

NORTH WEST CENTRAL BY-ELECTION

Statement

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.03 pm]: I rise to acknowledge the efforts of Merome Beard in the recent North West Central by-election and congratulate her on her win. The election result will be finalised in the next few days, but the result is not in doubt at all. It was a well-fought and very interesting campaign because of the number of candidates who made an effort to get involved. It was also a great opportunity to engage with the community and understand some of the issues in more detail.

That is particularly the case, as members on both sides of the chamber would know, when we knock on doors and talk to people about the issues they confront.

I also want to acknowledge Will Baston, our Liberal Party candidate, who did an absolutely tremendous job during the campaign.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Was he well supported by your side?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: He was absolutely well supported. It was an incredible result. In fact, he achieved an 18.8 per cent swing on preliminary results. Over 1 000 votes still have to be counted because a number of postal votes are yet to come in, and the absentee votes have not been counted. It was a tremendous outcome. I would like to mention a few facts about the electorate so that members opposite —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, can the member have his 10 minutes please.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I will provide a few facts for those opposite, who might not want to show their faces in the town of Carnarvon in the coming weeks. There was a lot of negative feedback about the Labor Party's lack of participation. This electorate is one-third larger than Germany. It is larger than New South Wales. There are 11 000 voters in this electorate but, sadly, only about 6 000 people voted.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Enough of the cross-chamber chatter, thank you.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The electorate is such an important part of our state, and one that was clearly ignored by members opposite, to their detriment. I spent a considerable amount of time talking to people. The anger from those hard-core Labor supporters was palpable. They form 20 per cent of the community who vote Labor. They did not have someone to vote for. They certainly had a large selection of minor parties from which to select.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The by-election was an opportunity to send a message about the issues that affect that community. For example, there are concerns about the crime rate in the town of Carnarvon, in particular, and concerns about health. I met mothers who were in the final stage of their pregnancies who had to be diverted to Geraldton or Perth to give birth to their children. They were very upset that they had to do that as it caused disruption to their families.

I met public servants who were very upset about the standard of housing and the problems that has caused for their families. One particular example involves a very sad case of a man who lives in close proximity to families where there is a massive problem of antisocial behaviour on a regular basis, to the point where his wife left the home to live in another location. He now suffers from the trauma of lack of sleep. I will raise these issues further in due course. They are some of the concerns.

The Labor government made grand promises about the Carnarvon fascine and the \$7 million that was allocated in 2020. I am sure the following headline was drawn up by one of the spin doctors in the minister's office—“All aboard—\$7 million for Carnarvon Fascine solution”. When I was there, a fairly mid-level bureaucrat was sent up to meet with about 100 people in the community to basically tell them that the work that was promised would not occur.

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We have members opposite interjecting. They did not even bother to turn up.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It was a disappointment for the community. What a terrible disgrace.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Perhaps the member might want to concentrate on the content that he has before him rather than putting content out across the chamber.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The community was disappointed in that presentation. We saw the disappointment in towns like Kalbarri to the slow response to the cyclone Seroja rebuild. It is no wonder that when Hon Alannah MacTiernan stood up to the Premier and suggested that the Labor Party put a candidate in that election, she got no support from the rest of her colleagues opposite. There was no support whatsoever.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! You are continuing to run the honourable member's time down.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It is great to see the response from members opposite. They are so defensive. They do not like to hear the truth.

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: They get upset about the truth.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, I invite you to have some respect for Hansard trying to capture the member's contribution and those interjections that are worth capturing.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: As I said, the votes have not yet been finalised. There will be more votes coming through.

Another important and serious thing to note is that a very serious and major issue with the by-election is that the Western Australian Electoral Commission needed to do more to get people out and give them notification of the by-election. The number of people who did not turn up to vote was a very disappointing outcome. That is a broader issue that needs to be seriously considered for future by-elections. It is very important that democracy is promoted and that sufficient time is spent and sufficient advertising is made available for that community. I think that needs to be reviewed. I call upon the minister to do his job properly. We have seen the absolute failure of this minister in the delivery of that outcome. We also saw that with the regional representation being removed. That issue was raised with me on multiple occasions.

I want to congratulate Merome. I am sure she will make a great contribution to the other place. I congratulate all the candidates who had the temerity to show up and do something for the community and make representations on their behalf. I think it is a great shame that the Labor Party chose to step out of that by-election. It is a great shame for the people of North West Central that this government continues to ignore the people of the regions.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It is a great shame that this government continues to ignore the people of North West Central. I am sure that members opposite will be very, very worried about showing their faces in those towns again.