

COALFIELDS HIGHWAY — UPGRADE

13. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Transport:

I also have a very important question about roads.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that during the 2008 election campaign, the Liberal Party promised to spend \$25 million on upgrades to the Coalfields highway by the end of this financial year?
- (2) Can the minister also confirm that the Liberal Party's 2008 election financial statement allocated no money for the Roe Highway extension until after the end of this financial year?
- (3) Can the minister explain why only \$4.4 million will be spent on the Coalfields highway, but more than \$12 million will be spent on Roe Highway by the end of this financial year?
- (4) Is this an example of the former failed transport minister making his own pet city project a priority at the expense of an important regional road, completely disregarding election commitments?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:

- (1)–(4) There are a lot of conflicting priorities, or a lot of conflicting projects, to which we have to allocate money both in the metropolitan area and in the regional areas of Western Australia. I am not sure whether the member for Collie–Preston recalls what happened in late 2008; there was a thing called the global financial crisis, the GFC. It is not a fast-food outlet, member for Collie–Preston; it was something we had to deal with!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: As a result of that, some of our infrastructure program had to be recast. They are just the facts, and we have never apologised for that.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Not Roe Highway, though; that got extra money.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: So does the Leader of the Opposition not think money should be spent on Roe Highway? Does the Leader of the Opposition think we should not be upgrading Great Eastern Highway through his electorate, which the former Labor government refused to touch?

Mr E.S. Ripper: It's federally funded!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It is not entirely federally funded, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Not entirely!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I will tell the member for Collie–Preston what we are doing with the Coalfields highway. He is right.

Mr M.P. Murray: Sorry?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The member is right when he says that it is an important road. There have been some very unfortunate incidents there, including fatalities, as the house well knows. It is also an important trade link for not only Collie, but also other parts of the south west, and the broader south west, to the port of Bunbury. This government understands its commitments to the Collie Coalfields highway, and, as the member well knows, we have committed \$14 million for two stages of construction of the Collie Coalfields highway. The first \$7 million will upgrade the section from the town of Collie west to Allanson; the next \$7 million, which will flow in the next financial year, will upgrade, I think, the next three kilometres, which runs west of Allanson. That will leave, as I recall, about 10 kilometres between the Wellington Dam turn-off and Allanson that will need to be upgraded to finish the significant upgrade program of that road. I think that is about right, member for Collie–Preston, in terms of what needs to happen. Stage 1 and stage 2 are funded, and works are currently underway on stage 1.

Stage 3 is the balance—the nine kilometres from just the other side of Allanson out to the Wellington Dam turn-off. The work is currently happening to finalise the road layout, road route and the associated environmental approvals. Following the finalisation of that, we have to work through a process to obtain areas of state forest and national park, and I am sure the member will support that when it comes through Parliament. When that is done, we will look to fund the balance of the upgrade of the Collie Coalfields highway. But make no mistake, 14 kilometres of the Collie Coalfields highway is being upgraded, and work is being undertaken to upgrade the balance.

I will ask the member for Collie–Preston one question before I sit down. From 2001 until 2008, how many questions did the member ask of his transport minister in this place? How many questions did the member ask of his transport minister in this place?

Several members interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I have had a look, and I could not see that the member asked any questions. I am amazed that the member has suddenly become concerned about a road that we are fixing!