

SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY PROJECT

309. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

Mr Speaker, before I ask the Premier my first question, I beg your indulgence to congratulate the connections of Miss Andretti, which won the King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot yesterday. I congratulate Keith and Peggy Beaglehole from Dardanup in the south west, and David Mueller, the Perth horse trainer who originally bought Miss Andretti. It is a great achievement for Western Australia.

Due to the government's mismanagement, in February 2007 the possible site for the \$2 billion square kilometre array project was moved 90 kilometres from Mileura station in the mid west to Boolardy station.

- (1) Is the government aware that Professor Don Backer, who is one of the world's leading radio astronomers and who works at the University of California, Berkeley, and his team are due in Western Australia next month and that his opinion of what is going on at Boolardy station will be extremely influential in determining the location of the SKA project?
- (2) Is the government aware that the noise level experiments that were previously conducted at Mileura at a cost of about \$4 million are now worthless and have to be conducted at Boolardy but scientists have been unable to effectively transfer the equipment because of the onerous requirements for site access and heritage issues?
- (3) Why is the government putting more hurdles in front of this internationally significant project rather than bending over backwards to make sure that the SKA project is built in Western Australia?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

- (1)-(3) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Frankly, I am not too sure where it is going. It is bizarre. I do not know what level of thought has gone into it. We faced the prospect of not having the project unless we made some alterations. We made those alterations, which have enhanced our prospects of being awarded the project, and yet the Leader of the Opposition has described us as having mismanaged it. That is unbelievable. The Leader of the Opposition is mismanaging his own frontbench and his own team.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You had it shifted because of the iron ore route.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The iron ore route. There is a very important industry developing in the mid west - the iron ore industry. There is also the prospect of developing the magnificent square kilometre array in either Western Australia or South Africa and its adjoining countries. Unsurprisingly, we are of the view that the project would be better placed in Western Australia. We are also of the view that we can have the best of both worlds. We can have the SKA project and, Leader of the Opposition, we can have a viable iron ore industry. They can sit together side by side. However, to do that certain alterations to the original proposals needed to be made. It would have been totally irresponsible to have not done what we have done. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot see that, he cannot see a lot. I am sure that when the esteemed scientist comes from the University of California, Berkeley campus to Western Australia, he will be very impressed by all the work that has been done at the state government level. The federal government, local government and industry have also contributed to ensure that we are able to proceed with both the SKA project and the iron ore industry in the mid west. It is not too difficult to grasp that the best outcome is to get both.