



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Budget

SPEECH

Monday, 26 May 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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| Speaker Irons, Steve, MP | Question No. |

Mr IRONS (Swan) (10:39): This budget has seen quite an incredible and unprecedented investment in a new road network in Perth to connect the airport and Kewdale freight and railway terminal in my electorate of Swan with Fremantle port. In addition to the \$300 million allocated for the Gateway WA project next financial year in my electorate of Swan, the Abbott government has committed \$925 million for the Perth Freight Link project, a standard freight connection between Kewdale and the Fremantle port. I was pleased to be able to help launch this initiative last Monday with the Minister for Finance, the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and the member for Tangney. Works are anticipated to include a five-kilometre Roe Highway four-lane dual carriageway extension from its existing terminus at the Kwinana Freeway to Stock Road in Coolbellup and improvements to Stock Road and High Street.

This productive infrastructure will make a huge difference to the economy in Western Australia. It will also help local residents, as it is estimated that it will take 65,000 vehicles off the surrounding roads every day. I note that Main Roads are considering the Beeliar Wetlands, and I certainly welcome the focus of Main Roads on ensuring that the wetlands are at the forefront of this project. There will be a 120-metre bridge over the Roe Swamp, which has conditional environmental approval. This is a project which has a very strong economic basis, with Western Australian government estimates indicating that the Roe Highway extension will deliver benefits of \$5.20 for every dollar invested. It certainly is an exciting time for Perth.

You would think that there would be no-one who could possibly be against such an investment in this productive infrastructure in Perth. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can see that you are thinking, as a Western Australian as well, that surely no-one could be against a fantastic result for Western Australia. But you would be wrong. While reading the local papers last week, I came across two articles: 'MacTiernan accused of road block' in the *West Australian* on 17 May 2014, and a letter to the editor from Labor Senator Glenn Sterle entitled 'Wrong turn on road funding' in the *Canning Times* on 20 May 2014. Labor Senator Sterle puts forward a bizarre argument that somehow better roads will not produce a safe wage for truck drivers and will end in tragedy. I think Senator Sterle really is clutching at straws to suggest that new roads will lead to road tragedies. I am sure there was no evidence or proof provided with his statement.

But Labor's opposition to roads is worse than that. It was written in the *West Australian* that the former WA infrastructure minister, the now member for Perth, Alannah MacTiernan, not only opposes today but deliberately tried to sabotage the Perth freight link with her decision a decade ago, as the WA minister, to delete the Fremantle Eastern Bypass road reservation and sell surplus land for housing. She is quoted as saying that proceeding with the link was planning lunacy. Nothing ever changes with WA Labor. They are, as a former member of this House, Martin Ferguson, said last week, a national disgrace.