

ROADS — KIMBERLEY

487. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record \$5.3 billion investment in roads in regional Western Australia. Can the minister outline to the house how this government is transforming road connections in the Kimberley region, including through the new Fitzroy River Bridge and the sealing of the Tanami Road, and can the minister advise how this investment is creating employment opportunities for local people?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Geraldton for the question. We are undertaking significant roadworks throughout the Kimberley region. Last week, I had the opportunity to visit the Fitzroy with the member for Kimberley to see progress on the Fitzroy River Bridge. As we know, the Fitzroy River Bridge was washed away in the floods that occurred in January this year, and we are now seeing progress being made on the new Fitzroy River Bridge. We have seen the demolition of the old bridge and the construction of piers in the river bed, and we will soon see the building of the deck. There has been massive progress; it is very significant. Importantly, the government is doing this with a lot of support from local businesses and local people, with 100 members of the local community involved in the project and around a quarter of the total crew hours having been worked by local Aboriginal people. At the end of July, \$6.1 million had been spent with local Aboriginal-owned businesses in the Kimberley, and Aboriginal people accounted for 26 per cent of the hours worked. Of course, we are undertaking the same process with the sealing of the Tanami Road. We are making sure that we engage with local people and provide local training and employment opportunities.

The state and federal governments have committed over \$500 million to this project. Currently, four new local Aboriginal businesses have been engaged in the project with another two commencing soon and more than \$15 million in contracts has been awarded to Aboriginal businesses. I am really proud of the work that is happening throughout the area. I am proud of the progress that is being made. It is disappointing to hear members of the Liberal Party criticise the workers who are out there delivering this magnificent project. They criticise the local Aboriginal people building that project and the contractors who are out there. The progress is incredible.

As I have said before, I sometimes go through the Facebook comments of opposition members and some of the responses. We know Hon Nick Goiran and Linda Reynolds are always out there going, "Well done! Well done, Libby!" We know members on their own side do that. However, interestingly, there are people out there who remember the previous government's record on infrastructure in Western Australia. It privatised Westrail freight, closed regional rail lines and outsourced the Main Roads Western Australia contracts, which basically saw Aboriginal employment plummet in those areas. It basically destroyed Aboriginal employment opportunities in Main Roads across the state. In response to the Leader of the Liberal Party's comments about the Fitzroy River Bridge, I want to raise in this place one particular comment. It says, according to my notes: Libby, while you were in power last time, your government closed the major transport infrastructure because the then transport minister's family owned a trucking business. I've asked the Liberal polities why that happened and why they're still waiting for answers.

We have an opposition that privatised our rail lines, closed rail lines in regional Western Australia and outsourced maintenance—so much so that we are now rebuilding employment opportunities and jobs throughout regional Western Australia.