

ALBANY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Statement

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (Agricultural) [9.46 pm]: As patron of the Albany Historical Society, it was my pleasure on 4 June to attend the society's fiftieth anniversary dinner in Albany and to deliver the keynote address.

Early in 1962, a group of local Albany residents concerned about the loss of significant pieces of the town's built heritage met to discuss what could be done to halt or slow down the destruction. One of the group, Mrs Judith Gleeson, wrote a letter to the Royal Western Australian Historical Society outlining the group's concerns. The reply to her letter led to the 4 June meeting, at the Country Women's Association Hall, which saw the formation of the Albany branch of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society. One of the first tasks of the newly formed Albany branch of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society was to ensure the safety of a little cottage in Duke Street. That building was to become known as Patrick Taylor Cottage. The significance of that cottage, known only to a few people at the time, was that the building was the oldest surviving dwelling in Western Australia, having been built in 1832. Patrick Taylor Cottage stands as testimony to what hard work, vision and commitment can do in a country town like Albany.

On 11 May 1967, the Albany branch of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society ceased to exist, as the incorporation of the Albany Historical Society had been approved under the Incorporations Act. The Albany Historical Society has gone from strength to strength, particularly since 1968 when, under a management order from the Crown, it received the title for the old Albany Convict Gaol. Subsequent to establishing the Albany Convict Gaol as a museum, the society has acquired more property and responsibilities. Cataloguing, restoration and maintenance of the society's ever-expanding collection is ongoing. The hardworking and dedicated volunteers, both past and present, are to be congratulated on their efforts to help make the exhibits a wonderful tourist experience.

I would like to mention a few important people who have contributed much to the success of the Albany Historical Society, which I may add is the largest affiliated historical society in Western Australia. I never knew Homer and Ethel White personally; however, their contribution to the Albany Historical Society over many years is legendary. Bonnie and Adeline Hicks likewise have contributed greatly, particularly in the recording of Albany's history, with many writings and publications to their credit. The current chief executive officer, Andrew Eyden, was appointed in 2007, having joined the society in late 2004 as a volunteer attendant at the Albany Convict Gaol. His contribution has been remarkable, with the society now regarded as a major player in Albany's tourism offerings.

The society's museum has more than 30 000 visitors per annum. I would certainly recommend to any Legislative Council member travelling to Albany that they spend some time visiting Albany's historical buildings and memorials—some may even like to join the Albany Historical Society.

The anniversary dinner was a most enjoyable occasion. Special guests included Peter Watson, MLA; Annette Knight, former mayor, and her husband, Hon Tom Knight, former MLC; Royal Western Australian Historical Society representatives; founding member Edith Webb; chief executive officer, Andrew Eyden; committee members; former Mayor Milton Evans, and his wife, Muriel Evans; and a number of special guests and society members.

If the past 50 years are any indicator, the Albany Historical Society will continue to prosper—educating, protecting and promoting Albany's amazing heritage. That heritage will be enriched with the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Anzac fleet departure from Albany in late 2014, and the Albany Historical Society will be there.