

OUTBACK HIGHWAY

786. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

- (1) Is the minister aware that the federal coalition Government committed \$10 million to the popular Outback Highway from Laverton to Winton in Queensland?
- (2) Given that this road undoubtedly brings great numbers of tourists and great economic benefits to Western Australia, is the Labor Party planning to match any part of the \$10 million commitment; and, if not, why not?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Yes. The federal Government announced an allocation of \$10 million, which is to be spread across three jurisdictions: Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. It is understood that only \$1.5 million of the federal allocation is to be applied to the Western Australian section of the Outback Highway.

Hon Murray Criddle: The question is whether you will match that part.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Wait. Hon Peter Foss always tells us to wait for the punchline.

- (2) The State Government is committed to the Outback Highway project and has spent \$6.5 million of state funds on the road between 1998-99 and 2003-04. We expect -

Hon Murray Criddle: That is what we spent in 1998-99.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The punchlines get better and they cannot wait for them!

The PRESIDENT: The parliamentary secretary will get on with the answer.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But they are such good punchlines.

We expect to spend \$1.3 million in this financial year, and a further \$3.5 million is provided in the current forward estimates. As can be seen, the State Government will have spent its committed \$11.3 million, which highlights the paltry nature of the federal Government's proposed contribution.