

**2008**

## **WHERE'S BUNBURY'S BOOMING BONUS**

It must be embarrassing for Mark McGowan to be the Minister for the South West. Every year at budget time the Minister who holds this musical chairs portfolio is given the unenviable task of coming down to Bunbury to explain why yet again one of the fastest growing regions in Australia has been ignored by Eric the Ripper.

This year's performance was the hardest yet. There was so little in it for the Bunbury Region that he was forced to trawl back over the past 7 years worth of budgets to fill his allotted speaking time. For instance we were reminded of the \$16m upgrade of the Bunbury Regional Prison which no doubt pleased the local criminal element the \$41m in remedial works to Wellington Dam for its undrinkable water and the \$27m Kemerton Power Procurement Project whatever that is.

After a healthy pause the assembled crowd was told of the State governments \$2.5m commitment to the cancer unit at Bunbury Hospital, unfortunately it came across as a bit of a sick joke as the unit was announced 2 years ago and most of the \$8.5m is coming from the Federal government. .

What the tax payers of Bunbury had really come to hear was not past budget announcements but the future. The punters were there to hear how big our boom bonus was going to be. What was Carps the Builder going to build for us, what was as he terms it our once in a century bonus? Perth has been gifted a billion dollar footy oval, a half billion dollar museum and a third of a billion dollar entertainment centre. What do we get ?

Now Bunbury is a mining region and we have been a key part of this boom with hundreds of millions of dollars of royalties flowing into Eric the Rippers pockets. While the new local schools and medical facilities are much appreciated they are part of any normal governments capital works program. As for the long list of water and power projects, they are funded via the user pays principle so they don't really count. What counts is the special stuff, the stuff that makes a region come alive. We want Carps the Builder to build us something special, my suggestion is a \$100m waterfront with a new conference centre, museum and art gallery.

But no such luck. Not surprisingly the assembled crowd was not impressed, Eric the Ripper has lived up to his name and Bunbury has continued to miss out. Maybe this budget was not the time for the announcement of our boom bonus maybe Carps the Builder is waiting until closer till the election before we get our special present. We will wait and see.