

NEWMAN — SOCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Nationals WA seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [2.56 pm]: I move —

That this house calls on the McGowan government to urgently address social and infrastructure issues in Newman to restore community confidence and safety.

The Nationals WA bring this MPI to the house today because this issue has been drawn to our attention by the community of Newman. I do not think it is over-egging it to say that this community is on the brink of crisis. Some very serious issues need to be addressed. The community has been asking for assistance from the government to rectify this and at present those calls are falling on deaf ears. Today we would like to take the opportunity to outline some of those issues and to call on the Premier and his cabinet to take the issues that have been raised with them seriously and explain to the community of Newman what they are going to do to make sure that community continues to grow and thrive.

I will start the debate with a rhetorical question: who has been to Newman? I am sure that the Premier and many of his ministers have been there and I am —

Mr K.J.J. Michel: How many of you have been to Newman?

The SPEAKER: You get called to order for the first time, member for Pilbara.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: You do not think I am silly enough to ask a rhetorical question about who has been to Newman if I am not confident that my members have been there, do you, member for Pilbara? Sit back there and listen, because they are not very happy with you.

The SPEAKER: Member for Central Wheatbelt, through the Chair. Member for Pilbara, that is your last warning.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It was not an aggressive question. I am saying that it is a beautiful part of the world. Newman has always been known for being a very welcoming and pleasant town to visit. I know that many members will have visited from time to time as ministers or members of the opposition and the like.

Newman is a very important cog in the wheel of the state and the nation's economy, and generates significant revenue for our state. I do not think it is too much for its residents to ask for support from the government of the day when they need it. Obviously, there is a very big employer in town, which has a significant impact on the community—that is, BHP. It is an employer, a significant property owner in the community, and its employees who are based there residentially are part of the community. Two very significant players in the community, the government and BHP, can have a serious impact on the outcome of the current situation.

If someone had not been to Newman and was planning to visit, they might have a bit of a google. I did that this morning and the results that came up were descriptions such as —

Newman, the largest inland town in the Pilbara, is a modern, attractive mining town in the heart of the Ophthalmia Ranges.

Scrolling down, the websites list a whole lot of things to see and do in Newman. Radio Hill Lookout, for those who have not been, has beautiful views, particularly in the afternoon, and views of the mine. The websites talk about the Martumili Artists and the East Pilbara Arts Centre, which is a jewel in the crown for the Pilbara. A fantastic facility that is quite unique in the sense that it not only exhibits internationally renowned artists, but also facilitates people meeting those artists, because they work in and are from Newman and the surrounding lands. It is a beautiful centre that the community uses for a raft of reasons. The centre is supported, I might say, by the previous government's royalties for regions funding and very much loved by the community. If one were to scroll down further, they would see attractions further afield; it is the gateway to an amazing part of our state.

What people will not find, but is widely acknowledged by the local community and amongst those who have visited the town, and is as plain as the nose on my face, Mr Speaker, is the fact that locals now call sections of the town East Timor or liken it to a war zone. Sections of that town are simply disgraceful. I visited the town with my colleague Hon Jacqui Boydell, member for Mining and Pastoral Region, and was shocked to see how badly some sections of this beautiful town have disintegrated. There is a reason for that. The community is aware of those reasons and knows what is driving some of these very poor outcomes. It is disappointing that neither the government, nor the biggest employer in town, have acknowledged that sections of this community look like a war zone, and that there are complex issues that the community needs support to deal with. We bring BHP into this

Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

argument because it is a big property owner and employer in the town and it could make a real difference if it chose to change some of its practices in the community. It would be remiss of me not to point out that although we have big advertising campaigns from the likes of BHP saying, “We think big” and “We delivered this much”, those campaigns are in stark contrast to the reality many residents in Newman are living at this moment.

I premise all these remarks by the fact that the community wants to take action. The community wants to be proactive and deal positively with some of the situations it is faced with today, but it has been challenged because it has received very little traction with those within government with whom people have raised the issue, and frustrated by some of BHP’s policies as a property owner and landowner in the community. Newman residents and their community leaders know that there is a positive future for Newman and that there are some great things to do and places to visit in Newman. Certainly, some people have called Newman home for a long time. They are asking for some help and trying to prevent the crisis moving on any further. I think Newman is crying out for help. As I said, my colleague Jacqui Boydell, member for Mining and Pastoral Region, and I visited the town in early April. We were shocked. It was very confronting. We drove down streets with the shire’s CEO and saw house after house boarded up amongst empty blocks with burnt-out car bodies. There was graffiti and vandalism interspersed with what was obviously social housing that seemed overcrowded and in a poor state of affairs. The numbers we were provided are damning. Some 500 homes in Newman are vacant—that is about 20 per cent of the housing stock in the community.

The SPEAKER: Members, if you want to have a meeting, go outside, please.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Seeing that many houses and that percentage of the town’s entire housing stock vacant and unused would have an impact in any community. Mr Speaker, 160 of these houses were boarded up. That is BHP-owned housing stock. Some of the houses have been boarded up for more than two years, and probably longer than that.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the House!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On some of the streets we went down, we saw boarded-up house, boarded-up house, boarded-up house and then one lone residence surrounded by a plethora of empty houses. That is not a community. That is not what people who live in Newman want to live in. Of course, with those empty houses comes the associated social problems. It would be no surprise to anyone in this house that if we overlay the areas police are called to most frequently, it directly correlates with the areas in which there is the highest number of vacant houses, particularly in east Newman. From what I am told, I understand there is a correlation. It would be interesting for the Minister for Police to comment on that, because there are some very easy policy strings that could be pulled in relation to that. We could also have a conversation with BHP about how it manages the empty housing stock.

I want to refer to an article written by Rebecca Parish posted on the ABC North West WA website on 24 April 2019. She spoke to some of the residents impacted by this behaviour. Under the subheading “Residents fed up”, the article states —

Doc Davey owns one of the worst damaged properties in Newman—a home he bought as part of his retirement plan.

“We had it leased out to the police for five years and then they vacated because of the problems that were emanating from the area. Straight after they left, within 3 months, the damage started,” Mr Davey said.

“We rebuilt the back fence six times, the damage just kept on coming.

“It is a basket case and we just haven’t been able to get on top of it.

“It’s worse than third world.”

Lucy-Anne Tokona lives in a home surrounded by vacant properties.

Recently one of the six properties boarded up to the rear of her house was used by numerous people for squatting.

She said she would feel safer if people were actually living in the homes.

“All of the houses around us have been empty for the two years we’ve been here,” Ms Tokona said.

“Its not much of a community neighbourhood, we need people living in the houses.

“You’ve got so much FIFO but I don’t know why when there are people here that need jobs, it’s like a transient town, isn’t it?”

To me, that says it all. Comments from police and local government referred to in that article and in another in *The West Australian* concur that the town is crying out for help and that things need to be done. As I said, the

community has attempted to raise these concerns with government; it has also offered some potential solutions. The community is aware that it cannot just come to the government to moan and point out the problems, and that it is always helpful to offer some solutions. As yet, to the community's knowledge, there has been no response in any meaningful way to those solutions. I say to the Premier, without over-egging the situation, that I feel that there are similarities in Newman to the situation we dealt with a couple of years ago in Kalgoorlie. All the precursors are present in Newman, and without swift and proactive action very soon, they could well lead to something far worse. There is antisocial behaviour, vandalism and a perception and a reality of rising crime that is draining police resources. Police acknowledge that is part of their role but have publicly stated in media interviews that it is a challenge to manage. There is alcohol consumption mixed with juvenile crime. One of the issues talked about is overcrowding in social housing, which is obviously leading to some of these more complex issues, particularly with the kids.

The shire told us that there are no senior government employees in the community—members will recall that that was an issue in Kalgoorlie as well—and there was a call for someone senior to coordinate government agency responses across the board. That issue has been raised with government and the community would like to see action. The community just needs some support. All the government agencies and the people they report to are based in Port Hedland, which is some way from Newman. Some very serious issues need to be dealt with, and it would be viewed very positively if the community could have someone senior to coordinate some of those responses—a higher level officer located in Newman to provide oversight and coordinate any response that might be developed with the stakeholder. That is not right.

These issues are being compounded by the transition underway from the town reserve and some of the outlying communities. I will not dwell on that because that in itself is a very complex and challenging issue, but it has been raised with us in relation to that community. The community is facing a changing demographic and wants to be able to deal with it positively, rather than trying to deal with the fallout from some of the issues that come with that changing demographic. Certainly, it goes back to that overcrowding issue and social housing that is being exacerbated and causing flow-on problems.

I think there is a potent mix in Newman at the moment. There is overcrowding in government housing, boarded-up and vacant houses owned by BHP and crime hotspots that correlate to those areas. There is a lack of senior decision-makers based in the community and those who are there feel helpless and neglected. The community feels that it has been neglected and let down by BHP and its members are worried about their future. The Nationals bring this debate to the house today to ask the government to intervene. I ask the Premier: has the Minister for Police briefed him on the issues that are occurring in this town? Has the Minister for Regional Development brought the concerns of the community that she has interacted with to his attention? I understand that the Minister for Regional Development has predominantly been dealing with this issue. Has the Minister for Housing advised the Premier of the strategy to deal with the overcrowding? Will the Premier and the Minister for Lands now take a much stronger line with BHP over its closure plans for Kurra Village and its residential workforce? Surely the Premier must agree that BHP's intention to transition workers into residential housing on an "organic and voluntary basis" is a weak and unacceptable solution to dealing with an issue such as this when homes are boarded up, and as far as we can see that organisation has no intention to commit to making it a residential and normalised community.

I understand—the member for Warren–Blackwood will speak about this more in a moment—that BHP is in the process of closing down Kurra, which it was supposed to have done two years ago. It has purchased a caravan park and another work camp within the community. That is not normalising or incentivising workers to utilise that housing stock that could fundamentally change that community. If eight houses on a street all boarded up were all of a sudden filled with employees coming and going, being serviced by cleaners and gardeners and all the rest of it, the dynamic in the community would immediately change. The Premier and his government have a responsibility to take a stronger line with this company. This community can see directly the impact of BHP being allowed to do exactly as it wishes. I will leave it to the member for Warren–Blackwood to talk more about that and the impact of these fly in, fly out camps and the fly in, fly out approach that it is taking. A town such as Newman can sustain a residential workforce. The people who have invested—the people who are looking to make this town their home—are being let down by the government at the moment. I am not over-egging the fact that this is a serious issue and precursors and all the right elements are in place for this situation to become much worse. There is a tinderbox situation up there at the moment. People would very much like to see some response from the government that gives them confidence that this matter is being taken seriously.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.12 pm]: I rise to make a few comments on behalf of the Liberal opposition in support of the matter of public interest that the Nationals WA have brought to the house today. I concur with the assertion of the Leader of the Nationals that the situation in Newman is brewing to be one of those perfect storms that may have unintended catastrophic consequences for people living in that town. I have a strong connection with Newman. Relatives of mine have lived in the town over

Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

periods of time and I have been a fairly frequent visitor, although I have not visited recently. I will be getting up there in the near future.

I understand that the government has been engaged in a \$20 million project over the past two years to transition some of the town-based Aboriginal reserves into normalisation. I understand that the town-based Aboriginal reserves do not receive remote funding from the federal government. We need to find a solution for these camps that are sitting on the edges of towns. Newman had one of those camps. I think it was the Parnpajinya town-based reserve, which is about two kilometres outside Newman. I understand that in March 2019, after a period of consultation that not all of the residents of that community were necessarily happy with, the bulldozers moved in. Sixty residents were living in 13 houses in that community. Those houses were not fit for human habitation. I agree that people should not be allowed to live in substandard housing. The reserve has been closed and the houses have been boarded up. About a year ago, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Ben Wyatt, said in this place that a solution would be found after the town-based reserves were closed. He mentioned Parnpajinya, in particular, as one of the reserves whose residents would be transitioned. Either the reserve would become a suburb of the town, with the usual expectation of people living in a suburb of a town, or the residents would be transitioned into social housing within Newman itself. I understand that the reserve has been closed and no transitional housing arrangements were put in place for the people who were displaced. They are trying to find accommodation within the town. They are overcrowding the houses of relatives who have social housing or other arrangements in the town or they are squatting in boarded-up vacant buildings. Those buildings do not have electricity or water. A very quick way for a house to run into disrepair is to have a lot of people living in it, as they have no ability to keep it clean because they are not hooked up to the usual services.

I understand that in April this year BHP tried to change some of the arrangements of its employees, so it would have a drive in, drive out workforce for Eastern Ridge, Jimblebar, Mining Area C, South Flank and Yandi. I think it was a really good decision to try to get a drive in, drive out workforce in place to normalise the town. I also understand that BHP is working with the Pilbara Development Commission and the Parnpajinya town-based reserve transition project to try to look at taking the vacant houses that are currently owned by BHP and transitioning them to the Parnpajinya community so that it can manage housing for its people. I encourage all the people in Newman who may be involved in that project to get together and try to facilitate some arrangement for these people who are currently living in overcrowded conditions, do something with the houses that have been boarded up, some of which have been trashed by the inappropriate number of people in the town, and have appropriate housing available for these individuals.

We do not want to see the catastrophic outcomes that we saw in Kalgoorlie. I went to Kalgoorlie as the minister when things in that town were imploding. It is a very unpleasant environment for people to live in. When people see graffiti and boarded-up houses and houses being treated inappropriately, they start to look for someone to blame. We do not want that to happen in Newman. Once again, I encourage all the parties to take the opportunity to address this issue—BHP and especially the state government. To have a state government-driven program close down a community and demolish houses without transition arrangements in place for the people living in them is appalling. They should have been provided with social housing within the town before the existing arrangements were removed. I implore the Premier to get on top of this issue and make sure that those individuals who are currently living in substandard accommodation in the town of Newman have quality accommodation that we would ordinarily expect.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood) [3.18 pm]: It is a shame that government members do not stand and try to make a response but pushes the opposition to take all its cards on the table.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It was a strategy when members of the Labor Party sat over here but they are clearly not supporting us. I want to highlight the fact that we are talking about a town in crisis. The Leader of the Nationals WA and the Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA have been up there. We engaged heavily when we were in government and we are now engaging whilst in opposition. Newman is a town in crisis. There are a range of reasons for that. Some of them are very complex, and no-one denies that. They are often related to the nature of the resource sector and how active the resource sector is, and the economy. A certain amount of relocation is occurring, particularly from the remote areas. I thought that this government was engaging in some really good strategies to manage that. It has to take active engagement. It cannot just sit back and watch. It has to be actively engaged. The transitional housing program was mentioned but there is no word of that with respect to this matter. The issue is that the biggest employer in town is BHP. It has a whole range of accommodation in town from houses through to some of the short-stay accommodation in Kalgan's Rest Caravan Park and Whaleback Village as well as Kurra Village on the edge of town. I want to focus on one area: the Kurra camp. If there is a decision that this government can make today that will fundamentally shift the game, it is the decision to support the shutting down of Kurra Village now.

I will go over the history of this village. When we were in government, I refused to sign the lease to extend Kurra Village. That certainly created some tension with our partners in government, but I still think it was the right decision and

Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

it seemed to have the support of the now current government when we had those debates in this place. I did not sign the lease. We believe that played a fairly strong role in forcing a position from BHP. I remember the meeting in Newman at which Edgar Basto said, “We are going to close down Kurra Village.” I thought it was fantastic that some steps were going to be taken to shut down a work camp on the edge of town that was surrounded by a barbed wire fence and a boom gate. People would be shifted into town and an effort would be made to normalise that community. That is all that this community is asking for and it is all that the National Party is asking for in laying out policy settings from government. It is not too much to ask government to support that process.

In July 2016, BHP said it would close the village by September 2016. That was when BHP made the commitment to the Minister for Regional Development at the time that it was going to shut down that village. In October 2018, we met with BHP in Port Hedland. Edgar Basto again said—some two years later—that it was still BHP’s objective to close the village, but ran an argument with us about a range of reasons why that was hard to do. Members must bear in mind that although the company had a two-kilometre train that went off the rails and was cleaned up in no time, it seemed to be struggling to shift people from a work camp into town to normalise the community. It is now May 2019 and still the camp has not been closed. We have on record a letter from the Minister for Lands, Hon Ben Wyatt, that states —

I have recently approved the extension of the holding over period for the lease to ensure ... BHP complies with its obligations ...

He has approved the extension of BHP’s Kurra Village and not taken a stance, as he rightly should, to close that camp on the edge of town. Back in 2016, some three years ago, the current Minister for Lands took that position but is not supporting it, despite making a commitment to close the village. The rhetoric of this government seems to support all the things that the National Party has been chasing.

What have we heard from the Premier? *The Pilbara News* of 24 October 2018 states —

Premier Mark McGowan said the Government wanted more workers based in Pilbara towns ...

The Premier is on record as supporting that position. Minister Dawson is also on record on 27 January 2016 as stating —

“Of course, BHP should be doing more to house workers in regional towns and cities and not in ghetto-style camps ...

He is supportive of that position. In response to a debate that the Labor opposition brought on in this place on 11 November 2015 about shutting down Kurra Village, Ben Wyatt said —

There is nothing that the Leader of the National Party —

That was me at the time —

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not wish to be too —

The SPEAKER: I know. Member, can you call the member by his ministerial title.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I acknowledge that, Mr Speaker. I apologise. Hon Ben Wyatt, said —

There is nothing that the Leader of the National Party said then that I can disagree with, and I hope he gets his outcome.

He was referring to closing Kurra Village as a camp on the edge of Newman. That was said by the current Minister for Lands. The Minister for Lands made a further comment in the same debate on 11 November 2015 —

Does the state have the right to say to BHP, “Enough, we are keeping Kurra at 600 beds”? If that is the case, so be it, but I have echoing in my mind the Premier’s words from not that long ago, “Remember who your landlord is”, which stand in stark difference to the words, “We now have a legal and statutory obligation under the state agreement to sign the lease.” I actually think that state agreements have gone one way for years, and I have no problem at all with the government—but it is not the government—taking a firm stand on something such as this.

In that quote, Hon Ben Wyatt states that we should be taking action and that BHP should be living up to its obligations of supporting the communities in which it operates.

Back on Wednesday, 11 November 2015, when the Premier was the Leader of the Opposition, in reference to a debate around Kurra Village and the behavioural expectations of BHP, he said —

The Leader of the National Party has set the bar, and here it is.

It is presumably a higher mark —

He has set the bar ... high. If the Leader of the National Party does not meet that standard, the people of the Pilbara should know that he is ... puff and wind.

I hope that the Premier's response to this debate today and when he talks to these companies who are operating in a community that is in crisis, is not "puff and wind". This government certainly has form as far as that is concerned. It has form when it applied to the Bay Village work camp at Karratha. The Minister for Lands at the time, Hon Rita Saffioti, signed off on that. It has form now with Kurra Village and signing off on an extension of it for a company that said it would close it over three years ago.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! You have to acknowledge when you cross the floor.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It also has form on BHP and its underpayment of royalties. The Premier seems to be moving to a position very quickly of having his belly tickled on that. Of course, yesterday, in the backdrop of a federal election, he gave us the big spray about Sino Iron. We make the point that this government does not care. There are complex issues in this case. These regional communities are suffering. The biggest employer in town owns a significant amount of accommodation. If we are going to set the objective of normalising a community like Newman, and that was the objective of the last government that did a lot of work in that space, the first step this government can take is to ensure that Kurra Village is shut and the people are moved into the town. This government needs to take the steps that it should be taking to move people from the remote communities into the town because there were strong resources for that. I hope that the Minister for Housing speaks in this debate because he has some obligations in this space. It takes active work to sort this out. This government cannot just sit back and allow a mess to happen. A train wreck is happening up there and this government needs to engage. Everything we have seen indicates that it is not engaging as it rightly should. The first step is to take BHP head-on and say, "We think that you are not standing up to the obligations you should be standing by." A heap of other examples from around the state say that this government has form and it is not doing that.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [3.26 pm]: Once again, the National Party uses any vehicle it can to attack BHP. The member for Warren–Blackwood seems to use any opportunity he can to attack the mining industry in Western Australia. That he seems to be the National Party's *modus operandi*. We know that there have been some issues in Newman and that people have been concerned. The government is well aware of that and it is working to do its best to resolve some of those issues. I want to say at the outset that I regard Newman as a great town. It is a beautiful town. It has been very prominent in Western Australian history. Much of the economic success of Western Australia is based upon Newman. I would like to thank the town of Newman and its people over the decades for their contribution to Western Australia. It is important that that community continues to be well supported. The motion calls on the government to urgently address social and infrastructure issues in Newman. I want to talk a little about some of those social and infrastructure issues.

As some members may be aware, when it comes to infrastructure, the Minister for Health recently announced that this government is going to deliver a \$1.3 million renal centre at Newman Hospital. Obviously there are a lot of renal health issues in Newman. We have \$47.4 million in the budget to rebuild Newman Hospital. That project will start next year. It is a credit to the member for Pilbara and a credit to the Minister for Health.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. MCGOWAN: As you may have noticed, Mr Speaker, I did not interject.

The SPEAKER: Members! There were no interjections when members from your side spoke. I expect the same for members on this side.

Mr M. MCGOWAN: The Labor government is providing \$47.4 million to build a new hospital in Newman for that community and work on it will start next year. Also in the budget is funding for a new women's health program to be operated in Newman. There have been major improvements in health care and infrastructure for people in Newman. Pilbara has a new investment of \$7 million in education, involving attendance strategies to boost school attendance of students across the Pilbara, with Newman obviously being the focus of that; public and private school links to use technology and coordinate between schools to create continuity and education for remote, transient and highly disengaged students; and teacher quality training, particularly in some literacy and phonetics programs for teachers to use those skills in the classroom. Those skills are particularly effective with Aboriginal kids in regional areas. Practical coaching for teachers across the Pilbara is one of the things we are doing. There are significant efforts to get kids into school and engaged in Newman. That is health and education.

On top of that, vacant properties in Newman were mentioned. Thirty of those vacant properties belong to government, and they are split between public housing, the Government Regional Officers' Housing program and non-government

Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

organisations. These properties are currently undergoing maintenance, and work is going on to ensure that those properties are used once the maintenance is completed. The vast majority of empty properties in Newman are owned by the private sector, predominantly BHP. The public properties are undergoing maintenance, as we would expect. In the north of the state in particular there is often a requirement for significant maintenance on any property, but on public properties in particular because the high turnover of tenants, residents and the like requires a lot of maintenance. All of that is going on.

The vast majority of the empty private properties—I think it is in the hundreds—are owned by BHP. We would like to see those properties filled. One of the very, very good things that has happened under this government is that BHP has indicated that it will allow drive in, drive out work on its Jimblebar and Eastern Ridge projects in Newman. As BHP said to *The West Australian*, it has listened to its employees, its potential employees, the communities in which it operates, government and the wider industry in making this decision. BHP said that it is going to allow drive in, drive out work for those two major projects at Eastern Ridge and Jimblebar, which are within 60 kilometres of Newman. Clearly, that is a big change. I set up the Pilbara collaboration with BHP and other companies, which was designed to find these sorts of outcomes. I am very pleased that under this government, more people will be living in Newman and working in the Pilbara. There will be more people, not fewer. BHP itself has said that because of the work the government has done, it has assisted it to make that decision. I expect that, over time, some of those jobs will be filled by those employees who will move to Newman and drive in, drive out to some of the mine sites such as Jimblebar and Eastern Ridge. We are also working with BHP to ensure that some of the vacant housing is used for other public purposes—for instance, for speech pathologists and for rehousing Parnpajinya residents. The fact of the matter, as I understand it, is that not a lot of people live in Parnpajinya, which is a town-based reserve, and we need to try to house them and get some sort of normalcy in their lives. The government is working with BHP on those sorts of options for people.

It is true that in Newman, as in many places, a number of young people who engage in antisocial behaviour are at risk in the community. Therefore, the government has put in place a range of initiatives to deal with that. There is the juvenile inter-agency management strategy and the Newman collective impact project. Under these initiatives, the police and other agencies are working with those young people to, hopefully, get their families into housing, but also get them to go to school and participate in more constructive activities. The Newman police are working very hard with youths through sport. This adds structure to the lives of young people at risk in Newman. A whole range of infrastructure, health, education, community safety and community engagement programs are going on and also a range of initiatives between this Labor government and BHP to get more people living in Newman and working in the Pilbara. Under the last government, those jobs would have been fly in, fly out. That is a fact. The fact that we set up the Pilbara collaboration and have worked constructively has resulted in that outcome. I do not engage in the abuse of the mining industry that the National Party does; I support the mining industry in Western Australia. I want to ensure that we make it as productive and successful for Western Australians as possible, and the Pilbara collaboration has had that outcome. I expect that more people living in Newman will help to address some of these issues.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that there have been some antisocial issues in Newman. I understand that the people in Newman have been concerned. I want to also acknowledge the range of initiatives that the government has undertaken to deal with it. Working with BHP to support more people living locally in the town is an important component of that. Getting people into vacant housing and building a new hospital and a range of other services are important components of that. I do not want to see that town being talked down. When people run around and call it Third World and things like that, as the National Party did, it might score it an easy headline, but all it does is talk down that town and make that situation worse. That is all it does. It is cheap. To use a set piece speech in Parliament to run cheap and nasty lies to try to get a headline and stir up community angst is cheap and pathetic. That is what it says.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Warren–Blackwood, you were heard in silence.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Instead of those members flying into town, having a look and then running the town down, those members should talk that town up because it is a great town. It is a town Western Australians should be proud of. It is a town that does a great job on behalf of our state. It is a town that we are supporting and we are putting a whole bunch of new initiatives and support into.

MR K.J.J. MICHEL (Pilbara) [3.36 pm]: I rise to speak on this motion.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! The member is getting up on his feet. There is no need for comments from the side.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 8 May 2019]

p2938c-2948a

Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

Mr K.J.J. MICHEL: First, can I say this motion calls on this government to do something that we are already doing. I love Newman. It is a great mining town. I have worked there. I have travelled over the whole of Newman. It has a great climate and is a great community. This government and I are well aware of the challenge facing the community of Newman, and our government is taking action. Unlike the Nationals WA, we are not showing up for five minutes just to get a photo opportunity. We are not attacking the community and calling it a war zone, like the Leader of the Nationals WA. That was a disgraceful attack by the Nationals. Let us talk up Newman, not talk it down. Instead, this government is working hard with the community. We are taking a whole-of-government approach to addressing the challenges in Newman. We have many agencies working together to support that community. I want to assure this house that we are determined to support this community. In April 2018, I took the Minister for Housing to Newman and also to Parnpajinya where we had a meeting with a lot of agencies and the community to discuss what they would like to do with the community.

Yes, there are a number of vacant properties in Newman, but there is some confusion about who owns them. Only a small number are owned by the state government; indeed, about 30 are owned by the Department of Communities, and these properties are undergoing maintenance. We are talking with agencies about using these properties for Government Regional Officers' Housing and we are also considering using them as part of other ongoing projects in town. We are taking action. We are also working with BHP, which is the majority owner of the vacant properties. We expect those houses to slowly be filled because of BHP's decision to allow a drive in, drive out workforce. We, the Labor government, have worked hard with the mining and resource companies. Workers will be able to drive in and out of the mine sites at Eastern Ridge and Jimblebar, which is a positive move. We are also in talks with BHP to allocate some vacant houses for other purposes, including rehousing residents from the Parnpajinya community. Instead of attacking BHP, we are working with it. Again, I am well aware of the housing issue in Newman, and I am committed to addressing it by working with the community, non-government organisations and businesses.

I am in constant touch with the Martu and Nyiyaparli people and the rest of the Newman community about antisocial behaviour. I am also well aware of the concerns of the community. I have had many discussions with community members, local government and non-government agencies. In particular, we have discussed the offending by some young people in the community. Young people at risk have been engaging in antisocial behaviour. I praise the work of the local police in Newman, who are responding to those concerns and working with the community. The police officers from Newman Police Station are leading community programs to encourage those disengaged children to take up community sport, which gives them something to do. In the past five weeks, Newman police have partnered with Newman Junior Football Club, the West Australian Football Commission and numerous businesses and volunteers to run training sessions every Thursday. This has had fantastic results. In the first week, 16 kids participated, but that has grown to 58 kids, which is a positive sign. I encourage the Nationals WA to support this program. Instead of attacking the community, it should be supporting the police officers who are dedicated to the community and driving change. Much of the work that these officers do is off-duty. I thank and praise them. They are building positive relationships between the police and the young people in the community. The police have already noticed an improvement in behaviour. I am told that when police officers check on the kids who have a bail curfew, they run out to greet them. That is a wonderful thing. It has had such a positive result that local businesses and volunteers are now serving food and drinks at football training. I have volunteered my time on a Thursday to do a sausage sizzle for the kids. Other sporting groups, such as soccer and Little Athletics, have also shown interest in working with these children.

Once again, I put on the record the fantastic work that the Western Australia Police Force and Newman police are doing. We are working together across government to address the challenges facing Newman. We are seeing encouraging signs and we are determined to continue this work. As the member for Pilbara, I have taken more ministers to Newman to meet and discuss issues with the community than did the former member for Pilbara, who is a member of the National Party. Again, I ask the National Party to stop attacking the community. It should be positive and support the police and the community. Let us work together to improve the community. The Newman Business Excellence Awards is being held this Saturday. I will be there along with the Minister for Mines and Petroleum to celebrate this great event.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [3.44 pm]: I wish to start speaking to this matter of public interest by moving an amendment.

Amendment

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I move —

To delete all words after “McGowan government” and substitute —

to continue to address the social and infrastructure issues in Newman.

Extract from Hansard

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Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Kevin Michel; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Simone McGurk; Speaker

I thank the member for Pilbara for the excellent job that he is doing on behalf of his community. He is constantly in touch with me as the Minister for Police and other ministers about what is happening in Newman and about getting support for the people of Newman. He is also routinely in touch with me about what is happening in Port Hedland, Karratha and other towns in the Pilbara. He is an extremely hardworking and active member for Pilbara. I commend him for his hard work. What we saw today is just how genuine and earnest he is in supporting his community. He is so genuine and so earnest in supporting the community of Newman and other communities in the Pilbara. It is a very big electorate, but he works very hard and closely with police and the community. Is it not interesting that the complaints of the Nationals WA are that there has been no proper engagement with the community and that the community's complaints are falling on deaf ears? Nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps it shows how out of touch National Party members are, because they do not realise what has been happening in the community and the kinds of support that the community has been getting from various agencies, largely thanks to the efforts of the member for Pilbara in drawing issues to our attention.

Since the member for Pilbara brought these issues to our attention earlier this year, our government has held a number of sessions. There has been a big effort to get various government agencies and local government to work together. I draw to members' attention one example. A number of community drop-in sessions have been organised by the Department of Communities and the police in conjunction with the local shire. This is an example of one that happened a couple of months ago. People were asked to come to a community drop-in session on Monday, 11 March 2019 at the Square pop-up shop. The sessions were at either 10.30 am to 12 noon or 5.00 pm to 7.00 pm. The flyer reads —

The Shire of East Pilbara and representatives from the State Government of WA invite you to drop in, ask a question, give some feedback, or address a concern you have in Newman.

That is listening; that is inviting people to sessions at which they can express their view and tell the local government, the Department of Communities and police officers how they are feeling and draw to our attention what their issues are so that they can be acted on. The flyer continues —

This is an excellent chance to voice any issues you have and to give the agencies in town an opportunity to understand what's important to you.

We'd love for you to take a few minutes out of your day and pop down and have a chat.

If you cannot join us on the day, but have a burning issue you would like raised, head over to the Shire's Instagram stories on Monday to drop us a line about what questions you'd like shared or concerns addressed.

The flyer includes contact numbers and details. That is being proactive. Work had to happen in the lead-up for that to occur. In the short time I have available I draw attention to the fact that as a result of the kind of information that our government agencies have got from community sessions like that, that have been supported by the member for Pilbara, actions have occurred. That is certainly not because the National Party has belatedly raised the issue today, but because we were already working on this and are engaged with the community. Things have already been put in train. For example, Newman police have formulated a proactive policing operation for Western Australia. That is due to commence. They have already been doing plenty of work in the community, but they have an extra proactive policing operation to commence on 27 May. It will be a six-week operation that will involve extra resources from district and specialist areas, and will include some of the following initiatives: high visual police presence in known antisocial and offending locations such as shopping complexes, licensed premises, industrial areas and community events; positive engagement with youth and diversion through community programs; positive engagement with licensed premises to educate and ensure compliance with the Liquor Control Act and local liquor accord agreements; family and domestic violence education and support; and high visibility road policing patrols with a focus on the causal factors of road crashes including drink and drug-driving, restraints, fatigue, mobile phones and unworthy vehicles. Operational tactics that are employed by the Newman police include the deployment of plain clothes and uniformed officers within shopping complexes to detect stealing offences and antisocial behaviour; uniform, foot, bicycle and mounted section patrols of shopping complexes to deter shop stealing and antisocial behaviour; covert uniform deployment of police on pushbikes throughout the light industrial area; covert surveillance of licensed premises to ensure compliance with the Liquor Control Act and liquor accord amendments; uniform patrols of licensed premises to ensure compliance; a safer driver campaign to reward safe road users, which will be done through a media promotion; crime prevention awareness in relation to family violence, which will include engagement of known high-risk individuals and families to ensure wraparound support is provided from government and non-government agencies; investigation of sly grog incidents through local intelligence networks; an engagement with at-risk youth strategy as well through community programs such as Night Fields, Blue Light discos, youth centres and the YMCA; and engagement with prominent Martu elders to identify alternative

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programs for young people to divert from the justice system. I might just note that police have actively worked on those restricted premises and they have increased the number from four up to 23. A lot has already been done and I commend the member for Pilbara for being so proactive.

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services) [3.52 pm]: I would also like to make a contribution to the debate, noting that the Minister for Police has moved an amendment to the motion. I am interested in the contributions of the Minister for Police, the member for Pilbara and the Premier, during which the Nationals did not listen to a word. Perhaps with the exception of the member for Roe, most of them are talking amongst themselves and not paying one second of interest to the government's responses to hear exactly what is being done in Newman. Like Newman, and a number of other locations, a lot of social issues have been referred to, which the government is well aware of. They are not recent phenomena; they have been going on for some time. They are complex issues. It is true that there are issues of accommodation and policy issues about the location of the workforce, but it is fanciful to think that one or two initiatives will magically resolve a number of issues in Newman or other communities like it. As others have pointed out, this smacks of the National Party being politically opportunistic rather than constructive on this issue. We know that a number of issues going on with antisocial behaviour of young people, for instance, will not be resolved unless there is a joined-up approach by government, and contributions by education, health, justice, the Department of Communities and, of course, police. Where we have those joined-up approaches and are working with young people and their families, we are starting to see some really good outcomes. I want to see how we go with tracking some of those outcomes over time before we celebrate them too much, but, clearly, young people do not act in an antisocial way and act out that behaviour in isolation to what is going on at home and in their wider community. Without tackling those things, any successes or progress will be short lived. We are trying to have a joined-up approach not only across government but also with the community itself. I was in Newman in August last year and was very pleased to meet with the people who are trying to do some work with the Aboriginal Male's Healing Centre. I met with the shire, child protection workers, police and disability workers at the same time to try to understand some of the challenges and understand their work. I also met with Maggie Lewis from the Newman Women's Shelter. She runs not only her shelter, but also offers leadership of good practice across the Pilbara and the Kimberley in responding to domestic violence.

We have specific initiatives to support vulnerable families, including the juvenile interagency management strategy and the Newman collective impact project. They can sound like a bureaucratic mouthful, but those specific structures are being set up to make sure that we drive interagency cooperation and approaches to these issues. In particular, the interagency management strategy is partnering with the Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service to make sure that it is a part of the solution as well. The early intervention collective impact project has been given some financial assistance by BHP, which understands that it has an obligation in this area. I know a number of services have spoken highly of BHP's engagement in not only immediate services, but also looking at long-term strategies and trying to target our work.

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (37)

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

Noes (17)

Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr P.A. Katsambanis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr P.J. Rundle
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup	Dr M.D. Nahan	Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr D.C. Nalder	
Mrs L.M. Harvey	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr K. O'Donnell	
Dr D.J. Honey	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.T. Redman	

Pairs

Mr D.J. Kelly

Mr J.E. McGrath

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Ms J.J. Shaw

Mrs A.K. Hayden

Amendment thus passed.

The SPEAKER: Members, as it has reached 4.00 pm, this business is interrupted and adjourned to a later stage of today's business. At the conclusion of private members' business at 7.00 pm, the house could decide to continue debate on a matter of public interest, but that will involve someone moving a motion to bring the matter back on, and the house agreeing to that motion.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2974.]