collie-Preston area. I believe that Collie-Preston was the National Party's third-best result in the lower house elections. I am sure that the people of Collie-Preston will be looking forward to a return on the loyalty that they showed to the National Party at the last election. That is what is required: National Party members will need to stand up and call this government to account. I look forward to working with Hon Max Trenorden. We go back a long way. We met at Meenar industrial park in 1991, when we sowed the first seeds to what is now the Avon Valley industrial estate.

As I said, Steve Thomas has warned the Minister for Transport about the dangers of not upgrading this road.

**Hon Norman Moore:** Tell us about that, Max!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I am very proud of what has happened at the Avon Valley industrial estate, as I am sure is Hon Max Trenorden, as a result of the meeting he had with Ian Taylor out there many years ago.

The minister should remember that Steve Thomas warned him about the dangers of that road not being upgraded.

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport)** [3.56 pm]: I listened with interest to Hon Ken Travers. I was very interested that he has given me an opportunity to respond. Normally I have to rely on unruly interjection! However, through the mechanism that the member has employed today under standing order 72, I get a formal response. This is puzzling because Hon Ken Travers has interrupted his own budget speech—I believe the member is the lead speaker—in which he has unlimited time to rabbit on about these things, yet he wanted to go down the path of bringing forward an urgency motion to interrupt the proceedings that would otherwise be coming on straight after this motion anyway. I am curious about that.

**Hon Ken Travers:** What is your point, minister?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I thank Hon Ken Travers very much for giving me the opportunity to rebut some of the trifle that he has been dishing up to the rest of the house.

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**Hon Sally Talbot:** Get on with it, because you only have 10 minutes!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** That will be more than enough because Hon Ken Travers has not put up anything of substance!

Unlike Hon Sally Talbot, who, as state president of the Australian Labor Party, is still in denial, at least Hon Ken Travers can admit that a Liberal-National government was elected on 6 September 2008. If that is the best Hon Ken Travers can do in trying to play wedge politics, he has a very long way to go! I do not think anyone will have the wool pulled over their eyes by the sort of case that Hon Ken Travers has just tried to develop, claiming quite disingenuously that somehow this government's priority has slipped away from country Western Australia in favour of city projects. That is a clear absurdity. Even while Hon Ken Travers is talking about our implementation of royalties for regions—something that the opposition is determined to fight against tooth and nail—he accuses this government of moving its priorities from the country to the city. It is a nonsense.

Let us look at the matters that Hon Ken Travers raised in his motion. We have to do that in the context that the Liberal-National government, unlike the former Labor government, is confronted with the most difficult economic times in probably 75 years. This occurred almost contemporaneously with the last state election—and a very early election it was too! I bet Hon Ken Travers has not forgotten about that either! It was a very early state election.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You promised \$25 million for the Coalfields highway.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** We have experienced a global financial crisis, and everyone in this house is well aware of that. The discipline that that has imposed on us, quite unexpectedly, is the most stringent management of funding of resources. I do not like the fact, as Minister for Transport, and as minister with responsibility for Main Roads, that I and my colleagues in government are forced to trim the cloth according to our means. I do not like it and I do not take any pleasure in it, but that is the fact of the matter. It might be good for Hon Ken Travers to rail about it while he is in opposition. He can enjoy himself, but we are determined to provide effective economic management for this state. We want to make sure that, in the current economic circumstances, we do not create a financial burden for future Western Australian generations. Even in these difficult times we have been able to allocate \$1.371 billion to the roads budget, which compares very favourably with last year's allocation, particularly given the belt tightening we have had to endure in the current economic conditions. We allowed about \$220.5 million of that for depreciation and other financial costs. The actual sum to be spent on the state's roads will be about \$1.151 billion. That compares with \$1.164 billion last year. That is a difference of only \$13.5 million or 1.2 per cent. That is not bad considering what we can deliver while protecting our future financial security.

However, of necessity we have made some difficult decisions in terms of what could be funded in the financial year 2009-10, and I readily admit that. One of the casualties for this year has been the portion of funding allocated to the Coalfields highway.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You are bringing on Roe Highway stage 8.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No.

**Hon Ken Travers:** That is exactly what the government has done.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** That is where Hon Ken Travers is wrong. But I am going to, very patiently, try to talk slowly and in words of as few syllables as possible to help Hon Ken Travers understand some of the basics of this budget.

**Hon Ken Travers:** I am happy to table it.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** It has already been tabled by a far better member than Hon Ken Travers. The Coalfields highway commitment was given during the midyear review in late 2008 for the first time because it had never been in the forward estimates under the previous Labor government—never. The Labor government was not so concerned about it during eight boom years when it had multibillion dollars worth of unexpected cash windfall surpluses, year after year for five years on the trot. Did the Labor government find the \$25 million to invest in the Coalfields highway?

**Hon Ken Travers:** No. But we certainly built the Perth-Bunbury highway.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Yes, but the Labor government was dragged kicking and screaming to do so. Before I move on to some concluding remarks, let me tell Hon Ken Travers this: just because at this stage the funding for the Coalfields highway has had to be pushed out from the 2009-10 financial year, it does not mean funding will not be provided in either the next year or a subsequent year.

**Hon Adele Farina:** There is nothing in the forward estimates.

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**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** What the budget is concerned about primarily this year is the 2009-10 financial year.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Hang on a minute; I have limited time.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You took \$10 million out of Coalfields and gave \$8.8 million to Roe 8 this year. It was never promised.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Maybe Hon Ken Travers has some insight into how this government's budget processes work that is not available to me. Nobody sat down and took \$25 million, or whatever the sum was for the 2009-10 financial year, from an allocation to the Coalfields highway and said that we should put it to some other city project. That is not how it works.

**Hon Ken Travers:** That is the net effect of what you did.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** It is not the net effect of what we did. Given the economic times we are facing right now, I guarantee that many of the figures published in the out years in this budget will change by the time we come around to them.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Will it be upwards or downwards?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Members should have no doubt that they will vary. While we are on the subject—the subject of election commitments—I have explained to Hon Ken Travers why the Coalfields highway funding has been deferred.

**Hon Ken Travers:** No, you have not.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Hang on! I have acknowledged that it has been deferred, and I have told members that that is because of the economic circumstances. Let us look at the record of the former government and at some of the projects that were committed to by Labor in the 2001 election campaign. We are still waiting on those projects. After years and years of multibillion-dollar surpluses, the former government could not find the money for those projects.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Is that your only excuse—to try to go back eight years? Is that your best excuse?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** May I have the floor, please, Mr President?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! If the minister directs his comments through the Chair and there are no interjections, I am sure we will make progress.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** The honourable member asked us to contemplate what we were going to do with Goldfields Highway between Wiluna and Meekatharra. That highway needs to be built, does it not? That is the member's view. Labor promised that highway in 2001, and it promised that it would be completed by 2006. Do members know how much of that promise has ever been delivered? Fifteen kilometres! I do not know how many hundreds of kilometres that is shy of the target, but that is the former government's record!

I will remind members of the ongoing saga of the Reid Highway extension through Middle Swan. We are getting on with building that, and we are doing it now. The Lancelin-Cervantes Road, which, again, the Labor Party promised year after year, election after election, is still not finished. The Geraldton southern transport corridor stage 2 —

**Hon Ken Travers:** It is because of your obsession about Goldfields Highway —

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I am looking forward to talking further about those matters. Hon Ken Travers is the one who is obsessed. However, I invite him to get over it, because what we are going to deliver is responsible economic management in difficult times.

**HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House) [4.07 pm]:** I am a bit surprised—I thought there might have been a few other members for South Metropolitan Region who wanted to argue about why we do not need Roe Highway stage 8. One of the most extraordinary decisions ever made in the history of Western Australian politics was the decision by Geoff Gallop just before the 2005 election that trucks would no longer be allowed to travel along Leach Highway between Albany Highway and Kwinana Freeway. He said that the reason for that decision was because those trucks were too big. He said that all the trucks from Kewdale and Welshpool would have to travel along Roe Highway 7, and when they got to Kwinana Freeway, they would do a right-hand turn and go north up the freeway, and they would then turn left and travel along Leach Highway to Fremantle, and onto High Road and along Stirling Street to Fremantle port. That was one of the most political decisions ever made in the history of Western Australian politics. What Geoff Gallop was saying was that trucks should not be allowed to travel along Leach Highway between Albany Highway and Kwinana Freeway, because

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that is unsafe for the people who live there, and those trucks will be put onto Roe 7, yet it is okay for trucks to travel along Leach Highway between Kwinana Freeway and Fremantle port and go past the homes of the people who live there. The Labor Party made that decision for one reason and one reason only—so that Tony McRae could win the seat of Riverton. That was a straight-out political decision to try to save the hide of Tony McRae in Riverton. I have to say that that decision succeeded, and Tony McRae won the seat of Riverton. However, he did not win it the next time around. That demonstrates the absolute lengths to which the former government was willing to go to win a seat. I say to those South Metropolitan Region members from the Labor Party—and I can never remember who they are, because they change around so often, but one thing I do know is that Hon Ken Travers is not one of those members, because he has never been south of the river —

**Hon Ken Travers:** Is that right?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** From the speech Hon Ken Travers has just made, he sounds as though he has never been south of the river!

**Hon Ken Travers:** Rather than spend all my time south of the river, as you do, I spend most of my time in my electorate!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Let us listen to each member's contribution with the same silence that Hon Ken Travers enjoyed when he made his speech.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** It seems to me that anybody who has seen the way in which traffic is routed in the South Metropolitan Region between Kewdale, Welshpool and Fremantle, and thinks that is a good system has got to be plain stupid. Members from the North Metropolitan Region, and indeed the South Metropolitan Region, should get into their cars one day and drive along Leach Highway at about six o'clock in the morning till about eight o'clock at night between Kwinana Freeway and Fremantle. They should look at the car park of which they will have become part. It is a disgraceful situation. Cars, motorbikes and all sorts of traffic are intermingled with vast numbers of semitrailer trucks heading to the Fremantle port. Just like those people who live in Riverton, lots of people who live between Kwinana Freeway and Fremantle live on Leach Highway. Some considerable parts of it make up a residential street. For 30 years I have lived about one and a half streets back from Leach Highway. I go on it every day. The change that has taken place over recent times has been extraordinary. It is quite dangerous to get on to Leach Highway. To cross it, people take their life in their hands.

The whole aim of the previous planning for the South Metropolitan Region was to have the Fremantle eastern bypass meeting up with Roe Highway stage 8 so that all that major traffic would be off Leach Highway and South Street and go to the port along roads that were properly built for the purpose. We obviously understand that the Fremantle eastern bypass is a dead duck, because the Labor Party wanted to get Jim McGinty elected at a by-election in 1991, or whenever it was, and made the decision to delete Fremantle bypass from the planning schemes. That was the only reason the Labor Party did it. It probably got him over the line if the truth be known, because he nearly lost that by-election, just as he nearly lost the last election in Fremantle. As a result of his winning the seat, the Labor Party—which did most of what he wanted it to do anyway—deleted the Fremantle eastern bypass and sold off the land to make sure that nobody could use it again. It was all because of one member, who is now, in the eyes of many, quite discredited. There is therefore a situation in which the available planning options to any government for Fremantle port and getting traffic to the port along highways that are appropriate for the role are very seriously compromised. There is no good reason that we should not continue Roe 8. Because ultimately a lot of the port activity is located south of Fremantle, Roe 8 could link into any other sorts of developments that might occur at Fremantle port in time to come. That will take a very significant number of trucks off a residential road, which is what part of Leach Highway is.

I invite Labor Party South Metropolitan Region members to look at Leach Highway at about eight o'clock one morning. They should hang around for a couple of hours and go back in the evening from about four o'clock till about six or seven o'clock. They can then tell me whether they think that is a good road management system. They can tell me whether they reckon it is safe for the people who use it. They can tell me whether they think it is a sensible way to get major transport from industrial suburbs to the port and back again. They can tell me whether the road that goes past Royal Fremantle Golf Club, which is two lanes wide, should have trucks on it. They can tell me whether they reckon it is safe when semitrailers turn from High Street into Stirling Highway, then over Stirling Bridge and on to the port. They can tell me whether that is a safe transport arrangement. It is not. That is what they left us with. We will sort it out. The problem is that they cut off some of our options because of Jim McGinty—the man who lost Fremantle for them.

**Hon Ken Travers:** His obsession is Roe 8 and yours is Jim McGinty.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** As far as I am concerned, this business about obsession is rubbish. I am obsessed whenever I go on Leach Highway in the morning with the stupidity of the people who put this transport system in place. It is sheer stupidity, and because I know why the previous government did it—because of McRae and

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McGinty—maybe I am obsessed; obsessed with the ridiculousness of what the previous government left us with. We all make hard decisions about where roads go and what needs to be done because there is no doubt that we must have a decent transport system; we have a port that imports and exports products and we have industrial suburbs where the material is used, and we need to get it from one place to the other. Therefore, we must have transport options that allow us to do that. I am afraid to say that we have inherited a very, very poor transport system that must be fixed, and we will go about fixing it.

I assumed when I got to my feet that, obviously, the South Metropolitan members would get up and tell us why we should continue to have Leach Highway the way it is, but perhaps they do not agree. Perhaps they think I am right and that is why a North Metropolitan member brings on a motion like this because every time Hon Ken Travers raises this, I ask him whether he has ever been on Leach Highway.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Yes.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I do not think he has. He could not have been; it must have been in the middle of the night when they have drag-racing down there. Have members seen that lot? Down in Myaree is where the hoons go drag-racing. I will have to talk to the Minister for Police about that because it has to be fixed.

This motion is a seriously subtle attempt by the Labor Party to engage in wedge politics; to try to say that we have taken the money away from one road and put it into another. That is nonsense. We have worked out the priorities of the government in how we spend our money —

**Hon Ken Travers:** And broken an election commitment as well.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Don't talk to me about breaking promises! I will tell members about the Tom Price road in a minute. If members really want to know about broken promises, remember there was \$100 million to build it in three years.

**Hon Ken Travers:** And how much did you spend on it—\$100 million!

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Exactly right, but the previous government was going to build it in its first term. I will tell members that it is about a quarter done—about a quarter done after the previous government had two terms! Therefore, do not ever, ever talk to us about broken promises. That was the most outrageous promise and members opposite knew it in the first place because we told them they could not build it for \$100 million. However, they went ahead and said that they were going to do it anyway. Fred Riebeling said that he would resign if the government did not build it in its first term, but he did not resign so that was another broken promise. However, the previous government's term in office is littered with broken promises.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [4.17 pm]:** I thank the President, and I start very briefly by congratulating him on his election as President and welcoming all the new members on both sides of the house to this place.

I congratulate Hon Ken Travers for bringing this, as he quite rightly said, very important motion to this house. What a sad response we have seen from the Minister for Transport and the Leader of the House. I was trying to work out quite what his credentials were to speak on this motion. Now we know it is because he lives —

**Hon Norman Moore:** Just a simple motorist.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Just a simple motorist, right, and somebody who lives just near Leach Highway.

**Hon Ken Travers:** I don't know how he even knows about the Tom Price road.

**Hon Norman Moore:** I was there on the weekend.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Were you?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** There is confusion here, I think.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The Leader of the House is obviously a bit confused about —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Perhaps the Leader of the House, the Minister for Transport and Hon Ken Travers need to reflect on the fact that they were heard with some courtesy when they made their comments and that courtesy should be returned to Hon Sally Talbot, who is on her feet.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** It was a sorry response, indeed.

I will take the opportunity to go through a little of the history of this issue. As Hon Ken Travers said, there are innumerable reasons why Roe Highway stage 8 should not go ahead, and I will canvass a couple of those. However, I want to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of this house, particularly the new members, a bit of the history of the discussion of this issue over the past few months. What have we seen from members of the government and the Minister for Transport? The minister really makes me shake my head in mystification because there would have been a time when Hon Simon O'Brien would have come into this place and blustered his way through a 10-minute response to a motion like this without his feet even touching the ground. What do we see now? He comes in and he is quoting —

**Hon Lynn MacLaren** interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Did members hear all those figures he was quoting? He has his departmental brief about where various bits of money are coming from. What I feel like saying to the Minister for Transport is that he cannot put that on the back of a pamphlet. Who is going to understand all that stuff—really? There would have been a time when he could have spun the politics on this, but he knows he cannot spin the politics on building this road through the wetlands of his electorate. He knows that one of the most important difficulties he has is that the people in his electorate do not want Roe stage 8 built.

I want to go through a bit of the history, so that we can all be seen to be starting from the same place in our understanding of this issue and the abysmal pie-up that the government is making in pushing ahead with these plans. On 17 March we on this side of the house asked the government seven questions about its plans for Roe Highway stage 8. In response to those seven questions, we saw six attempts to duck and weave, and, to use that time-honoured response in conservative politics in Australia, “Don’t you worry about that; it’ll be okay.” We asked the Minister for Environment whether she had been briefed by her department about the likely environmental damage to the Beeliar wetlands resulting from the building of Roe stage 8. The answer was no; she had not been briefed by her department, and she had not sought a briefing. We then asked the minister whether the best way to protect the wetlands might be to not build Roe stage 8. She then gave what became the stock-standard answer to this question, which was the “Don’t you worry about that.” She said that if this project reached the stage at which the bulldozers might be starting work, it would go to the Environmental Protection Authority for assessment. Well, guess what was in the newspaper on Saturday? It was the advertisement from the EPA announcing that it was now doing an assessment of this road project. Did we hear an announcement about that from anybody on the government side? Did we see this heralded? Did we see all the stakeholders contacted about this?

**Hon Ken Travers:** The Premier forgot to tell the Minister for Environment that he had done it.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I suspect, indeed, as Hon Ken Travers said, that the Minister for Environment did not even know, because not one peep did we hear about this, even though it became her standard response for the rest of the afternoon to say, “Don’t you worry about this; if it ever gets to that stage, it’ll be going to the EPA.”

We then asked the minister whether she was aware that 11 community and environmental groups had expressed very loud and well-articulated concerns about this project. She actually asked for a list of those groups so that she could work out who they might be. I got a call, after asking that question, from somebody who said that the minister had said that she might be meeting with one of those groups some time in the future. The caller said that she was a representative of that group. That was rather exciting, because it meant that somebody was actually going down onto the ground to see what effect this road would have if it was ever built. I know ministers have very busy schedules, but unfortunately the minister was only able to spare a very short time in visiting that group. Members of that group were bitterly disappointed by the fact that they felt that they were not able to convey to the minister some of their passion for the area as well as some of the arguments about why this road should not go ahead.

We then asked a question that we still have not got to the bottom of. The question was about the report that was referred to by my colleague Hon Ken Travers, and that now infamous letter from Eric Lumsden that we have referred to many times in this house over the past few months. This is the letter that informs Hon Fran Logan, the member for Cockburn, that Main Roads is doing a study to determine the transport needs of the south west and south east metropolitan area, and the Peel region, in the light of the extensive development proposals in those areas. That study is still going on; not that the government would know that. Last time we raised this issue in the house, we got as many different answers as there were people on the other side willing to get up and give their opinions. We do not know whether there is one study or two studies; and we do not know when they are reporting.

**Hon Ken Travers:** The optimum planning group is yet to report.



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**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The optimum planning group; the strategic this or that—they obviously have no idea what is happening.

We then asked—this was probably the saddest part of question time—whether the minister had asked for briefings or whether she was aware of the international conventions that would come into play for the protection of the wildlife in the area. There are, in fact, three separate conventions applying to the area: the Japan-Australia agreement for the protection of migratory birds in danger of extinction and their environment; the China-Australia agreement for the protection of migratory birds; and the Republic of Korea-Australia agreement for the protection of migratory birds. In answer to the question, the minister said that she was not aware of any of the conventions that apply to this area. Having been told over and over again that everything would be okay and that the road would be properly assessed, we now find that it has gone to assessment, that funding for the road has been fast-tracked, but that none of the environmental issues has been seriously addressed.

I will raise one more matter in the short time left to me—the government's complete engagement in subterfuge. The state government assumes that it will receive commonwealth government money. This is the elephant in the corner, and it is why Hon Simon O'Brien resorted to standing and reading out some of his department's briefings rather than provide the house with his understanding of what is happening. Hon Simon O'Brien is clearly working on the assumption that the Rudd government will give him the money he needs to build this road. Indeed, he roped in one of his federal colleagues to propagate this myth. I refer to a man who is having a very worrying time at the moment—the member for Tangney. He will cling to any bit of flotsam that floats past, including the flotsam being flung out by Hon Simon O'Brien.

The government is clearly working on the assumption that it will receive federal government money. I have news for the state government: it will not get it. What does the state government think it is doing, when it has received more than 500 pieces of correspondence from constituents all over the metropolitan area in opposition to this road? Over the years more than 4 000 people have signed petitions to say that they do not want this road. The federal government does not want this road either; it has released its list of roads for which it will provide funding, and Roe Highway stage 8 is not included. This development has been heartily welcomed by people who understand why this road should never be built. It is an act of environmental vandalism, it is old-fashioned thinking and it runs contrary to public opinion.

**HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [4.27 pm]:** I rise to support this motion. The decision by the Liberal-National government to scrap the promised upgrade of Coalfields highway will have dire consequences for economic development, employment opportunities and road safety in the south west region. During the state election campaign, Colin Barnett said that, if elected, a Liberal government would deliver \$25 million over three years for the upgrade of Coalfields highway. The Liberal government's plan for Collie-Preston, as already indicated by Hon Ken Travers, was released during the election campaign and stated very clearly the Liberal Party's assertion that Coalfields highway was perhaps the most important industrial road in the south west, and that decent transport infrastructure was essential to Collie-Preston's long-term economic and social viability, which was why the Liberal Party made a commitment to spend \$20 million to upgrade Coalfields highway. This position was reiterated by Colin Barnett in a media statement released in conjunction with the release of the Liberal Party's plan for Collie-Preston.

Now that the Liberal Party has taken office, it appears it has changed its mind about the importance of Coalfields highway to the industrial and economic development of the south west region. There is absolutely no funding for Coalfields highway in the 2009-10 budget. It is not a case of it having been delayed; it has been scrapped altogether—there is no funding for it in the forward estimates. The Liberal Party has broken its promise to upgrade Coalfields highway, and its commitment to support economic development in the south west region. Before the election, Colin Barnett said that Coalfields highway was the most important industrial road in the south west and required urgent funding for upgrades.

Yet, now, after the election, the Liberals consider that it is no longer important. One can only ask: why? It appears that the Liberal government serves and funds only those electorates that voted Liberal. The Shire of Collie together with the member for Collie-Preston, Mick Murray, lobbied hard over a number of years for an upgrade of the Coalfields highway. Having secured a commitment from the Labor government to upgrade the Coalfields highway prior to the state election, they welcomed the Liberals' decision to match its election commitment. However, having gained government, the Liberals have reneged on the election commitment to fund this important highway upgrade and have provided no explanation why.

The Coalfields highway sustains a lot of traffic, most of which is heavy vehicle traffic. The road is in a poor state and in urgent need of a major upgrade. A number of fatal accidents have occurred on the Coalfields highway and the speed limit has had to be reduced to 100 kilometres an hour due to its poor state of repair. The need to upgrade the Coalfields highway has never been more pressing than it is now, with a number of new projects and project expansions in the pipeline—specifically, they include coal exports, the proposed urea plant, the Worsley

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expansion, the Bluewaters project, a revitalisation of Muja A and B coal-fired power stations, and bauxite exports.

The Liberal government has not only scrapped funding for the urgently needed upgrade of the Coalfields highway, but also failed to provide much-needed funding to critical rail upgrades in the south west. The budget does not provide any funding for rail works on the Collie-Brunswick Junction or Brunswick Junction-Bunbury rail lines. These rail lines require work as a matter of urgency to provide for increased capacity from these proposed new projects and expansions. The Brunswick Junction-Bunbury line is just about at capacity and the Collie-Brunswick Junction line needs to be upgraded to accommodate increased freight tonnage of the amount envisaged by these projects. Without an upgrade of the rail network there is no capacity to cater for proposed projects, much less any increase in existing projects or new projects in the future. If the rail network capacity is not increased, local industries will be forced, by necessity, to use road. The potential for urea and coal exports would involve one million tonnes of coal and up to two million tonnes of urea coming down the hill from Collie to Bunbury. It would mean a huge number of loaded trucks coming down the Coalfields highway and entering into the local road network. However, this government has not funded the rail line upgrades, which force industry to use the Coalfields highway. At the same time, it has scrapped the promised funding for the urgently needed upgrade of the Coalfields highway, the very road that these industries will need to use. Without the upgrade, the road will not be able to cope with the substantial increase in heavy vehicle movements.

The decision by the Liberal-National government to scrap the promised upgrade of the Coalfields highway will have dire consequences for economic development and job creation in the south west region, as well as for road safety on this important road. To scrap the funding for the Coalfields highway upgrade in favour of directing a significant increase in funding towards the Roe Highway stage 8 project is unjustified and shows how city-centric this government really is.

Economic development in the south west region is clearly not a priority of this government. I support the motion

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [4.33 pm] — in reply: I expected to hear a better response than we did from the government today to justify its actions. If the minister was serious when he said that it was the global financial crisis that caused the government to cancel the upgrade of the Coalfields highway, we could have accepted that explanation if it had also cancelled the Roe Highway stage 8 project. If there is a global financial crisis, how can the government find \$8.8 million next financial year for Roe Highway stage 8 when its election commitment was \$20 million in 2011-12? It promised no money in 2009-10, but all of a sudden for 2009-10 it has found \$8.8 million, but it has had to cancel the Coalfields highway upgrade because there is a global financial crisis. That was explanation one from the government.

Explanation two was that the Liberal Party does not have to honour its election commitment because Labor did not make a promise along the same lines; therefore, it is justified in breaking its election commitment.

However, this government did not explain why it was able to find \$8.881 million for Roe Highway stage 8 in this tough global financial crisis but could not find the \$10 million that it promised at the election for Coalfields highway—a highway on which I understand Main Roads has already been out doing survey work in preparation of the roadworks. I wonder whether the minister can check that out and tell the house whether it is true and whether we have already wasted that money because the survey work has been done and the minister has cancelled the road.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** If you take an interjection, I'll tell you.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Yes.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Do you want me to tell you that?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Yes.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Subsequent to us coming into government Main Roads has been out commencing the planning work, as no planning work had been done for the Coalfields highway upgrade. Even if we were to proceed with it immediately, we would not be able to get on with it within the next year or two anyway; so that is another reason why it has been pushed back a bit.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The government therefore started to spend money but now it has canned the project. It could get going on it but now it has clearly made a political decision to say that it is going to break its election commitment.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** They were not the exact words I used, I don't think.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The government has clearly made a political decision to bring forward the funding for Roe Highway stage 8. Again, I thought the minister might come forward and say, "Ah, yes, the Fremantle Ports Optimum Planning Group or the south west metropolitan roads study has been completed and shows X and Y

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will occur if we build Roe Highway stage 8.” We did not get that. We never got a response to that. I can only assume, therefore, as we expected, that those studies have not been completed. The government is therefore getting on with putting \$166 million into building a road over the forward estimates in a project totalling \$550 million when it has not even done the studies and the planning to tell us whether that road will solve the problems that the Leader of the House was so very eloquently telling us about in his local neighbourhood. The Leader of the House was eloquently telling us about the problems that needed to be solved in the southern suburbs. I tell the Leader of the House that there is road congestion right across Western Australia, there is road congestion on Mitchell Freeway and there is road congestion at peak times on Kwinana Freeway. Studies have shown time and again that building more roads is not necessarily the answer. Roads often create more traffic and remain congested. We did not get an explanation from the government today on how Roe Highway would solve any of the problems, but somehow in a global financial crisis it will find \$8.8 million next year for Roe Highway at the same time as it will cancel \$10 million for Coalfields highway. The minister said that no-one sat in the budget room and made that active decision. The government might not have made an active decision, but that is the net effect of what it has done. It has taken funds from Coalfields highway and put it into Roe Highway stage 8. It has taken money from the regions that produce royalties and put it over into the southern suburbs on a project that the government cannot tell us will actually do anything for the road network in the southern suburbs.

I tell members what the government has also done in this budget that it still has not come out and admitted to. It has no money after next financial year to maintain the subsidy for containers. The Leader of the House might want to listen to this. His problems with roads in the southern suburbs will increase extraordinarily because one of the things that the last Labor government was doing was getting a lot of transport off the roads and onto rail by providing a subsidy.

**Hon Norman Moore:** Ha, ha! You go tell the people on Leach Highway that.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The number of containers on rail was increasing. It went from two per cent to well over 15 per cent, and we had a target of 30 per cent.

**Hon Norman Moore:** It made no difference, though.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** The Leader of the House should look at his government’s budget. The government has cancelled that subsidy into the forward years. The government has therefore made a political decision to put the people of Collie last and to put its obsession with Roe Highway stage 8 number one.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.