

[Wednesday, 23 June 1993.]

MR MARSHALL (Murray) [4.34 pm]: I am indeed privileged to be able to speak in the Address-in-Reply debate as the member for Murray. I am fully aware of the responsibility that accompanies the honour and I intend to represent my electorate enthusiastically. It is a pleasure to be part of a coalition team that is prepared to make some hard decisions, and whose ideals I share. It is a team that is keen to see personal responsibility restored and Government interference lessened.

I am here today because hundreds of people have faith in me. My sincere thanks go to all the people who helped in the "Marshall for Murray" campaign. I would like to record my debt to the members of my campaign committee who worked for a full 12 months, especially my campaign manager, Andrew McCormack, and my wife, Helen, who stuck to the task throughout the highs and lows of the campaign.

At the turn of the century my grandfathers followed the gold trail from Bendigo to Kalgoorlie before joining the unskilled work force at the Fremantle wharf. My father, Horrie, left school during the Depression at the age of 13. He went on to become an all-time great in the sport of cycling and achieved success in the world of racing. He gave me the college education that he did not have. This background, combined with a successful sporting and business career of my own, has enabled me to be comfortable with people from all walks of life. I owe much to my heritage.

I wish to take this opportunity to tell the Assembly something about the Murray electorate. Murray is a large area surrounding but not including Mandurah. It stretches from Madora in the north to Lake Clifton in the south. It includes Ravenswood, Yunderup, Pinjarra, Dwellingup, North Dandalup and Coolup. There are many unrelated pockets, each with its own concerns and problems. The dairy farmers of Coolup have different needs from the young families at Greenfields. People who have chosen to live on the Yunderup canals have a different lifestyle from those who decided to make their homes on the five acre lots at White Hills. It all makes for a very interesting electorate.

The resources of Murray are varied. The region has important mineral resources including deposits of limestone, clay, sand, gravel, granite and bauxite. Alcoa Australia has an extensive bauxite mining operation in Murray with a large scale alumina refinery at Pinjarra. It is by far the biggest employer in Murray with approximately 2 000 workers. This represents 80 per cent of all manufacturing employment and a gross payroll of \$82m. Alcoa's refineries at Pinjarra and Wagerup produce 13 per cent of the world's market in alumina, while the Pinjarra bauxite processing refinery is the largest in the world. The company is highly regarded and contributes in a substantial way to almost every aspect of community activity in the Pinjarra area. It is also Greening Australia's biggest sponsor. It spends \$12m annually on environmental research, planning and rehabilitation. Alcoa, the only mining company in the world listed on the "Global 500 roll of honour", provides an excellent example of how overall environmental protection can be integrated with industrial development.

Agriculture has traditionally been an important component of the region's economy with beef cattle, sheep, dairy cattle and extensive piggery operations. Apples, nectarines, plums, pears, peaches and watermelons are grown in the Murray region, and although there has been a significant decline in the forestry industry two mills are still in operation. There are 28 commercial fishermen operating in the estuary with a total catch of crabs, prawns and mullet worth about \$700 000 annually. Tourism also is important to the area. The Harvey Estuary and Peel Inlet combined are two and one half times larger than the Swan River estuary. The scenic waterways and magnificent bushland and forests are major attractions for tourists with approximately half a million people visiting the area each year.

Within the Murray are some of Western Australia's finest jarrah forests, the magnificent Murray River valley and the Lane-Poole Reserve. This location is extremely popular with tourists as it is one of the few areas near Perth where they can camp in a relatively natural bush setting. One little known resource in the Murray electorate is water. Quietly taking shape in the corner of the Murray electorate is the \$60m North Dandalup Dam which will supply about 10 per cent of the metropolitan water when completed in June 1994. Since last October 160 workers with giant earth moving equipment have been excavating for foundations and spillway. Incidentally, a 60 metre high embankment which stretches over one kilometre will use more fill than was used on the Ord.

Not far from North Dandalup the \$11m Cojurunup pipehead dam is also nearing completion, which means there will be four major dams in the Murray electorate. We already have the South Dandalup and South Dandalup pipehead dams. The dam at South Dandalup continues to be a favoured spot with tourists and day trippers. The North Dandalup dam with its combination of water, bush areas and tranquillity will, I am sure, prove equally popular.

Murray is currently acknowledged to be one of Western Australia's most rapidly growing regions outside the metropolitan area. At the 1989 election there were just under 9 000 electors on the electoral roll. At the February 1993 polls there were almost 16 000 electors. The population, including children, has seen an even more dramatic rise. By far the greatest proportion of these newcomers live in the Greenfields and Coodanup areas, which have predominantly fairly low cost housing. The sudden rise in population has put pressure on

some of the local facilities. Bus services have not kept up with the demand. There is an urgent need for local shopping facilities within walking distance. Welfare agencies are under pressure. In times such as these when Government resources are stretched to a breaking point it is essential that people work together to help themselves. Many Murray people are doing just that. Recently the Falcon Family Centre was opened. A group of concerned residents had seen the urgent need for a family centre. They formed a steering committee, organised assistance from the Lotteries Commission, worked tirelessly, had furniture made by a resident, and the project was completed in 12 months. Only three weeks ago in Pinjarra an appeal was launched for a \$1.4m indoor sporting complex. It is the most ambitious scheme ever tackled by the people in Pinjarra. The Murray Shire Council supports the project and fundraising has commenced for the first increment of \$500 000. The South Mandurah Football Club, the Falcon Fire Brigade, Halls Head Sporting Association, Dawesville Fire Brigade and many other groups have shown that by helping themselves they can achieve a great deal. The nature of the Murray electorate with its independent pockets of residential areas has led to each area developing a unique identity and has fostered a strong community spirit within each. In today's society this feeling of identity and belonging is precious. It is great to see people helping themselves and each other.

They do however, need outside help in the areas of transport, hospital services and education. A town bus service within Mandurah provided by one or more operators coordinating with Transperth trunk services should be developed over the next few years. Some of these town services may need State financial support. A fast and direct service to Rockingham and a fast Perth service - possibly via Kwinana town and the extended Kwinana Freeway once it is opened next year - are needed to complement Transperth's existing trunk services. The extension of the Kwinana Freeway to Mandurah is imperative if people are to be able to live in the pleasant surroundings of Murray while working elsewhere. Although the Murray electorate is serviced by the Pinjarra and Mandurah hospitals many ancillary services that are taken for granted in the metropolitan area are not available. Services are needed in such areas as child psychiatry, plastic surgery, ear, nose and throat surgery, ultrasound and dietetics. The need for a Peel regional college has been evident for a number of years. A budget allocation of \$145 000 was made in 1991 for the purchase of land, but nothing was done. Exhaustive studies have been undertaken to determine the most suitable site, but still no decision has been made and no land has yet been purchased.

Youth unemployment is a disturbing 29 per cent in Mandurah-Murray. To cope with the educational, employment, training and community needs of the Peel region, it is essential that the college become a reality as soon as possible. The Murray area, in many ways, is a microcosm of the State at large. Job creation is a priority, but the major challenge is to encourage development and allow progress, while balancing it against care for the environment. At the moment in Murray a number of areas are finding this balance is difficult. Should the Caddadup rubbish tip be relocated and, if so, where? Should the proposed Murray airfield be given the green light and, if so, what will happen to the existing kennels? Should net fishing in the estuary be limited? Should job creation be more important than preservation of the Creery wetlands? In every one of these instances, it is possible to hear convincing arguments for and against. When making decisions, should more weight be given to the interest of today's residents than of future residents? Should we be looking five years ahead or 50? To find this balance is a real challenge.

As I have mentioned, life in the Murray revolves around the Peel-Harvey Estuaries - and the waterways of the Murray. However, the estuary is sick. As everyone who has visited the area in the last few years will know, the estuary has been affected by blooms of a toxic blue-green algae which makes the water unsuitable for recreation. At the time of the blooms many residents, especially those who live along the canals, experience very unpleasant odours from decomposing algae scum. What can be done to return the estuary to health? Work is proceeding on three main fronts. Firstly, management of land in the catchment area. This is aimed at reducing the amount of phosphorus - upon which nodularia feeds - which leaves the land and enters the estuary. Farmers in the area are working closely with the Peel-Harvey Catchment Centre to reduce the amount of phosphates they use, and have planted thousands of trees, but poor management by the Water Authority is still a major problem. The catchment has 2 000 kilometres of Water Authority drains across it, and these act as "express highways" by which phosphorus reaches the estuary, with little chance to infiltrate and be retained in the soil. According to a recent report of the Peel-Harvey Catchment Centre, the drainage system is unpopular with landholders because of the high annual rate, overdraining, high maintenance costs and destruction of wetland systems. Additionally, based on Water Authority figures, the drainage system in the south west lost approximately \$4.5m last year.

It is difficult for one Government agency to encourage landholders to do the right thing when another major Government agency has done the opposite. Various reports on drainage reform have been written in the past six years. Not all have been released, and none has been acted upon. I expect the present Government to change this. The catchment centre, in conjunction with landholder groups, has developed simple systems of modernising drains. These should now be implemented on a broad scale. Another solution to the phosphate problem could be the use of Alcoa's bauxite residue or "red mud", a by-product of the alumina industry which has the ability to capture and hold nutrients. On acid, sandy soils application has been shown to increase pasture production by 15 per cent and to decrease phosphorus leaching by 50 per cent. Alcoa requires an assurance of

community and Government support before it will agree to widespread use, and EPA approval has yet to be given, but the red mud program has the potential to be a shining example of cooperation between mining, agriculture and environmental protection.

The second step towards helping the estuary to recovery is a weed harvesting program, and the third and major step is the \$57m Dawesville Channel, one of the most ambitious maritime engineering feats ever attempted in WA and due to open in March 1994. The Dawesville Channel will increase flushing of the estuary. This will mean that the whole system will be able to tolerate a much higher loading of phosphorus; that more phosphorus will be removed; that the system will become more salty and nodularia will not be able to flourish. There will be a reduction in the time that nutrients will remain in the system; the level of oxygen in the water will rise, and water clarity will improve. This all sounds wonderful - but there is another side to the picture! The environmental impact of the predicted higher tides was not fully researched. In August last year Murray farmers raised concerns about salty, tidal waters going up the drains, and causing devastation of wetland areas. To its credit, the Department of Marine and Harbours has now launched an investigation into the matters raised, and further modelling of tidal fluctuations has been completed. Some residents still do not realise that as well as larger areas being covered in water at high tide, larger areas will also be exposed at low tide! It could be difficult to launch boats. Mosquito control will be essential, and it may be necessary to install floodgates in drains where freshwater habitats are threatened. The effect on nursery stocks of fish, prawns and crabs will also have to be closely studied.

It will be essential to monitor the effects of the channel very closely. With all three areas of control working together, it is hoped that the estuary will be revived, so that present and future generations will be able to enjoy the pleasures it had to offer in the past. The waters of the Peel-Harvey Estuary belong to all Western Australians; and it is in everyone's interests to have them sparkling.

What then does the future hold for Murray? It will certainly continue to provide over 20 000 people with a wonderful place to live. Some of these have steady employment locally or in other areas; many are enjoying the pleasures of retired life. Unfortunately, others are not so lucky. Unemployment in the region is 15 per cent, which is higher than the State average. Although much of the unemployment problem can be attributed to the current economic recession, Murray lacks a diversified employment base. In recent years the area has become reliant upon mining and mineral processing as a primary source of economic development and job creation. This industry must of course be encouraged and assisted wherever possible. It is unlikely that large numbers of jobs will be generated in farming, agriculture, or forestry; there could be room for further development in organic farming and aquaculture. At present, light manufacturing employs very few people, but this is one area where growth is possible.

At a seminar on job creation that I arranged last year, the main message was that small businesses are not seeking assistance but less interference from all levels of government. One local businessman, Rae Davison, has shown what can be done. Davison Industries manufactures agricultural chemicals and has a canola oil crushing plant. This progressive company started operations in Pinjarra in 1988 with a staff of four, and half a million dollars in sales. It now employs a staff of 44, and in 1992 sales - the export component of which is growing all the time - reached \$20.5m.

If we encourage small business people and do not swamp them with red tape, they will get things going. It is, however, tourism that offers most hope for the future in Murray. Racing, pacing and greyhound racing already attract many visitors to Murray, as does the Meadow Springs Country Club, which is fast becoming a major tourist destination. Approximately 30 000 tourists visited Meadow Springs last year, 10 000 of them from overseas. The Hotham Valley Railway's recent promotion "100 years of rail" brought over 10 000 visitors to Pinjarra, showing what planning and enthusiasm can accomplish. The four-lane bridge over the Dawesville Channel, to be opened in November, is 22 metres high and will enable yachts of all sizes to enter the marina. When the Port Bouvard resort with its golf course and tourist hotel is completed, traditional tourists will be well catered for, but the fact that it is attracting and accommodating other sorts of tourists has exciting possibilities.

As Penny Figgis, a Director of the Australian Tourist Commission pointed out in an article in *Habitat Australia* earlier this year, eco-tourism is claimed to be "the fastest growing sector of the huge American market" and will "probably grow at two to three times the rate of conventional tourism. Travellers are increasingly seeking the natural in preference to the artificial; the distinctive rather than the bland". We in Murray are well placed to take advantage of this trend. The delights of bird watching, crabbing, putting out a net, prawning, boating and fishing have lured visitors to the Murray for generations, and if efforts to revive the estuary are successful they will continue to do so.

There are the pleasures mentioned earlier of the Pinjarra-Dwellingup areas, where 250 000 visitors a year already enjoy the natural environment of Lane Poole Reserve and its surrounds. Less well known is a project quietly taking place at Dwellingup - the innovative Forest Heritage Centre, where eco-tourism will be seen at its best. The Forest Heritage Centre will offer people the chance to stay a while in a forest environment. The School of Wood, with its fully equipped workshop will be used to develop skills in the fine wood industry. Forest tourism will provide a unique opportunity for visitors to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the forest and

they will be able to see craftsmen at work from the vantage place of a platform reached by a rope bridge through the tree tops!

Other environmentally friendly projects are evolving in a different part of the Murray. Yalgorup Lodge, south of Dawesville, opened recently, offering superb holiday accommodation for just 12 people. Guests are encouraged to cycle along the estuary foreshore, to bush walk, and to relax in peace. A restaurant facility is currently being added to the Threlfal Galleries which are set in delightful natural surroundings at Wannanup, while the charming Bouvard Gallery was recently opened in a bushland setting at Melros.

The opportunity for expansion in eco-tourism certainly exists in Murray. If it is grasped, tourism could develop into an even more valuable industry for the area. At present the magnificent Murray is the best kept secret in Western Australia. It is a playground on the doorstep of the metropolitan area just waiting to be discovered. My vision for the future is that the people of Murray will be able to live the sort of lifestyle that attracted them to the area in the first place - a combination of the best aspects of country living with some of the facilities that are taken for granted in the city.

By continuing to appreciate the contribution made by Alcoa; by allowing light industry and small business to flourish; by encouraging government to plan wisely to meet transport, medical and educational requirements; by promoting environmentally friendly tourism; and by cleaning up the estuary, my vision for Murray will be achieved.

I thank members for giving me the opportunity today to talk about the exciting, challenging, interesting electorate of Murray, and cordially invite members, if they are ever down our way, to drop in and share a prawn sandwich or a bowl of crab chowder!

[Applause.]