

House: Legislative Assembly- Reading - Cognate Debate Second Reading
Date: Wednesday, 17 May 2006
Member: Barnett, Mr Colin; Wyatt, Mr Ben; Johnson, Mr Rob; Radisich, Ms Jaye; Woodhams, Mr Grant; O'Gorman, Mr Tony; Redman, Mr Terry; **Castrilli, Mr John; McRae, Mr Tony; ACTING SPEAKER; Waldron, Mr Terry; Constable, Dr Elizabeth; Day, Mr John; Trenorden, Mr Max**
Subject: APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO.1) 2006
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Mr G.M. **Castrilli:** When the Minister for Peel and the South West came to Bunbury earlier this year I thought I had a fight on my hands. This new minister was telling the people of Bunbury how important they were to the government and that their interests would be looked after. However, the budget indicates that nothing much has changed. Some Perth politicians cannot take their minds beyond their own backyard. The member for South Perth is an exception. The state's major service centre in the south west has been somewhat betrayed and abandoned. The Minister for Peel and the South West does have the interests of the south west at heart, but he will go prematurely grey trying to get the Perth-centric cabinet ministers to think beyond the metropolitan area.

How many times in the past few weeks has a minister regurgitated the message that Western Australia produces 30 per cent of Australia's export wealth, it is one-third the size of the country and it comprises 10 per cent of the Australian population yet it receives only 7.6 per cent of the federal government's distribution of road funding?

Mr T.R. Sprigg: It is 9.8 per cent now.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It has gone up. The government often refers to the way that Canberra treats this State. However, this government treats regional Western Australia in exactly the same way. I understand that 80 per cent of the state's wealth comes from regional Western Australia. How much of that goes back to regional WA? I suspect that it is not much. The south west cannot compete with the export earners such as the North West Shelf and the Pilbara iron ore projects, but it has a \$6.8 billion economy.

According to the *Budget Overview* the south west receives \$133.5 million of the state's distribution funds. Almost 200 000 Western Australians reside in the south west and that number is growing rapidly. The government continues to view everything from a Perth perspective. It refuses to acknowledge the substantial growth that is occurring outside the metropolitan area and the need for funds to be directed to regional Western Australia. This government is sick of getting less from Canberra than it would like, but I pass on the message to this government that the voters of the south west are sick and tired of being ignored by it.

On Thursday afternoon, after I had been given my pack of budget documents, I was hoping that the local media had been leaked the wrong information and that surely the government would not yet again abandon Bunbury and the south west. I scanned the budget papers looking for the signs that the government had taken its responsibilities seriously and was running the state effectively and fairly. Again and again, the government failed. I kept thumbing through the budget papers hoping it would not be the case but, alas, not so.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You had the wrong package!

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Yes, I was probably given the wrong package. I hope it was the wrong package so I can go back tomorrow and have another look. Maybe it was just a dream.

What government forces a single generation to pay off in one hit a piece of infrastructure that is expected to last 100 years? Most economists would tell us that it is far more efficient to debt-fund the program over the life of the project. The payoff was \$1.3 billion. What an amazing amount of money. All that money should be put into the health system and into programs to promote new industries in Western Australia.

What has the government done for Bunbury? It has insulted the city by ignoring the hundreds of millions of dollars required to be spent on infrastructure in the city so that it can reach its potential as the state's second capital city. We have been offered a paltry \$2 million and a few other scraps for new capital infrastructure. As a regional city of the south west, the infrastructure supports and is essential for the growth of the entire region. Did I expect the government to commit billions of dollars in one hit? Of course not. Did I expect strategies such as the outer harbour, the outer ring-road, the port access road and the infill sewerage program to be totally ignored? Once again, of course not. Where is the state government's strategic planning? The outer harbour development is laid down there. With the help of private enterprise, it could be a \$2 billion development with minimal cost to the government. Such a major project would bring wonderful benefits not just to Bunbury but to the south west and the state. The government made a big song and dance about it during the last election campaign, and rightly so. Where are the actions from the government to support its so-called intentions? In the *South Western Times* on 17 February 2005, the then Labor MP and member for Bunbury, Tony Dean, claimed that the project, which involved moving the industrial facilities at the outer harbour to the inner harbour in east Bunbury and releasing land for residential and tourism development, would not proceed under a coalition government. He promised that under Labor, the project would be completed. The newspaper stated - "Labor is dead serious about this project and it will go ahead if we are re-elected," Mr Dean said.

"You don't spend nearly \$1 million on a feasibility study if you are not serious.

As we know, the concept plans were drawn up. A total of \$750 000 was provided for a feasibility study. That feasibility study was supposed to occur in August 2005. Then it was delayed until Christmas 2005. Now it is May 2006 and we still do not have the findings of this study.

The government has learnt nothing from the disaster that plagued Mandurah. Anybody who has tried to travel along the southern extension of the metropolitan area in recent years would understand the frustration that the regular travellers have had to endure while the government vacillated over the upgrading of the highway to provide Mandurah with a working bypass. That is occurring. I think that is being repeated in a similar situation in Bunbury because the government does not have the vision to commit the funds to fix those bottlenecks, which are a serious impediment to growth and safety. I challenge any minister to sit at the Eelup roundabout, the most dangerous roundabout in Western Australia. It is rated in the top three most

dangerous roundabouts in Australia. Ministers should sit there for a few hours to recognise that there is a growing interaction of large trucks with urban traffic. It is a serious problem and it needs attention now. We need to construct the port access road and the Bunbury outer ring-road. To avoid the situation that has happened in Mandurah and to ensure that the region is an easily accessible destination, early construction of the port access road and the outer ring-road is vital.

There has been a demonstrated increase in the number of heavy haulage vehicles servicing the industrial needs of the south west. I have previously stated that there are about a thousand truck movements a day in the port alone, the bulk of which pass through urban areas and interact with urban traffic. The outer ring-road has been on the drawing board for 20 years. At this stage, I understand that the completion date is about 2031. All that has been allocated to the Bunbury Port Authority in the budget is \$4 million for dredging, and there are a few other bits and pieces. That activity occurs every few years to keep open the shipping channels. That is nothing new; that money comes from the port's own resources. What else did it get in the budget? I am not sure what it asked for, but I imagine that with all the talk of containerisation, increased woodchip exports and the proposed coal exports, a new berth would have to be constructed. That has been talked about for some time now, but nothing has happened, not even with the \$60 million that was promised by Premier Carpenter in his former role as Minister for Energy. That money was to form part of the rescue package for choosing gas over coal as the fuel for the base-load power station and to assist with the infrastructure for future coal exports. The ink was still wet on the letter we received from the Premier when he arrived to defend himself for why that money was not in the budget.

I made reference several weeks ago to the infill sewerage program and how the towns of the south west were fed up with the timetable for connecting to the main sewerage system being pushed out time and again. The latest timetable indicates that many towns will receive infill sewerage anything up to 15 years later than was originally promised. I noted in the 2005-06 budget papers that the budgeted amount for the infill sewerage program for the whole of the state was \$34.5 million. In 2006-07 the actual budget is \$30.6 million, which is \$4 million less than the amount allocated in the previous financial year. I was hoping that the amount in the budget would have at least increased because the infill sewerage program is of vital importance. We know the detrimental impacts that septic tank leaks have on ground water and aquifers. The activity on Bunbury's infill sewerage program is minimal at the moment, and there will be even less in the coming financial year. The program in Bunbury has been pushed out to 2018, and with this reduction in the budget, it could be pushed out even further. Towns have been experiencing environmental and town planning problems because of the lack of access to the main sewerage system. It is preventing the development of land. People now have to develop land of 2 000 square metres and above just so they can get some development in the town.

I reiterate that the south west has a diversified \$6.8 billion economy. It utilises road, rail, sea and air for its transport needs. Where is the vision - the integrated strategy to combine all the transport elements to ensure the quickest path to economic development? I understand that the federal government has allocated \$15 million to work with the state to develop a better transport corridor from Perth to Bunbury. I hope that this government takes the opportunity to develop that integrated transport strategy for the south west and to develop the long-term strategy that is required. I

can certainly assist with the start of this process by giving the government a copy of an integrated transport strategy that I launched in 1999.

Freight haulage is expected to increase significantly in the southern province. Road and rail freight is expected to nearly double from the 1995 figure of 27 million tonnes to 50 million tonnes in 2020. Two million tourists a year are expected to be attracted to the southern province. Population growth in the south west is expected to increase significantly. One does not have to be Einstein to work that out. We all know that. In the *Bunbury Herald* of Tuesday, 7 March 2006, the Minister for Peel and the South West was quoted as saying -

“It needs to have a vigorous approach by government, the government needs to provide vision and take with it local councils, people and businesses of the South West.”

The minister was talking about Bunbury. He went on to say that the surrounding towns were an important part of any structure, and the community would need to work closely with the government. I believe the minister also conceded then that the budget for the south west was not flash, and I think he said that it was not as rosy as it could be. There are no new major capital commitments from this government in this budget for Bunbury. The people know it, and they are extremely disappointed. Does the government care? It should. I do not think it does. It may during the election year. Maybe the government thinks like that because it has its one vote, one value policy locked away, and therefore it believes that it does not have to pay too much attention to regional Western Australia. However, I will give it another perspective. If the government truly believed in one vote, one value, and assessed the contribution to the state coffers that an investment in the south west would return, I am sure that the government would triple the amount of investment it makes in the south west. Even if the government allocated the infrastructure expenditure in the budget of \$5.2 billion on a population basis, the south west would receive at least \$500 million. On any measure, I suggest that the allocation would be at least double what it is today.