

REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA - INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Motion

Resumed from 31 May on the following motion moved by Mr B.J. Grylls (Leader of the National Party) -

That this house condemns the Labor government for its failure to recognise the infrastructure needs of regional Western Australia in the 2006-07 budget, given -

- (a) the majority of the state government's record \$2 billion surplus has been generated courtesy of the booming regional-based resources sector - but there is evidence that the regional economies have not benefited from this activity; and
- (b) the government has set aside \$1.3 billion - 65 per cent - of the \$2 billion budget surplus to pay off the Perth to Mandurah rail project at the expense of much needed investment in regional Western Australia,

and calls on the state government to provide a significant funding boost to regional development in this state to fundamentally re-adjust the prospects for long-term sustainable growth in our regions.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [6.08 pm]: I support the motion. I highlight that it is fantastic that the state has a \$1.9 billion surplus.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I ask the member for Wagin to resume his seat. The member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara had the call when this motion was last debated. Does he want to continue his remarks?

Mr T.G. Stephens: I may well want the call, but I need to know why I am being called on. Mr Acting Speaker, can you tell me what the item was about?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Some members might say that the member did not know what he was talking about before! It is the continuation of debate on motion 11 on page 9 of the notice paper about the budget allocation for infrastructure in regional Western Australia.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Central Kimberley-Pilbara) [6.09 pm]: Yes, I would love to speak very briefly on the motion. Members were in Geraldton very recently, and we saw some superb things being done across that part of regional Western Australia. Government members were extremely proud to be there in support of the local member of Parliament, who has done so much for his town, his community and his region. It was strange to hear the complaints of those opposite, who said to us at the time that Geraldton had somehow or other been duded. Among our ranks, people were concerned that it would be extremely difficult to carry back even the gold street paving squares that had been delivered to that community.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I will finish very quickly. I made a throwaway comment; that is, if the government has duded Geraldton, I want the communities across my region to be similarly duded, because I thought that Geraldton had done extremely well as a result of the efforts of the hardworking local member of Parliament. He has been able to tap into the budget allocations for infrastructure in regional Western Australia par excellence. That is not to say, as members on this side of the house will know, that I think everything that is necessary to be done for regional Western Australia has been done. A lot more needs to be done for regional Western Australia. However, fortunately, we have started to embark upon that task. I believe that we have initiated some good programs. Some of those programs have started well. I am thinking of things such as the regional infrastructure fund. I believe the time has now come for that fund not only to be an ongoing fund, but also to be enhanced with additional resources so that more can be done for regional Western Australia to respond to the many challenges that exist there.

In regional Western Australia right now extraordinary things are happening as a result of the resources growth in that region. I have previously spoken about the expansion of the resources sector into the Pilbara region. I have recently become aware of how vast, immense and urgent is the need to respond to the challenges of the most northerly region of the state; that is, the Kimberley region. I do not think that this house or very many people within Western Australia appreciate the size of what I believe is a - I have used the image before, but I really want this to resonate and reverberate around this chamber and within government - tsunami of resources growth that is impacting upon the Kimberley region.

I want to distract briefly, if I can, my frontbench colleagues and the Treasurer, who is sitting there listening attentively, I know. However, I want to make sure that he listens to this point, because I have never said this to him before; that is, I believe that the Treasurer needs to know that in the Kimberley region right now, not only do the social issues that I have always spoken about exist, but also huge demands, which we do not fully appreciate yet, are about to be placed upon this state by the oil and gas sector. We have some understanding of the

Woodside issues. However, companies are signing contracts that will put pressures on that coastline and on the people of that region, the likes of which have never been put on any part of this state ever before. It is not a small issue that is impacting upon us. A huge resources growth is now expanding beyond the Pilbara and beyond all the pressure points about which the Treasurer knows into another region. It is about to unleash vast quantities of wealth for Australia, and some of that will be for Western Australia. Probably only small amounts will flow back to regional Western Australia to areas such as the Kimberley. However, for that to happen, people such as the Treasurer and his colleagues on the front bench must appreciate that we have a challenge that we have never previously understood. Right now we have the task of unlocking the ways in which the resources sector can respond to that challenge in regional Western Australia.

In my parliamentary life, I have never before seen anything like what is about to unfold. I do not believe that Western Australia has ever seen anything like this, and we have seen some extraordinary things. We have seen gold rushes, iron ore rushes and the rush that has been caused by China. However, a new phenomenon that requires the response of government is about to hit not only the Pilbara region, but also, more extensively, the Kimberley region.

What do I say to members about this motion? We are doing very good things, of which we can be proud, regarding regional infrastructure challenges. However, more needs to roll out in response to those challenges. Just briefly, in the Kimberley region, for instance, we need to identify the sites upon which we can take delivery of the gas that will emerge from the coastline and adjacent to the Kimberley coast. We need to identify sites that can facilitate the extraction of that gas, which will produce enormous benefits for the nation, the state and, hopefully, in turn, the region. That will not happen by accident. It will happen when people within government grab these issues by the throat, I guess, and find ways of delivering that which is possible. Can we do it alone? No, we cannot. We need to do this certainly in partnership with the people of that region, but especially in partnership with the national government, which I regret will be the principal beneficiary of the profits that are extracted by governments from the resources developments off that coastline.

I thank the Chair for reminding me that I had a few minutes in which to conclude my remarks. All I can say is what a misplaced motion it is from the National Party to suggest that there has been neglect of regional Western Australia. In Geraldton, we saw a place that was being loved and being delivered with support and resources with affection. The local member of Parliament had every right to walk tall among his ranks. He is a member of Parliament who is an extraordinary model for us all. I can well appreciate the embarrassment of the National Party, which, while in government, was never able to extract from its Liberal Party colleagues, who always had the whip hand when they were in government, benefits similar to those that are now being rolled out across regional Western Australia as a result of the advocacy skills of the member for Geraldton.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I thank the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara for that short speech.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [6.17 pm]: I say to the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara that he shortened his speech very well, and I appreciate his doing that. I strongly support this motion, but I also agree with a couple of comments made by the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara. I quite often talk about inland country WA. Some of our coastal areas have done pretty well. However, in some of the inland areas in particular, and in some parts of the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara's area also, issues arise. I have spoken about the \$1.3 billion of the budget surplus that has been allocated to the Mandurah railway. That comprises about 65 per cent of the surplus. My point is that if the government had allocated 15 per cent of the budget surplus, which would be about \$300 million, people would have accepted that; I certainly would have accepted it. It would have been good management. The government could have allocated even 20 per cent of the surplus, but I would not have gone past 20 per cent. The railway is an important project for the state, so let us get on with it and do the best we can with it. However, we must remember that the responsibility of government is to the whole state, and that is what this motion is about; it is about the whole state.

I will give a few examples of issues in my area. However, as we are talking about funding and supporting local infrastructure etc, I will also deal with some of the pressures on the private sector and local governments to carry out government's community service obligations. Many private companies, particularly mining companies up north, already willingly make significant contributions to communities to support their operations. These contributions take many forms, such as medical services, child care and housing. The contributions are in addition to royalties, lease rental, payroll tax and all those things. It is sometimes easy for governments to take the easy option and pass their community service obligations on to local government or the private sector. They are sometimes not quick enough to identify and respond to community needs. There are lots of examples I could use. One is in the Karratha-Dampier region. The Minister for Health was asked for assistance to help attract and retain doctors in that region. It was to occur in a joint project with industry. However, the minister responded by saying that industry should foot the bill and not the government. There is a joint responsibility because a lot

of areas do not have mining. Childcare services is another example. Companies cannot get childcare services from the federal or state governments, so they have to attract their own staff.

The wheatbelt area also has problems with child care. One local group, the Wheatbelt Organisation for Children's Services, has done a great job of lobbying to obtain and improve services in the area. That is great. However, we must ask why such groups have to be formed before people take notice. A group for parents with autistic children has been formed in my local area on a similar basis.

I want to mention business confidence statistics in rural and remote regions. The latest Sensis business index provides further evidence of the lack of attention to rural and remote regions. I want to be realistic. Some regions have done reasonably well but there is a void inland to which we are more exposed. Country members are lobbied more about it, which is a concern to me. The November 2005 to January 2006 business index for small and medium enterprises, which was published in late February, indicated that despite the booming state economy resulting in business confidence in the metropolitan areas of Western Australia being the highest in the nation, confidence in regional Western Australia was the nation's lowest. Despite the boom, the figures reflected that. Regional Western Australia was the only region around the nation to record a decline in business confidence. The Minister for Small Business was quoted on ABC radio as being surprised and concerned by the statistics. I agree with him. I was surprised. I do not think that the figures would be that bad. The Minister for Small Business was quoted as saying -

This doesn't seem to gel with a booming state, a booming economy, but I suppose the breakdown indicates that predominantly that's flowing into the metropolitan area and we've just got to make sure the regions are able to benefit from it as well.

That is what we are about with this motion. I hope that the minister is coping okay, because he has been a bit sick. He has recognised the situation and made an announcement about doing something about it. The ABC then quoted the minister as saying -

Small businesses are essential if the economy is to continue moving forward and the government is committed to raising the level of confidence in rural areas.

I welcome those comments, which were made in February. I would like to see that happen more in inland country Western Australia.

I will now refer to my electorate of Wagin. Every member of this Parliament would like to obtain everything he could get for his own electorate. I acknowledge that. That is our job and role; to try to benefit our areas for the people who elect us. I sometimes get annoyed when people lump all politicians together and say that they do not do this or that. I would say that 99 per cent of members are committed, work hard and do the right thing. I understand that the government cannot give everyone everything. It is all about priorities. However, there is a real inequity in funding. The bulk of the budget surplus has been allocated to the railway. People in country Western Australia see that as inequitable. They are contributing greatly to the surplus. Country people claim Perth as well; it is our capital city as well. Most people have family or children in Perth. They come to Perth to watch the football and do other things. We want Perth to do well; we want facilities in Perth. Yes, we also want facilities in Albany and Bunbury because those towns are important to regional Western Australia. However, let us not forget what happens inland.

The Western Australian College of Agriculture in Narrogin is full; it cannot admit any more students. It has been crying out to this and the previous government - I acknowledge that - for funding. Things have been talked about for the past five years but we have not got anywhere. I am pleased that the Minister for Education and Training said this week that she will visit the college at the first opportunity. I am hopeful that something can be done. A lot more girls are now attending agricultural colleges. The colleges are turning out students who go directly into employment. The school leaving age will go up to 17 next year. As such, the colleges will become more important. When Mark Vaile visited Western Australia he talked about technical colleges. We are pushing him into providing more money to assist our agricultural colleges so that the state does not have to do it all. If we can get some assistance from the federal government. They are wonderful institutions that can contribute even more.

The final stage of the Narrogin Regional Hospital is now on the radar. The project has been there for five years - since the redevelopment of the hospital started. The hospital is wonderful and works well but it would work a heck of a lot better if the final stage were completed.

The second stage of the link road in Narrogin is another issue. We have had five years of a road that goes nowhere.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: The missing road!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It goes nowhere. It requires only a couple of million dollars. Together with the Mayor of Narrogin and the shire president I wrote to the minister. We were acknowledged but I know that the problem is not being taken seriously. It is not a big amount of money but there are real safety concerns. The area now has big industry. Narrogin is growing. It has large hay plants, cattle feedlots, a piggery and an oil mallee plant etc. Big trucks have to pull out on to the main road when they should be sweeping straight through. The road should be completed. This is why the motion is before the house; it is about priorities. I urge the government to think about these issues when it forms its budgets. It should ensure that the spread is reasonable. The Katanning shire is negotiating with the Minister for Agriculture and Food for new sheep saleyards. I am pleased with the minister's attitude and that of Hon John Bowler. I am confident that the government will realise that. The Western Australian Meat Marketing Corporation is in Katanning. The town is in the middle of the sheep-rearing area of the state.

I must mention the deep sewerage programs, particularly at Boyup Brook. I mention the programs all the time. I cannot believe that that program has not been prioritised. Tambellup, which is in my area, is receiving attention. I congratulate the government for that. The town is on the Gordon River and, as such, there are environmental issues. Boyup Brook is located on the beautiful Blackwood River but nothing is happening with the program. I would love the member for Collie-Wellington to give me a hand with that problem. The town used to be in his electorate. Single leach drains were allowed to be put in because it was known that the area would eventually get deep sewerage. However, it did not happen. As such, there is a decaying sewerage system that is located right on the edge of the Blackwood River. I know that the Water Corporation was organising for someone to look at that some time in the past eight weeks. That has not happened as yet.

There are many other things I could mention but I want to give time for other members to speak. I have spoken with the Minister for Health about health resource centres. The centres are located in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Port Hedland, Broome and Kalgoorlie. However, no priority is given to areas in between. It is a long way from Port Hedland to Kalgoorlie to Albany. There is a big vacuum in between. Esperance, Katanning, Narrogin and Merredin need more resources. The government is building a new hospital in Moora after it received a fair bit of pain. The building will be fantastic. In addition, Merredin is being upgraded. Those facilities should be changed into resource centres like Albany and Bunbury - although not to the same level because we are realistic and genuine. We realise that bigger populations need more resources. However, we need to make sure that we have appropriate services. I know that the minister understands that; it is about priorities. It should come sooner rather than later.

We have argued a fair bit in this Parliament about business enterprise centres. Not so long ago the then small business minister was splitting up the business enterprise centres. Some were got rid of and some got bigger areas. We kept saying that the way it was happening was dangerous because they were not going to work properly. The one located in the central and upper great southern has fallen over. I am now prepared to sit down with the minister, Hon Norm Marlborough, to try to make it work. Unfortunately, the area is too big for its budget. People were busting their guts to make it work but it did not work in the end. There was too much work and not enough money. It ran out of money and people chucked it in and there is now an interim manager from the Small Business Development Corporation. The final thing I will mention before I finish my contribution is the fight against starlings. The government has allocated extra money to the fight against starlings. However, they are still a big problem. Starlings will cost this state a lot of money. Mr Acting Speaker, they are heading towards us. We do not want them in Western Australia. I have seen the damage they have caused in Victoria. The Department of Agriculture and Food is doing the best it can; however, extra funding is needed now to blast this issue. People talk about cane toads; however, starlings have been called cane toads with wings because they are just as destructive.

If the government used 15 per cent of its surplus to pay off the railway debt this year - that would have helped the situation, although it might not have helped the government politically in a couple of years - and another 15 per cent next year, it could have spent the remainder of the surplus on some of the things that I have outlined. I realise that had the government done that, not everything that needs doing in Wagin would have been achieved. However, two or three things that we have tried to achieve over the past five or six years may have been funded, and that would have made a big difference. That applies not only to my electorate, but also to the electorates of other members. I urge the government to think about that, because 50 per cent of \$1.9 billion is \$950 million, and that money would have gone a long way. The government's surplus is above the needs for the general running of this state. It should be utilised properly. A great positive about regional WA is the bush change movement. There is not so much growth on the eastern side of my electorate; however, the growth that extends west from the Great Southern Highway is huge. Just as a farmer who does not do a bit of fencing each year will have a major problem in 15 years - we must do a bit each year for regional Western Australia, otherwise whatever party is in government will have a huge problem down the track.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Wellington) [6.33 pm]: I rise to speak against the motion, although I understand some of the problems that the member for Wagin spoke about during his contribution. Things in the south west region - I refer to the south west region, not the Collie region - are going pretty well. We have a lot to learn from being caught short in the latest boom, particularly with the shortage of land. The smaller regional towns - I include Wagin - have been caught out with a shortage of blocks. People cannot subdivide their blocks quickly enough. Those infrastructure problems have caused great pain, because the chance to build the base of such towns has been lost. Recently LandCorp said that it would be another six years before planning in some of those places would come to fruition. In saying that, the land shortage issue has been recognised and we are starting to work our way forward.

Harvey, Waroona, Busselton and Capel were at the forefront of education funding in the latest budget. The amount of money that is being spent in that region has been underestimated. Two million dollars will be spent on the Collie Senior High School; \$9 million will be spent on the Cape Naturalist college and the Dalyellup middle school; \$6 million will be spent on the Manea senior college; and \$4 million will be spent on additions and improvements to Newton Moore Senior High School. Added together, those amounts reveal that the government's investment in our future is great. Some of the problems that go with regional centres versus small towns is people's access to education. If people in Collie want to attend university in Bunbury by bus, a one-way ticket costs \$7.50. That equates to \$15 a day for a return journey, even for concession card holders. Certainly a \$15-a-day bus trip precludes some younger people and those on low incomes from studying in Bunbury. Some younger people move to pursue their studies; there is a drain of young people from the smaller towns. In many cases, a family will move from a small town to further their children's education, because that is cheaper than having their children travel to the coastal regional centres.

My recent comment that Bunbury wants everything copped a bit of flak from the press and members opposite. However, my comments were not reported properly. What I said is that although Bunbury can ask for everything, we must look at a regional plan so that the people to whom I referred can travel to Bunbury. Yesterday I flagged with the press the idea of a light rail system, which should be planned for now so that people can travel around the Bunbury region. A light rail could cover Bunbury, Eaton, Australind, Binningup, Myalup, Harvey and Brunswick. We should plan for that now, because that is what will be needed in 50 years. We do not want to experience the same problems that we are experiencing with the bypass road through Mandurah, whereby the government is having to buy back land at inflated prices. I am sure that the owners of the properties would not say that the prices are inflated. Those properties should have been bought years ago, with a reserve placed on them, so that the work for that infrastructure could be done later. If we do not do that for Bunbury, we will be caught short in another boom in 15 or 20 years. More money and effort should be put into futuristic planning for the Bunbury regional scheme. Indeed, the Bunbury regional scheme should be the greater south west scheme. The Mandurah rail line, which has been criticised to a degree, could extend down the coast road to hook up with the light rail at Binningup. Instead of hooking up bits and pieces of Western Australia's south west, we should consider hooking up the whole of the south west. Are we not our own worst enemies? We come into this place and yell at the Treasurer - and at our mates, because we are all feeding from the same bowl. Members have to make sure that they get their share, otherwise they might not get their jobs next time around. Larger think-tanks must consider what is good for the region.

Another problem that has been spoken about is infill sewerage, which is certainly a problem for towns like Yarloop. Although Yarloop has been in the news recently for all the wrong reasons, some people still want to develop there. However, they cannot because of the sewerage problems. A regional plan is needed, not just a town plan, because Preston Beach also has water problems. Those issues should not be addressed on an add-on basis.

The budget papers reveal that \$8 million will be spent on the Bunbury port. Indeed, \$5 million will be spent by Main Roads on the South Western Highway, between Bunbury and Pinjarra. Community sport and recreation in country towns is one of the top things that binds a small town together. I am sure that everyone would agree that small towns must have sporting facilities. I know that regional areas are well placed in the area of sport and recreation, because two-thirds of the sport and recreation budget is spent in country towns. If we worked that out per head of population, it would be the other way around. We cannot grizzle about that. We all want the synthetic bowling green - now. We all want a new golf course - now. However, the government must prioritise, and that is where this budget has been done well. I would like many other things for my electorate. I do not think I have belted the Treasurer hard enough. I should probably hit him a bit harder; however, now that he has shaved off his moustache, the mark that I would leave from hitting him with everything that I want for my electorate would be quite large.

I refer to the federal government's grants commission. Those who allocate the money do so by driving through our towns and making a decision. They talk to a couple of leaders and make a political decision. That system should come under the umbrella of regional managing right across the board. At the moment, someone talks to a

small group of people - some of whom have a political bias and some of whom do not - who say that they want this and that and that if they do not get those things they will have problems. The government should put that money into a pot and it should be distributed on a total regional basis, not a regional centre basis. We must move away from that mentality. There is plenty of money in the country, although it all went to Albany and Geraldton! I had better be careful!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): That is very close to requiring a point of order, member for Collie-Wellington!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I could refer instead to Geraldton. We have heard about problems in the Greenough electorate. If the money is going to regional centres on a per capita basis, it cannot be said that it is not going into the country, because it is. My problem with that is that perhaps some of that money should be spread across a wider area.

The health system is another area that is always on my mind. The budget provides an allocation of \$800 000 in the south west region for the dental clinic in Bunbury, and \$3 million for the expansion of the in-patient mental health unit at the South West Health Campus. It was much needed and its provision is much appreciated. The whole project will cost \$6 million. That is an area in which the focus can be on a regional centre. There can be a health centre to which people can be escorted or taken by ambulance. Mental health is a major problem in country towns, caused in part by the drift away from city centres. The attraction is cheap housing, but there is a lack of jobs and education in many cases. Full employment is considered to be around three per cent, and some areas have rates as low as that. Some people are unable to work even though they are on the unemployed list. The stresses of trying to feed a family with no job will lead to mental health problems. It is great to see that \$6 million being spent in the Bunbury region, where there are doctors and psychiatric nurses. These people can be attracted into regional centres, but not into small country towns; very rarely do they want to go to such places. One issue with general practitioners is the turnover and the other is education for their children.

We have problems in country towns but, looked at across the board, the health system is working a lot better than it has for a long time. Some changes in the south west region have helped that, along with some changes at the top. The new radiotherapy facility at the South West Health Campus will, for the first time, save people the trouble of travelling to Perth for treatment. That has been appreciated by many people who have come into my office. There are some anomalies in the patient assisted travel scheme. Now that facilities are located in regional centres, some smaller places like Collie, which is 65 kilometres from Bunbury, are too close to those centres for patients to qualify for PATS assistance. If they can go to Perth, or if they can get their doctors to say Perth is the only place they can get treatment, they can get a subsidy. Those are the types of things that we have to look at. It is not just a health issue. The infrastructure is there, but we must work out better ways of using that infrastructure. I will keep my remarks brief, because I know the member for Greenough wishes to speak. As it is the opposition's motion, I will leave it at that.

MR G. WOODHAMS (Greenough) [6.43 pm]: It is great to hear government members, particularly the members for Collie-Wellington and Central Kimberley-Pilbara, talking about issues in their own regions. It is an acknowledgment that there are some particularly awesome issues in regional Western Australia that regional members must deal with. I am encouraged to know that some government members think the way we do on this side; that there are issues that need acknowledging and pursuing. I will talk about those in a little while.

I want to take up one point raised by the member for Collie-Wellington. I would not encourage the advent of synthetic bowling greens in any communities in his electorate. The maintenance and performance of synthetic bowling greens creates difficulties for bowlers. I advise the member that, if it is possible to retain a real live lawn green in a club, that should be the preference of members. I know from the experience of the Mullewa Bowling Club, which has a synthetic green. The member may think my comments are facetious, but they are not. The costs for maintenance are still quite considerable, but the resulting bowling experience is not the equivalent of that on a normal lawn green. I encourage the member for Collie-Wellington to dissuade people who ask for synthetic bowling greens. There may be some economic arguments, but I suggest it is best to oppose them. Having proffered that advice, I support the motion.

One of the things we have spoken about in this house on many occasions, and with which I am sure many members opposite are now in total agreement, especially since the Geraldton regional Parliament, is the importance of the completion of the Indian Ocean Drive by completing the missing link from Lancelin to Cervantes. As has been suggested before, the economic, social and environmental effects of the completion of that road can only be positive for all Western Australians, not just the communities of Lancelin, Cervantes and Jurien. The people of Perth and the metropolitan area seeking to travel north at present find it a much more arduous task on the Brand Highway than has been the case in the past. We have heard from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure about some of the planned upgrades for Brand Highway, but those upgrades do not go anywhere near meeting the requirements of industry and domestic traffic along that highway. I encourage

discussions about improvements to the Brand Highway, such as building extra passing lanes or renewing parts of the road, but that discussion must go hand in hand with the completion of the Indian Ocean Drive. The benefits for the communities, both where that road exists at the moment and where it does not exist at the moment, would be quite fantastic. A series of communities could be developed along the coast between Perth and Geraldton, to which some of the people who would have difficulties living in the south west or Perth could relocate. The skills required in that part of the world would be quickly gobbled up. I suggest that one of the priorities for this government should be the completion of Indian Ocean Drive. I know it is something that we have been saying consistently on this side, but I believe that it is something that members on the government side secretly agree with. I look forward to that work being carried out and I am a great advocate for completion of that work, along with further improvements to the Brand Highway.

Yesterday I spent quite a bit of time at the agricultural college at Morawa, which is part of the agricultural college system. I had the great privilege of seeing the improvements that have been made to the piggery. Although I was absent from Parliament, I saw some points of similarity between the piggery at the agricultural college and the activity that sometimes goes on in this place. In speaking about the agricultural college at Morawa, I back up the comments of my colleague the member for Wagin about the agricultural college at Narrogin. I know that the hostel at the Narrogin agricultural college is full to capacity, and there is now a similar situation at Morawa. Only a few years ago, there was a strong recommendation that that college be closed down. Since then, there has been a considerable turnaround and acknowledgment of the benefits of a college of agriculture in rural Western Australia.

Another area to which I believe funding should be directed is not only the courses that are being developed in agricultural colleges in Western Australia, but also the hostel accommodation. One of the pleasing things about the agricultural colleges in recent times has been the growing number of females who have applied for, and been accepted into, these colleges. However, as members would recognise, that creates a requirement for separate accommodation facilities. The two colleges of which I have personal experience - Narrogin and Morawa - are finding it very difficult to provide separate accommodation facilities, because the building is not large enough. Given the demands that are being placed on our education system at the moment, I suggest that some of the \$1.3 billion budget surplus could be spent on upgrading some of the hostel facilities. The hostel at Narrogin is certainly deserving of that. The hostel at Morawa is full this year. It will be full again next year. If these institutions are to enable young Western Australians to develop skills that will benefit all of us in the community, surely the basic thing that the boarders at those colleges require is reasonable accommodation. Given that the booming economy in Western Australia has the ability to power Western Australia, education is one of the most important things it should be powering. That is where I would be putting some of that budget surplus.

On my trip to Morawa yesterday I asked about the situation with the provision of power to that town. The people of the town of Morawa are generally confident that they will be delivered power 24 hours a day. However, on some occasions that is not the case. Unlike their neighbours - I use that word loosely - in the electorate of Greenough at Kalbarri and Dongara, one of the issues that Morawa does not face is continual blackouts and brownouts. Recently I had the great pleasure of visiting Kalbarri. That is certainly one of the jewels of the Western Australian coastline. One of the ongoing dilemmas that the people of Kalbarri face is the provision of power. Mr Trevor Clapton, the manager of Kalbarri Beach Resort, spoke to me and the Leader of the National Party, the member for Merredin, and also to Mr Chris Cox, the Western Power representative in the mid-west. Mr Clapton was most demonstrative about the number of times the power has gone out at that resort. He was also very demonstrative about the number of brownouts that are taking place. As members in this house would know, if the power goes off, that is it. There is not a great deal people can do with their machinery or their computer or other electrical appliances. However, if the power happens to be downgraded to what is colloquially known as a brownout and the machinery works at a lower capacity than it should perform at, it can cause a lot of damage to not only that machinery but also any associated equipment. Although Mr Clapton said he was prepared as anyone to deal with blackouts, because that is the reality of having a large electricity grid, people should be assured that when electricity is available, it is 100 per cent juice and not 50 per cent juice. Therefore, one of the other areas into which I would put more money and infrastructure is the south west interconnected system in that part of Western Australia where my constituents live; that is, the electorate of Greenough.

A consistent theme in what I have been talking about tonight is the opportunity that faces the government of Western Australia. We consistently hear about the fantastic boom this state is experiencing and how we have never had it so good before. If that is the case, this government has a window of opportunity - to use that jargon - to create in innumerable communities across Western Australia infrastructure and facilities that will last to the end of this century. I have heard that the Premier said today that there will be no upgrade to Dongara District High School; it is not planned for in the budget. If there is no money to do that, when will these

communities ever have any economic or social justice delivered to them? That is the case not just in education but also in other areas of social infrastructure need.

We have been told by the Treasurer that this state is experiencing a considerable period of growth. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P.B. Watson), you were in Geraldton with me, and you would have heard, as I did, the plaudits that were given to the member for Geraldton. I do not dispute that the member for Geraldton deserves that. He works very hard. However, I have heard it said by members on both sides of the house that the benefits that have been visited upon the electorate of Geraldton should also be visited equally upon every other community in Western Australia. This is an opportunity that we have now. It is not an opportunity that we have in years to come when this boom that we are experiencing rolls down the other side. This is the time when the government should be investing in the future in regional Western Australia. We often hear how this state is being robbed of its finances by the federal government. I put it to members - it is an old argument, but I will put it again - that it is very true that regional Western Australia, which is the powerhouse of Western Australia, is being robbed of its opportunities because most of the money is being spent in Perth.

Another area to which I would like that \$1.3 billion budget surplus to be allocated is communities like Mullewa. Mullewa has had money spent on it in the past, and Mullewa will have money spent on it in the future. The member for Greenough is not in the house today -

Several members interjected.

Mr G. WOODHAMS: Well, I am in the house today, but if I stand sideways, members may think I am not in the house! The member for Geraldton is not in the house today, but today both he and I were the recipients of a telephone call from the chief executive officer of the Shire of Mullewa expressing his concern about the lack of government money that is being spent in Mullewa. In allocating some of that \$1.3 billion surplus in this budget, I have no expectation that a huge amount of money would be spent in a community such as Mullewa. However, one of the things that we need to do in communities like Mullewa, in which there is a range of issues that no amount of money and no amount of infrastructure will fix, is develop social and education programs that will empower people to make some changes to their lives. One of the ways in which the government can do that is by providing incentives to government agencies to move some of their people into those communities, so that instead of agencies being dragged from Mullewa across to Geraldton, there is a reversal of that trend. I therefore request the government to find the social conscience to attempt to do some of those things and not look just at the financial bottom line. We are not talking big dollars here. We are not talking about a huge amount of money. We are talking, though, about having the will to make a change for the better. That will come at a cost. However, I do not believe it is a cost that would be out of bounds in a \$1.3 billion budget surplus.

One of the things that many of our indigenous communities in the mid-west need is additional teacher support. I am talking about support for Aboriginal teachers. I do not believe there is a strong enough program that encourages and engages people from Aboriginal communities to participate in structures through which they can become a registered teacher in the government system and then return to their communities. That is an easy thing for me to say, and it is an easy thing to ask for. I know it is not easy to deliver. However, that is where I would like some of that \$1.3 billion surplus to be spent. That would be a more appropriate spend of those dollars than is some of the largesse that is being delivered à la the Mandurah railway line.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
