



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Electorate of Swan: Great Eastern Highway

SPEECH

Monday, 4 July 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Irons, Steve, MP

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Mr IRONS (Swan) (10:30): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to talk about the celebration of the commencement of the Great Eastern Highway, an important road in my electorate of Swan. The celebration of the commencement took place on Saturday 25 June in Rivervale and I attended the latter part of the proceedings at the invitation of the WA transport minister, Troy Buswell. This was a particularly significant moment for me personally as the upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway was the first issue that I started campaigning on as a Liberal candidate for the seat of Swan back in 2006-07. The stretch of the Great Eastern Highway that goes through my electorate of Swan fulfils a number of important functions. It is the gateway to WA's east, including the important agricultural wheat belt area. It links the city and the airport. It is home to many of the small businesses in my electorate. But, perhaps most importantly, it is used by local residents going about their day-to-day lives.

As you can probably imagine, with all these functions and uses the Great Eastern Highway has become a very congested road. It is currently two lanes over much of the distance between the city and the airport and there are some fairly messy interchanges, which can make a journey up the Great Eastern Highway dangerous. Fortunately, there has always been a fairly wide road reserve and as a Liberal candidate in 2006-07 I campaigned for the widening of the highway. This campaign received plenty of support from the community, including from prominent local figures such as the Mayor of the City of Belmont, Glenys Godfrey.

With that support, I took the case for the upgrade to the then Prime Minister, Mr John Howard. Prime Minister Howard, who was always a great supporter of road improvements, saw merit in the proposed upgrade. It was a great moment for the local community when he visited Perth in person on 27 September 2007 to announce that a re-elected Liberal government would fund the upgrade. Two days later, the member for Griffith—and he is in the chamber, and I congratulate him on making this decision—Mr Kevin Rudd, sensing how popular my local campaign on this issue was, copied Mr Howard's pledge to upgrade the Great Eastern Highway, securing crucial bipartisan support before the 2007 poll. So I thank the member for Griffith for supporting my local campaign. This proved to be important, as Mr Rudd went on to win the election.

However, I knew that there would be a long road ahead. On winning the seat of Swan on 14 December 2007, I made it my No. 1 priority to make sure that the Labor Party delivered on its promise to put \$180 million into the Great Eastern Highway upgrade from Kooyong Road to the Tonkin Highway. There was a picture of the member for Griffith and the local Labor member on the Great Eastern Highway for the whole election campaign, Kim Wilkie. The WA government has contributed \$45 million. It has been a long road to the commencement of the road works. Over the past few years, we have had to fight every step of the way to get the federal government to come good on its promise. But it is great that the upgrade has started.