

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Infrastructure

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (7.20 p.m.)—I rise to support the intent of the first part of the motion but, frankly, I laughed myself a little silly at the second half. With respect to the first half, I agree: infrastructure planning does provide the platform for regional economic growth. The rapid growth in many regional centres has placed the nation's infrastructure network under pressure. The changing social and demographic environment in major regional centres certainly presents a significant economic and development challenge. I agree wholeheartedly that the past 12 years have been a missed opportunity for the nation to invest in the future beyond the current mining boom. I can only assume from the motion that, when referring to the past 12 years, considering that the coalition government was in power for 11½ years, they are simply referring to the states.

In reference to the missed opportunity by the Labor states over the last 12 years, I can only say 'hear, hear' to the Labor Party for recognising what the nation knows: the Labor states have failed the nation. The states' record is abominable. Since the GST was implemented, the states have received \$46 billion more than they would have done if the wholesale sales tax structure had still been in place. Out of this \$46 billion windfall—because if we had stayed with the wholesale tax regime the extra \$46 billion would not have been there—how much have the Labor states spent on infrastructure? Is it 10 per cent, 20 per cent or 50 per cent? If infrastructure planning provides a platform for economic growth, if growth is so important, out of this \$46 billion you would expect the Labor state governments to expend a substantial amount. They have spent \$2 billion. That is it—a lousy \$2 billion. Out of \$46 billion in unanticipated income, they have spent \$2 billion.

Let us look at the moribund state of New South Wales. Frankly, any Labor member for New South Wales should be embarrassed at the state that New South Wales Labor has fallen into. Over that period of time, the pay of state public servants has increased 14 per cent above the business sector. The Labor state governments across the nation will have taken debt—as in public debt—from something like \$10 billion in 2005 to over \$80 billion by 2010 as they rapidly seek to catch up on the infrastructure quandaries that their 12 years of neglect have caused.

The Henry Ergas review also reinforces that only \$2 billion out of the windfall \$46 has been spent. What did our Prime Minister say on 30 June 1999 about that GST windfall of \$46 billion? Frankly, it is a little laughable. He said:

When the history of this parliament, this nation and this century is written, 30 June 1999 will be recorded as a day of fundamental injustice—an injustice which is real, an injustice which is not simply conjured up by the fleeting rhetoric of politicians. It will be recorded as the day when the social compact that has governed this nation for the last 100 years was torn up. It will be recorded as the day when the nation's taxation system moved from progressivity to regressivity. It will be recorded as the day when the parliament of the country said to the poor of the country that they could all go and take a running jump.

Well, thank you, Prime Minister Rudd, for your incredible insights in 1999, because the GST delivered \$46 billion to Labor states and what did they do with it? At a time of record need for infrastructure, what did these abominable Labor state governments do? They spent \$44 billion on pay rises for public servants and a whole range of other anomalies and \$2 billion on infrastructure.

The Labor government has the hide to walk into the House with a motion decrying the lack of infrastructure that has been put in place, decrying the previous coalition government for it but secretly knowing that it is their own Labor states and talking up

the Labor fest. This government has put in place a whole range of Labor slush funds on the back of the surpluses provided by the member for Higgins.

This Labor government should look very carefully at what the Howard government left: the \$38 billion for AusLink, the Roads to Recovery, the \$2.4 billion in interstate rail networks, the \$4.1 billion for broadband, the \$2 billion Communications Fund; what the previous government left goes on. Do not try and cover up the abominable and moribund behaviour of state Labor governments through your revisionism. It is not worthy of you, nor of me.