

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Amendment to Motion

Resumed from 12 December on the following amendment moved by Hon Bruce Donaldson -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regret to inform Your Excellency that the Government is failing in its administration of the State of Western Australia.

HON DERRICK TOMLINSON (East Metropolitan) [4.16 pm]: I support the amendment moved by Hon Bruce Donaldson. The failure referred to in this amendment is in the Government's administration of the State of Western Australia. I draw a distinction between the political ineptitude of the Government and its ineptitude as the Executive Government. The political ineptitude has been addressed in the debate that has just been completed. The administrative and executive ineptitude are the subject of this amendment. The Government will address the political ineptitude. Members will find, when we come back to this place on 4 March 2003, that the seat occupied by the invisible man will be occupied by Hon Nick Griffiths. The seat currently occupied by Hon Nick Griffiths will be occupied by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. The seat currently occupied by Hon Jon Ford will be occupied by Hon Tom Stephens.

[Quorum formed.]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I was saying that, when we return to this place on 4 March 2003, some of the political ineptitude of this Government will have been addressed. The seat currently occupied by the invisible man will be occupied by Hon Nick Griffiths. The seat currently occupied by Hon Nick Griffiths will be occupied by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. The seat currently occupied by Hon Jon Ford will be occupied by Hon Tom Stephens. Hon Jon Ford will occupy the seat currently occupied by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you want to make a bet on that?

The PRESIDENT: Members, betting is not allowed in the House.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: There, Mr President, is Hon Ken Travers trying to make money out of the misfortune of poor Hon Tom Stephens! It is absolutely despicable that Hon Ken Travers would take financial advantage of one of his colleagues in that way!

Hon Jon Ford will make an excellent parliamentary secretary. As a matter of fact, I am sure that the factions will dispute whether Hon Jon Ford or Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich should get the nod to sit on the front bench in the seat now occupied by Hon Nick Griffiths. It must be an interesting tussle between the factions for the numbers at the moment. However, that is a matter for the Government to decide.

I will now address the Government's ineptitude in the administration of the State. I will illustrate that by referring to something that became glaringly obvious to me when I attended the official opening of stage 4 of Roe Highway between Welshpool Road and Kenwick Link on Sunday, 1 December 2002 at 10.00 am, to which I was invited. I do not know whether other members of the Opposition were invited. Certainly the previous minister who was responsible for much of the work on the planning of that highway had not been invited. Nevertheless, I was invited. I attend those functions whenever I am invited, because they are important. This function was very important. The event was exceedingly important for the residents of William Street in Kenwick. One of the speakers at the event said that the residents of William Street, Kenwick had suffered for 10 years as a result of the long process of the extension of Roe Highway from Welshpool Road to Kenwick Link. Indeed, they tolerated considerable suffering in that time. People who drove on William Street - I frequently drove on it to move around my electorate - were aware of the volume of heavy-haulage traffic that travelled from Roe Highway at Welshpool Road along William Street into Albany Highway, from Albany Highway into Nicholson Road and from Nicholson Road into the Canning Vale industrial area. That was an intolerable traffic burden on the residents of William Street. For them, the opening of stage 4 of Tonkin Highway was not only historic, but also a moment of considerable relief to their lifestyles. It is now very relaxing to drive down William Street. I have deliberately driven down it at various times of the day to test the effect that the extension of Tonkin Highway has had on the volume of traffic on William Street. Not only has the volume of heavy-haulage traffic diminished considerably - in fact, I have not met any heavy-haulage traffic on William Street since stage 4 of Tonkin Highway was completed - but also the volume of passenger vehicles has likewise diminished. The volume of traffic on William Street is now equivalent to the volume of traffic on a suburban backstreet.

The official opening of stage 4 of Roe Highway between Welshpool Road and Kenwick Link was a very important occasion. Quite properly, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was on the dais at the opening ceremony, because the project is within her jurisdiction. The Deputy Premier, Hon Eric Ripper, was also on the

dais. Again, it was appropriate for him to be there because, as the Treasurer, he is responsible for the capital expenditure on that project. Also on the dais was Mr Martin Whitely, the member for Roleystone. Again, it was appropriate for him to be there because the project was completed in his electorate. Any honest assessment of the last election would demonstrate that the William Street controversy was a significant factor in the change of hands of the seat of Roleystone from the incumbent Liberal member, Fred Tubby, to Mr Martin Whitely, representing the Australian Labor Party. Therefore, it was appropriate for him to be there. A representative of Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd was also on the dais. That company completed the work not only on budget, but also ahead of time. Leighton Contractors needs to be commended on that. The fifth person on the dais was a representative of the Kenwick action group. Again, I think it was quite appropriate for someone from that group to be there. He represented the pain that the people of Kenwick - William Street in particular - had suffered for 10 years. It gave everyone an opportunity to say thank you to the Government for relief. Those were the five people on the dais. Standing behind them were Tony McRae, member for Riverton, the federal member for Swan, Kim Wilkie, and an organiser from the Transport Workers Union of Australia. That is significant. I will return to that at a later stage.

The first meeting I attended on this issue was held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 5 March 1991. On 25 February 1991, I received a letter from Hon Pam Beggs, JP, MLA, Minister for Transport. The letter advised me that Main Roads, in association with the Shire of Kalamunda, was to hold a public meeting in the Beckenham Community Centre, Streatham Street, Beckenham at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 5 March 1991. The purpose of the meeting was to enable residents to be acquainted with the proposed design of the Roe Highway extension from Tonkin Highway to Welshpool Road. The meeting was a baptism of fire. I had been in Parliament for only 18 months and was very green in judgment, although very committed in attending as many electorate functions of this kind as I could.

[Quorum formed.]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: As I said, the meeting in February 1991 was a baptism of fire. I attended, expecting it to be an information evening in which residents would be informed of plans for the extension of Roe Highway from Tonkin Highway to Welshpool Road. The meeting was called by the Shire of Kalamunda in association with Main Roads. Beckenham is not within the Shire of Kalamunda; it is in the City of Gosnells. Stage 2 of Roe Highway between Tonkin Highway and Welshpool Road was within the Shire of Kalamunda. As such, the Shire of Kalamunda was the host of the meeting. However, the meeting turned into not an information evening but a war between two factions opposed to the extension of Roe Highway to Welshpool Road and to the inadequacy of the preparation for Roe Highway and Welshpool Road. The groups under attack were Main Roads Western Australia and - surprise, surprise - the City of Gosnells. The two groups represented residents of William Street and property owners in Albany Highway. The residents of William Street predicted what came to pass; that is, that building the extension from Tonkin Highway to Welshpool Road and from there diverting the highway traffic into William Street would have the effect of increasing the volume of heavy haulage traffic along William Street. It was the only sensible route and the shorter route between Roe Highway, the Cannington industrial area and the Canning Vale markets. The residents were outraged because they predicted the consequences on their lifestyle. They demanded that the next stage of Roe Highway be brought forward to minimise the period during which they must suffer the consequences of that traffic. That happened in 1991. I attended the opening of that stage in 2002. I can understand their chagrin and their anger; they expressed them at that meeting in February 1991.

The second group, however, had a different concern. In 1991 the plan was for an intersection of Roe and Albany Highways. The site of the intersection was uncertain because the engineering planning for that stage had not been done. However, landowners, in particular commercial landowners, had made investment decisions based on the best information available to them on the siting of the intersection of Roe and Albany Highways. Some landowners and residents of Wimbledon Street were aggrieved because they foresaw the consequences on their lifestyle of a diversion of Albany Highway around what is now known as the Kenwick Link. Therefore, Main Roads and the City of Gosnells came under vigorous attack at that public information meeting. Both the City of Gosnells and Main Roads went away from that meeting humiliated and with their tail between their legs. To its credit, Main Roads learnt a great deal from that meeting. I observed from then on that Main Roads never produced a road proposal without its first being released for thorough public consultation. Thorough public consultation in advance of a decision being made about the location of a main road is now a standard procedure of Main Roads. From that meeting in 1991, therefore, came that virtue in the procedures of Main Roads. One of the first public consultation groups was established to look at the preferred siting of the link to the intersection of Albany and Roe Highways and, secondly, to consider a proposal to divert Albany Highway along Wimbledon Street - the now Kenwick Link. That consultation process took 12 months and produced three alternatives, which were again circulated for public consultation. They were not simply considered by a consultative group in which the local community was represented. Public opinion was sought through public meetings, displays and information days. A shopfront was established on Albany Highway, where a model of the alternatives was

displayed and residents were invited to express their opinions. It was an excellent exercise in public relations. Inevitably, in any of these exercises, time is consumed. A decision was made, firstly, to divert part of Albany Highway through Kenwick and to widen that section of the highway; and, secondly, to reaffirm the Wimbledon Street deviation. The consequence of that decision was that what had been a single stage of Roe Highway from Welshpool Road to Nicholson Road, Cannington, became stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. Stage 2 became the building of the Kenwick Link, which took 18 months. Stage 3 became the re-routing and widening of Albany Highway along the railway line at Kenwick. However, what seemed a fairly simple engineering exercise was an exceedingly complicated engineering exercise because the proposal was to build a tunnel for the passenger rail under Roe Highway rather than have a split level crossing. The design involved re-routing the highway, building the tunnel, re-establishing the highway and relocating the railway line. It involved a fairly substantial engineering undertaking. Halfway through the design stage the Government made another decision to route the passenger rail at Kenwick from the Armadale passenger line into the goods traffic line to Kwinana. That meant that the tunnel had to divert to two routes - one for the Armadale route and the other for the intended Perth-to-Mandurah route.

Hon Ken Travers: What year are we up to now?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I am up to events in 1996.

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I have been listening now for 12 minutes as the member has debated the amendment, which reads in part -

but regret to inform Your Excellency that the Government is failing in its administration of the State of Western Australia.

If it were the substantive motion, the member would be entitled to trace history. However, we have been having history lessons now for some time. I fail to see the relevance of the member's remarks to the amendment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Hon Ken Travers has raised a point of order and has read to the House the amendment, which states -

That the following words be added to the end of the motion -

but regret to inform Your Excellency that the Government is failing in its administration of the State of Western Australia

Like Hon Ken Travers, I, too, have read the amendment and I have listened to Hon Derrick Tomlinson. The words "is failing" certainly do not prevent a member citing the reasons the Government is failing. If the Government fails to act on something that it had the capacity to act on, it seems to me that, in the view of the member, it could be said that it is failing. Hon Derrick Tomlinson's comments may not be palatable to some, but they are well within the words of the amendment.

Debate Resumed

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Hon Ken Travers does not appreciate that understanding history is the key to understanding the present. I started by saying that those people suffered for 10 years. I will go through those 10 years and explain why they suffered in that period. I also want to praise the work of Main Roads Western Australia in those 10 years, and then I will demonstrate the failure of the Executive Government of this State.

I had reached the engineering design stage of the bifurcation of the tunnel. Therefore, there was a delay in engineering design while the railway engineers reconfigured the tunnel that they had designed for the Roe Highway underpass. That caused a further 12-month delay. By 1999 the tunnel was under construction, and road building was under way. I stress that this meant, first of all, relocating the railway line to a temporary diversion and then relocating the highway. Having relocated the highway to a temporary diversion, the tunnel was constructed. Once the tunnel was constructed, the new highway alignment was then constructed. Once the new highway alignment was constructed, the railway was relocated to its original alignment - a long and complicated engineering process. The logistics of it were commendable from the point of view of those responsible for the engineering design and construction - Main Roads Western Australia.

I made the point that following the horrendous meeting at Beckenham in 1991, Main Roads has not undertaken a major road construction without public consultation taking place in advance. It also learnt to constantly inform the residents affected of what would happen, and at any time the residents could go to the construction site and the information would be available to them. The residents could stand and watch the construction through a glass window. There was constant dialogue between Main Roads and the residents.

I will illustrate one of the dialogues that I became involved in as late as 2000. Part of the problem for William Street was that it was to be spared the heavy-haulage traffic, which would use Roe Highway. Then came the question of where William Street would terminate. Would William Street continue to flow into Welshpool

Road, at what point would it flow into Welshpool Road, and where would it connect with the industrial area on the northern side of Welshpool Road? Main Roads' solution was simple: William Street would simply follow Welshpool Road for a kilometre and a half and then join it at an intersection a kilometre away. Any resident who was used to driving along the William Street-Welshpool Road dogleg into the industrial area now had an extra three to five kilometres to travel. As members might imagine, they were not happy. I happened to visit one of those enterprises on another matter. The owner of the business asked me whether I knew what was happening with the extension of William Street. I explained what I understood to be happening. He told me that he had not been advised of that. I said that he surely must have been, but he said that he had not. A meeting of the local business proprietors was called, which I attended. I listened to their genuine complaints. They said that they had not been told. I told them that I could not believe that, because Main Roads was assiduous in informing affected property owners, but they insisted that they had not been told. I told them I would fix that. I rang Main Roads and spoke to the engineer. In those days we were allowed to speak to public servants; we did not have to get the permission of the minister before we could speak to public servants.

Hon Ken Travers: We did!

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Members opposite did?

Hon Graham Giffard: Yes.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is disgraceful! It is disgraceful when a member of Parliament cannot represent his or her constituents by going directly to executive government. If members opposite were affected in that way, I apologise. I am disgusted by that. However, that is a side issue; I am being distracted from the motion.

Hon Nick Griffiths: I don't think it is a side issue. I think your ministers treated your backbench differently from the way in which they treated the Opposition.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order! Hon Derrick Tomlinson does not need any help.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I am constantly being distracted from the message of the debate!

I called a meeting. I was embarrassed, because the first thing that the Main Roads' official did when he walked into the meeting was to shake hands and say, "G'day Fred, g'day Charlie, g'day Mary". He knew them all by name. I thought that that was interesting. They then recited all the things that they had put to him at three previous meetings. I had been absolutely duped! I rang the next day and apologised to the Main Roads' official, because I had been led to believe that there had not been any dialogue. In fact, there had been constant dialogue about this very issue with those people. The Main Roads' official said that this happened all the time and that Main Roads was used to it; it was part of the process and part of what they had to do.

I now refer to a matter closer to the present. In 2001 the previous Government was confronted with the embarrassing realisation that it was overcommitted on its roads program. The four-cents-a-litre program had been killed by a decision of the High Court. Part of the road building program was predicated on that four-cents-a-litre program. Certainly the extension of Roe Highway was predicated on that hypothecated revenue. A decision was made not to proceed with Roe Highway at that time. However, the minister of the day then entered into dialogue with his counterpart in the federal Government to get federal funding for Roe Highway. In the meantime, of course, Roe Highway became a matter of considerable political debate because William Street separated the seats of Belmont, which was held by Mr Eric Ripper, now the Deputy Premier of Western Australia, and Roleystone, which was held by Mr Fred Tubby. Mr Ripper's seat was never in doubt; Mr Tubby's seat was under considerable challenge. It became a hotbed of conflict, which had to be resolved one way or the other. It was resolved politically in the present Government's favour. It won the seat of Roleystone. Any independent analysis of voting in the seat of Roleystone would indicate that the William Street issue was significant.

The then Government had been actively working to overcome the issue. It was too late in persuading the residents of Kenwick that there was a resolution of the problem by persuading the federal Government to accept Roe Highway stages 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 as being a road of national importance. In December 2000 the Prime Minister in a speech at Mandurah announced that the federal Government would be assuming responsibility for the Roe Highway with a \$76 million grant to the State for sections 4, 5, 6 and 7. This meant that \$76 million would be injected into the State's roads program over three years and that the Roe Highway extension stage 4 could proceed.

The contract for the design and construction was ready to be let in March 2001 - in other words, a month after the election. It went ahead and the contract was let in May 2001, not by the Court Government but by the Gallop Government. Main Roads, which had been responsible for the design of the contract, was ready to proceed as soon as the funds were made available. The federal Government made the funds available in December 2000. From that stage on, the relief from heavy-haulage vehicles travelling along William Street was assured.

I now come to the ineptitude of the public administration of this Government. At the beginning of my presentation I told members who was sitting on the podium. Each of those people on the podium spoke. The master of ceremonies was the minister, Hon Alannah MacTiernan. She praised the member for Roleystone for achieving this great moment for the people of Kenwick, because if he had not acted in the way he had done, the highway would never have been built. What did he do? He said to the people of Kenwick in a letter that if it was not built by the end of 2002, he would resign. That was very bold stuff, particularly when he knew that the money was already in the bank! However, to the victor goes the spoils; so considerable praise to him. As an electoral strategy, it was excellent - unprincipled, but excellent. Hon Eric Ripper spoke next and said that had it not been for the work of Hon Martin Whitely - sorry; not Hon Martin Whitely. He will never make it; he is a one-termer -

Hon Ken Travers: He is an honourable man.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Yes, I will give the member that, but he will never make it; he is a one-termer. Martin Whitely was also praised by Hon Eric Ripper. Hon Eric Ripper then stood and said to the assembled people of Kenwick, "Your Government has surplus budgets. However, your Government is not wasting the surplus budget. The surplus budget is being spent on projects like this; we are spending the surplus on building Roe Highway." There was not a word about the \$76 million from the federal Government - not a cracker. There was not even a representative of the federal Government at that meeting. The only representative of the federal Parliament was the federal member for Swan. Martin Whitely then spoke. The Leighton Contractors Pty Limited representative then spoke -

An opposition member interjected.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: No; the trades union did not speak. The representative of the people of Kenwick then spoke very well indeed.

What I found disturbing was that Main Roads WA was not mentioned. I looked around the podium to see the Main Roads' representatives. They were not there. Guess where they were! They were sitting behind me in the audience! These were the senior executives of Main Roads, who for the past 10 years had been responsible for all the design and redesign work and for all the public consultation on Roe Highway, and who had had to suffer all the public complaints from the meeting in February 1991 until the day when Roe Highway was opened, and they were not even acknowledged! They sat behind me in the audience, unheralded and unacknowledged. One of the important things about executive government is that it is responsible for every decision and action of the Public Service. The public sector is under its direct administration. I have always admired the public sector in Western Australia, because it is scrupulously honest and scrupulously loyal to the Government of the day. I am disappointed at the process that has emerged over the past decade of politicising the public sector. Whenever we have a change of government we have a change of heads of departments, because the Government of the day feels that it cannot trust these senior executives and it shifts them. I am disappointed at that trend, because from my observation the public sector is loyal to and fulfils the directions of the Government of the day; it does not have to like it, but it does it and it does it well. One of the very good and commendable departments that we used to have is Main Roads WA. In that history to which Hon Ken Travers has objected, I demonstrated the professional work of Main Roads in not merely designing the route but also consulting with all the people affected by it and making sure that every decision it made was a decision that those affected by it knew and accepted in advance. Decisions were not foisted upon the residents without their knowledge; they participated in the decision-making process along the way and Main Roads WA deserves nothing but praise for that. What did this inept Government and its inept Minister for Planning and Infrastructure do? It sat them somewhere at the back and did not acknowledge them. If that is the way a Government treats the public sector, then it deserves censure. In this instance not only the minister but also the Government deserve censure. The Government and the minister are collectively responsible because they collectively insulted Main Roads. I take no great pleasure advising the Government that it is inept in its administration of this State.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Simon O'Brien.