

CORONAVIRUS — REGIONAL ROAD PROJECTS

496. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the vital role that the McGowan Labor government's record investment in regional roads will play in supporting jobs as the state recovers from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Can the minister update the house on what the \$85 million widening of Bussell Highway will mean for motorists in the south west; and can the minister outline to the house how this and other regional road projects will support local jobs, local businesses and the broader WA economy?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for that question and, of course, for his interest and involvement in helping secure funding for the Bussell Highway duplication.

As has been outlined, the McGowan government has yet again been successful in securing funds from the commonwealth government. The commonwealth government came to the state government and asked, "What projects can you get underway in the next six months?" We wanted to make sure that we could be true to our word, so we identified projects that could get underway very, very quickly. We looked at roads, particularly those in regional Western Australia, because we believe that getting regional jobs underway as soon as possible is very important, and also because of what these jobs and contracts could mean for local businesses throughout regional WA. We put forward a range of projects, including the regional road safety program that the Premier outlined yesterday, and, of course, the Bussell Highway project.

The member for Bunbury knows that we have been lobbying very, very hard for this project. It has been undermined by members in this place on the other side, but we have been working very hard to get that funding. We went out on a limb and started the preliminary works on the basis that we thought that if we presented the case, the commonwealth government would give us the funding. As a result, we did preliminary works and the preloading for stage 1. We spent \$4.5 million on pre-construction works on Bussell Highway earlier this year. That paves the way for stage 1 to commence; we are aiming for October. That is very good news for everyone in the south west and very good news for jobs and business in the south west.

If members look around Western Australia, they will see the priority we have given to the projects that the previous coalition government ignored, despite having been in government for eight and a half years. Projects like Bussell Highway were simply ignored. We have projects throughout regional WA, like improving the Minilya–Exmouth Road and \$20 million for Exmouth roads. We have Toodyay Road, member for Moore, and, of course, other projects around Western Australia. We are a government that governs for all, and none can be best described but the work that we are doing for regional roads and regional road safety and the fact that we are delivering roads throughout regional WA—roads that the previous Liberal–National government completely ignored.

Ms L. Mettam: That's pretty ordinary.

The SPEAKER: Your comment was pretty ordinary. I call you to order for the first time, member for Vasse.

Mr M.P. Murray: Who's said nothing for eight and a half years!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I wish you had not spoken, but you did, and I call you to order for the first time, Minister for Sport and Recreation. I know you have a scarf on, but it does not soften you at all.