

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE — KIMBERLEY REGION

436. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record \$5.3 billion investment in Western Australian regional roads. Can the minister outline to the house how this record investment is transforming road connections in the Kimberley and how it is creating employment opportunities for people in the Kimberley?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for that question. I am wearing a West Coast Fever scarf, if people had not noticed. The member for Wanneroo, the Minister for Community Services, brought in the scarves today. She is a very big supporter of netball in WA, as are many members of Parliament. We wish them the best for Sunday when they play their semifinal, and going forward.

I thank the member for that question. Of course, the member for Kimberley is a strong advocate for her community, and there is a lot happening on roads and road connections throughout the Kimberley. I am pleased to inform the house that works have begun on three key bridge replacements on the Great Northern Highway through the Kimberley. Single-lane bridges are being replaced with dual-lane bridges at—hopefully, I will say this correctly, member for Kimberley—Tickalara Creek, Frog Hollow Creek and Arthur Creek. Initial works are underway. The bridgeworks at Arthur Creek will be undertaken in 2024. The construction phase will support 100 direct and indirect jobs. The project is jointly funded with the federal government.

Another key element is making our roads accessible year round and safer. Work has begun on sealing the Tanami Road on the section linking Great Northern Highway to the Northern Territory. The section to be sealed is over 1 000 kilometres long. State and federal governments have committed \$542 million to the project and, very importantly, currently more than 65 per cent of the workforce comprise Aboriginal people, with two-thirds living in Halls Creek. The government has also awarded \$15 million to Aboriginal businesses to date.

We all remember the vision of the collapsed Fitzroy River Bridge. The good news, of course, is that the demolition of that bridge has been completed and work is very much underway. I said that by April the Main Roads team had constructed a temporary single-lane causeway over the Fitzroy River; by the end of May, a fully functional two-lane causeway had been opened and demolition of the old bridge had been completed. Work is underway on the new bridge. Thirty-four piles have been driven into the riverbed to support the new bridge pier, with each of the seven piers to be supported by four piles. We are now halfway through that work, with concrete to be poured for the pile caps next week. Again, this work is progressing very, very well, and I thank Main Roads and the Fitzroy Bridge Alliance partners: BMD Constructions, Georgiou Group and BG and E. Congratulations to all those involved. This project will reconnect the Kimberley and ensure that Kimberley connections remain strong.

In preparing for this question, the member will be surprised that I had a look at some of the attacks on this work as it was happening.

Mr J.R. Quigley: Who would attack?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Well, good question. It was Hon Neil Thomson from the other place! I like it when I go through the outrageous attacks in their Facebook posts, and then someone comments, "Well done, Neil!"

Mr R.S. Love: You must have too much time on your hands!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You say I am too busy! There we go.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Make up your mind! Am I too busy or do I have too much time on my hands? I do not know!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I love this. Neil was there attacking the contractors all the time —

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sorry—Hon Neil Thomson in the other place.

The SPEAKER: Was that your point of order? Yes? Okay.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Southern River!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Hon Neil Thomson attacks us on Facebook and someone comments on his post, “Well done, Neil!” Well done! Who provided that positive commentary? Hon Nick Goiran!

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: But it gets better. I saw some other positive comments attacking us for the fact that the Fitzroy River is unpredictable and sometimes floods. We should have predicted the floods every time it rained; we should have predicted all the rain. Hon Neil Thomson is having another go and then someone comes in with the comment —

Only the McGowan government could get a river crossing so wrong ...

Who was that? It was Senator Linda Reynolds! It was actually quite insightful! There were some other comments, including this one from someone who is not a member of the Liberal Party commenting on Hon Neil Thomson’s attacks —

This is disgusting. You should be ashamed of being such a vulture trying to peck on the carcass of crisis. Gross, gross, gross.

That was from someone who is not a Liberal Party member of Parliament. We are very proud of the workers up there who got on with the job. Linda Reynolds actually says far more. Do members remember when she went missing for six months and no-one could find her? Maybe we should have gone on Hon Neil Thomson’s Facebook page to find her!

We absolutely appreciate the work done by all the workers up there in that community who have been working very, very hard, reconnecting. We are replacing the single-lane bridges with dual-lane bridges, we have started the Tanami Road upgrade, and we had the new Kimberley bridge underway pretty much within five months, which is an incredible effort. We designed it, worked through the process, liaised with the local Aboriginal groups and started the work. It was an incredible outcome. I thank everyone involved. I know the member for Kimberley is very excited about what is happening up there, and as my new parliamentary secretary, I suspect she will be up there inspecting all the works very soon.