

TALISON LITHIUM — COLLIE — WORKFORCE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [2.50 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house condemns the McGowan government for pressuring Talison Lithium to preferentially employ up to 350 workers from Collie at its expanding operation in Greenbushes, thereby encouraging a community-crushing drive in, drive out workforce.

Obviously, there has been some recent discussion about this. It is my understanding that there has been agreement with the government about a set of rules for this debate.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [2.51 pm]: I move —

To insert after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The SPEAKER: Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need an absolute majority in order to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [2.52 pm]: I move the motion. This government has form in its interaction of the mining sector with communities in regional Western Australia. We know what the Minister for Lands did with Bay Village in Karratha, going against the wishes of the local community. We know about the successive extensions of the lease with Kurra Village in Newman by the Minister for Lands at the time, which again, did not keep tension in the market to support its interaction with the community. But the government has gone to a whole new level. I will get to that point in a second.

The National Party and I support the expansion of Talison Lithium. It is a fantastic investment. It is good for local jobs and it is good for the lithium industry. I think it has about 40 per cent of the world trade in lithium—a fairly substantial part of it. It is good for the development of the renewable sector going forward. It is also a good company, with a really good corporate citizenship front, particularly with former councillor Pat Scallan as its general manager. Pat picked up a community award at the Australia Day awards recently. The interaction with the Greenbushes community, and by extension, to Bridgetown, has been outstanding. It is a quality company. The company has been interacting really strongly with the community because it knows that the community wants the benefit of having the mining sector there. The company knows that the community wants to see jobs and see the community participate in things that the mining company is involved with. They also want to see more kids at their school. They want to see a broad economic kick to their region, so much so that all the shires have got together, smartened up and done an audit of what is happening. They have looked at housing, opportunities for development and opportunities to cater for jobs growth in their region. That is not just in Bridgetown and Greenbushes; it has included Nannup, Donnybrook, Boyup Brook and Manjimup. It is really doing the yards. When I asked questions during estimates last year about what the government was doing, I was told it was doing work for the South West Development Commission. Again, there was a good level of engagement for getting those outcomes.

Now we see the government putting pressure on the company to employ people from Collie in the Greenbushes mine on a drive in, drive out basis. I do not know whether that is drive in, drive out on a daily basis or drive in and stay at the work camp in a section of the operations village in order to work at the mine. It is 100 kilometres away from Collie. That is not supporting local employment. The government is actively supporting a drive in, drive out workforce, which is against the interests of that community and the interaction between Talison Lithium and the community so far, including one of the government agencies. This goes well beyond all bounds of regional development. It goes against all regional development thinking. Robbing one community to pay another community does not make sense. I recall talking to a previous president of the Shire of Collie about the issues in Collie. One of the concerns raised in Collie was the higher level of drive in, drive out workforce coming to jobs in Collie. Can members imagine if the government suddenly paid for a bus to bring people to Collie to drive in and drive out? The member for Collie–Preston would be going spare. He would be absolutely going spare.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Sport and Recreation to order. He is the Minister for Sport and Recreation, not the member for Collie–Preston anymore. He has been promoted!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The government is not only strongarming the company to make sure it employs people from Collie, 100 kilometres away, but also funding a bus to bus them there. It goes against all regional development thinking, against the efforts that the minister cited in all his papers for when he ran for the seat last time, and against all the thinking that the government pitched last election in its Plan for Jobs. All that has gone out the window because it is preferentially treating one community in favour of another, and getting it to take jobs from 100 kilometres away. That is not supportive of regional development. This government deserves to be condemned for this action.

I support the government making efforts to support Collie. When a big change is happening in the energy sector, it has to do that, but it should not do it at the cost of another community, and it should not put in resources to make it happen. We do not support a drive in, drive out workforce. There is more than enough capacity within the shires that sit around the Bridgetown–Greenbushes community to soak up that workforce. Why not shift them there? Why not shift them from Collie to live there? They would welcome that, but that is not what this government is trying to achieve.

If we take this argument, some other options could be put up. Firstly, the government could have secured some jobs for local businesses; instead, it put out the tender and it got a company from Malaga to build the trucks in Collie. A local business was trying to pick up that tender. It did not; it missed out. The lame line from the Premier was that the government had to go to a tender process, but its Plan for Jobs refers to changing the rules to ensure that local companies pick up those jobs. It goes against what the Premier said before the last election. The government even paid the Malaga company \$2.5 million to relocate a level of capacity to work in Collie. Again, that goes against the whole thinking about local communities getting jobs, and regional development. Secondly, the government committed to \$60 million for a biomass plant and a solar energy facility, which, at the last election, Mick Murray, the member for Collie–Preston, said —

A McGowan Labor Government will commit \$30 million to support the building of a biomass energy plant in Collie and \$30 million to support the establishment of a solar farm in Collie.

I asked questions about this —

- (a) Did the government go out to a formal expression of interest process seeking proponents for the projects: ...

The answer was no. My second question was —

... did the government undertake any process that sought out interested parties in the projects;

The answer was no. The government has not even tested the market to see whether there is interest in its \$60 million election commitment. There are more than enough answers for Collie. The government is now pitting one community against another. That is not right; it goes against all the objectives of regional development.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.59 pm]: I support the Nationals WA's motion. This is an absolute joke. How often do we get a mining operation in the south west—God's paradise? It is very rare to have towns located close enough so that people can live in one town and drive to a mine site. Talison Lithium is being told how to run its operations, and 350 people will have to travel on a bus from Collie via Donnybrook, Mullalyup and Balingup to get to a worksite. Talison already has a very sensible safety policy on who drives to the mine site. I will let members know what it is. Currently, 86 per cent of Talison's employees on 12-hour shifts reside within a 30-minute radius of the mine site. If workers go on to a 10-hour shift, they have to reside within 60 minutes of the mine site. If workers do an eight-hour day, they are allowed to have a 75-minute drive. A normal shift is 12 hours. If a worker lives in Collie and has to be bused in to the mine site, it will be a 14-hour day. What about the industrial manslaughter legislation the government is going to bring in? Who would be responsible if there is an accident because a worker onsite is tired or fatigued from every day having to drive for an hour before their 12-hour shift and then an hour back home? Will it be the government or the minister who is imposing this condition?

Let us look at the distances. Bunbury is 64 minutes away, which is the same distance as from Collie to the mine site. Workers could be bused in from Bunbury, but that will not help Collie, will it? Donnybrook is 31 minutes away. Boyanup is 43 minutes away. Mumballup is 48 minutes away. One has to go through Mumballup to get to Greenbushes. Balingup is only 10 minutes away. Nannup is 37 minutes away. Boyup Brook is 32 minutes away and Greenbushes is two minutes away. Why would a worker not live in Greenbushes when they are going to work in Greenbushes? That is where the workers should be, and that is exactly what we should be promoting. Bridgetown is 14 minutes away and Manjimup is 40 minutes away.

I know someone who lives in Balingup who worked on the Talison expansion project and is very well skilled. What will happen to them? If they apply for a job, will they find out that there is a state government-imposed

policy at the mine site? Will they be told, “Sorry, we can’t employ you; the next two people we need to employ have to be from Collie”? This person has three uncles who live in Collie. Does he go and stay with his uncle and apply saying that he now lives in Collie? That would drain the economic benefit of him living in Balingup. That is one minute example. Those 350 people could live in any of those towns I mentioned that are very close to the mine site, but they have to live in Collie. The member mentioned they may not have the workforce of 350 people because they may not want to live there. What would happen if 350 people were on a bus every day on that nice scenic road? It is not really a road we want to have buses on—Mumballup Road, past the Mumby pub.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [3.02 pm]: I am very happy to urge the house to reject this motion. I can tell that none of the members who spoke in this debate have spoken to Talison Lithium about this issue, because the government has not said to anybody that they must employ people from Collie. The government said that there is a skilled workforce in Collie, and we want to make it available to the Greenbushes project. The member for Warren–Blackwood says that people should sell their house in Collie. Think about that. We have a town that is going through a transition and his plan is for people to sell their house. That is what he wants to happen. Right in the middle of the transition, he wants people to leave Collie. That is a disgraceful suggestion. It is no wonder the Nationals WA have been rejected in Collie for over 20 years—for two decades. They are still bitter that the Minister for Seniors and Ageing was able to best them in that seat, and has done it again and again.

Before the member for Nedlands opens his mouth, he should think through what he is saying. He said that it is extraordinary that there is a mine in the south west. A quarter of the mining industry is in the south west. A quarter of Western Australia’s mining activity is in the state’s south west. It is one of the most productive mining regions in the world. He was the former Minister for Mines and Petroleum and he got up and talked about how it is a surprise that there is a mine in the south west. I suppose if he ever drove to Greenbushes, he would have to drive past Alcoa Wagerup, all the mineral sands projects and Collie to get to Greenbushes, and would he not notice that there is this massive industry employing thousands and thousands of workers before he got there. Just do not embarrass yourself, mate.

We are also not saying that they have to employ people from Collie. As I say, we are giving them the option to employ those high-skilled workers who are in an industry that is being displaced. There is another issue: 60 per cent of the workers at the Muja power station and 40 per cent of the people at the Premier coal mine do not live in Collie, so we are giving them the option of going to a different industrial location from Collie, because we know a transition is going on in the workforce in Collie. That is what is happening. We are trying to look after the people of Collie, and the National Party is still jealous because it has been rejected by that community for two decades. I remind members—what is the total population of Greenbushes?

Mr P. Papalia: It is 362.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The total population of Greenbushes is 362 men, women and children. What a ridiculous idea that they could recruit the entire workforce from those 362 people. How ridiculous! When the member for Nedlands is driving down to Greenbushes, he would drive past the little compound for South 32 Worsley and he might see the bus that runs from just outside Bunbury to the refinery busing workers from Bunbury to Collie. That happens every day. Any time that the member for Nedlands ever drives down there, he would drive past that street—what is that road? So that is ridiculous! What a criticism. People have been bused to Worsley for 30 years, but suddenly it is an outrage.

I do not understand why the National Party does not like tenders. Let us understand what happened with the firefighting equipment. There was an open tender and the jobs plan applied to it. The jobs plan does not say, “You must select.” It says in the criteria that local employment is one of the decision-making points. They made a decision that the Western Australian industry would get it. That is done independent of ministers; that is not a ministerial decision. I know that this is somehow strange for the opposition—the idea that a government lets public servants make independent decisions without ministers interfering, but that is what happened. The government then did its bit to ensure that the work ends up in Collie. Yes, we got a highly skilled company from Malaga to locate some of its operations in the south west. Is not that a great idea? It is the same as the decision to locate Piacentini and Son there. Again, it took an active government to involve itself in that great decision. Collie is now one of the fulcrums of automation in the world. Think about that. That is the exact sort of thing that we should be celebrating. Members opposite should be standing up, like Hon Dr Steve Thomas, and congratulating the government for doing its job getting Collie ready for this transition. This is to be celebrated. This is a ridiculous motion that shows that the member does not understand the consequences of what he is asking for. The member’s plan is to take people out of Collie. Our plan is to keep people in Collie. The member’s plan is to punish the people of Collie for electing an active member. Our plan is to reward the people of Collie. We are a stable government that has made long-term decisions for the proper interests of the people of this state because we have a Premier who is focused and provides leadership. Members opposite are rabble, with divisions within themselves and divisions amongst the parties. They will not even sit as an opposition. It is obvious that members opposite never pay attention

Mr Terry Redman; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Mick Murray

to the detail, which was clear in the member for Nedlands' contribution today outlining that he does not understand the strength of the mining industry in the south west.

There is no leadership, no understanding of the needs of the people of this state, and no guiding principles to set up for the future decision-making that we all need. This is a disgrace. The National Party has abandoned the people of Collie and the Liberal Party is standing alongside it. They are not interested in keeping people in Collie. They are not interested in making sure that the people of Collie have access to high-skilled jobs. We should celebrate the fact that we have a skilled workforce in Collie. As the Premier said yesterday, the people of Collie for 120 years have powered this state, and now, when we are at an inflection point in the power industry, when things are changing, the Labor Party, unlike the Liberal and National Parties, is never going to abandon the people of Collie. We are not going to give them false promises, like \$250 million on a power station that did not work, which is exactly what the Liberal and National Parties did. Imagine if we had that \$250 million available to us today to spend on job-creating activities in Collie. That would make a real difference. Thank you.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [3.10 pm]: I do not have a lot of time. The first question I ask of the Nationals WA: are they now proposing that all the people who come from Donnybrook, Greenbushes or Bridgetown and work in Collie give in their jobs? Is that what they are asking? Of the 3 000-plus people who work in that region, many come from Bridgetown or even Margaret River and travel, because of the four-day shifts —

Mr D.T. Redman interjected.

The SPEAKER: You had your go, member for Warren–Blackwood!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: They are on four-day shifts and they travel. I am asking, because the Nationals are saying that we cannot have people travelling from one town to another. Are they now saying that the people from Bridgetown should not have a job —

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, minister.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: — at the power stations or in the mines over there at the moment? It is ridiculous. What we are saying—I follow on from the previous minister—is let us give those people a chance if there is a job there and they can travel. People do travel. I think there are about 40 people working in that area who travel, stay at the camp and come back at weekends. What the member is saying is just ridiculous.

I will give members a bit of a history lesson; I do not have a great deal of time. Who put on the buses from Bunbury to the power stations in Collie? It was the Liberal and National Parties that put those buses on, because they said it would be easier for the people of Bunbury to travel up the hill. Some of them have now relocated back to Collie after that finished because they have now retired. What members opposite are saying is absolutely ridiculous. It would be impossible to find 350 people with the click of a finger to go down to that job tomorrow; they are not there. Members should get their facts right. The former Minister for Mines and Petroleum made a ridiculous statement about the regions and travelling. I never heard him say one word when the Shire of Collie was saying, “Let’s have a look at the hours that they’re working and the drive in, drive out.” Not one word came out of his mouth while he was the minister, yet he had the gall to stand up and say that.

Mr R.R. Whitby: Well said.

The SPEAKER: Well said, too.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Mr V.A. Catania
Ms M.J. Davies
Mrs L.M. Harvey
Dr D.J. Honey
Mr P.A. Katsambanis

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr S.K. L’Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr W.R. Marmion

Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms L. Mettam
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr K.M. O’Donnell

Mr D.T. Redman
Mr P.J. Rundle
Mrs A.K. Hayden (*Teller*)

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Mr Terry Redman; Mr David Templeman; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Mick Murray

Noes (38)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr M. Hughes	Mr P. Papalia	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.J. Price	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms J. Farrer	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Ms S.E. Winton
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms C.M. Rowe	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms A. Sanderson	
Mr T.J. Healy	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Ms J.J. Shaw	

Pair

Mr I.C. Blayney

Mr K.J.J. Michel

Question thus negatived.