



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Infrastructure

SPEECH

Monday, 12 September 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Albanese, Anthony, MP	Question No.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:08): If words and rhetoric could be turned into bitumen we could have duplicated Highway 1 many times over the last few years. If words and rhetoric could be turned into rail track we could have solved urban congestion. The fact is that this government has failed when it comes to infrastructure.

These are the facts: according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics public sector infrastructure investment fell by 20 per cent in the coalition government's first two years in office. For three years the Abbott and Turnbull government has failed to commence a major new project in Western Australia that was not planned by the former Labor government and funded in budgets it inherited from the former Labor government—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting Suspended from 12:09 to 12:31

Mr ALBANESE: In order to hide its inadequate action, the government has gone on a magical infrastructure re-announcement tour. That began just weeks after the 2013 election, when the former transport minister boasted that the government would deliver the Perth Gateway WA project. This was a project that, during the WA Senate by-election, the government pretended was new, but some of it had already even opened at that point. Cars were already travelling on some parts of the road.

We have seen it here again today with the member for Durack speaking about the North West Coastal Highway, the Port Hedland improvements projects, the Great Northern Highway—Muchea to Wubin—the Black Spot Program and the Roads to Recovery Program. All of those have not a single dollar of coalition government funding in them. They were all done by the former Labor government, just like we funded the Swan Valley Bypass, just like we funded, built and opened the Great Eastern Highway project in the member for Swan's electorate. Indeed, the member for Swan was there when I, as minister, began work on Gateway WA project, and yet the government pretends that it is new. They were funded by the former Labor government, just the like duplication of the Dampier Highway, the Esperance Port Access Corridor and other projects in Western Australia. Indeed, in Western Australia there is not a major road or rail infrastructure project that was initiated by the coalition.

What we saw during the election campaign was nothing short of pathetic. The coalition allocated more than \$850 million to 78 new road projects under its program. Of those projects, 76 out of 78 were in electorates held by the coalition at the time of the election, 46 of the 78 projects were in New South Wales and 11 were in Queensland. There were none in Victoria, and in Western Australia, of the 78 projects, there were three in the entire state. By contrast, Tasmania, which happened to have the three amigos—now known as the three oncurs—in their marginal seats in Tasmania, had 15 project. There were 15 in Tasmania and three in the entire state of Western Australia.

The member for Durack spoke about the Roads to Recovery Program and financial assistance grants through local government. The government cut \$925 million in road funding via financial assistance grants to local government when it froze indexation in 2014. Indeed, one of the worst affected electorates was Durack—\$71 million in cuts as a result of that. The fact is that this government has failed when it comes to infrastructure, has failed when it comes to building important roads and failed when it comes to public transport. This is a government without an agenda when it comes to nation-building which has marginalised Infrastructure Australia and politicised the entire infrastructure agenda, which is consistent with a government that has no plan for a stronger economy, just a plan for stronger rhetoric.