

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Amendment to Motion

Resumed from 31 March on the following amendment moved by Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the Opposition) on 18 March —

That the following words be added to the motion —

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that the government has failed to adequately address a number of serious issues affecting Western Australia

HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan) [5.48 pm]: I rise to support the motion. I do so because there is no doubt that I want to advise His Excellency that the government has failed to adequately address a number of very serious issues affecting Western Australians. The government went to the last election with a number of promises. In fact, it took a number of policies to the last election. It claimed to have released 40 strong and detailed policies across major portfolio areas. It would be fair to say that if one looks at the Liberal Party's policy document, it is apparent that there are many policy and portfolio areas that are not deemed to be very important at all. It would also be fair to say that the 40 policies that are listed may well have received consideration for funding, whereas those that are lacking certainly would not have received any consideration. The one exception to that statement is the Liberal Party's policy for the racing industry. It is fair to say that although it had a policy for the racing industry, and although that policy pretty much mirrors the Labor Party's policy—I understand members of the Liberal Party were scrambling very quickly before the election to try to put together a policy in this area—there was no funding for that policy. I understand that Hon Barry House had a plan to cobble together the Liberal Party's plan for racing. I have a big soft spot for the racing industry. They are a great group of people who do a great job. When I was the Minister for Racing and Gaming, they were interested in one thing: they recognised the importance of the industry on which many families rely. To them it is not only a business, but also a passion. There is no doubt in my mind that they want their minister to continue to see their businesses grow. While we were in government, we gave a number of tax concessions and infrastructure grants to the industry, and that provided an opportunity for regional race tracks to be upgraded.

Hon Jon Ford: That is very important for the regions.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is very important to the regions. Over the past six months in particular, the industry has been in troubled waters. There is no doubt that that situation will probably get worse as people have less discretionary income and therefore will be less likely to have a punt. There is no doubt that the industry is looking for some direction from the government and that it needs a hand up as well as a handout. The industry desperately requires the Liberal Party to honour the commitments it made prior to the last election.

There is no doubt that the Liberal Party had no policy for several other very important industry sectors prior to the last election. The areas that spring most immediately to my mind are small business, tourism and training. I do not know whether that is a reflection on the Liberal Party's belief that they are not important policy areas, and, therefore, it did not devote any time or resources to them. Certainly that is the way it looks. Often if something looks a certain way, that is the way it is.

I do not want to focus my contribution and advise His Excellency just of that. I want to bring to the attention of His Excellency the fact that many promises were given and commitments refined in the Liberal Party's plan for its first 100 days in government. There was a big plan and a mini plan, which was a subset of the big plan and extrapolated the things the government thought that it could achieve in its first 100 days of office. One-hundred days has long gone. We have seen many of the 100-day promises simply not attended to. I will put these on the record because the Liberal Party was very big on accountability. When in opposition, the Liberal Party, together with the Independent member for Churchlands, Liz Constable, had something to say on every issue, irrespective of what it was. They said that ministers were unaccountable, that they would do better in government and that they would not be secretive and so on. I thought we were dealing with "Ms Accountability" when dealing with the member for Churchlands because she had so much to say about accountability. She had never been tested on anything, had barely made a speech in Parliament and basically did no work in the media, but she was really great at taking the high moral ground. If anyone was to take the high moral ground, it was the now Minister for Education. She always thought that everyone else should be accountable. Of course, she came from the right side of the tracks in the nice part of town and all the rest of it. Her view was that she did not have to be accountable for anything.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Tell me if I am wrong. Am I wrong in my assessment that Hon Liz Constable barely stood up to make a researched or decent speech in all the time that she was on the opposition benches?

She always had a lot to say about what everybody should do but now that it is time for her to deliver, she cannot deliver. The Minister for Education made some very strong promises regarding open and accountable government.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Do you have an example of this?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes. Hon Colin Barnett made her the shadow accountability minister in the lead-up to the last election. Members will remember that. Am I right or not? I am right. At every opportunity she crowed on and on about how the government would reform the Freedom of Information Act and how agencies should not hide information or their dirty linen. She said that they should take it out, make it public and learn from everything that had gone wrong. I thought that she was going to be a very interesting minister. Do members know what happened? As soon as she became a minister, everything started to change.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Every school had a teacher.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If the member thinks that that has anything to do with the government's policies, as opposed to the current global economic crisis, she has rocks in her head. We will just see how all that plays out. If the member wants to take credit for that as a great achievement, she can do that, but she will be sadly misleading herself.

I will go through a number of things because I want to put on record how open and accountable this government is. Honestly, this is just the tip of the iceberg. I will name and shame. That is what I will call it—name and shame.

Hon Barbara Scott interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Hon Barbara Scott can make some comments after I have gone through this list, identified these members and put on the public record just how open and accountable this government is and just how accessible it makes information to an FOI applicant. Keep in mind that this is only the tip of the iceberg. We put in a FOI application on 14 November 2008 to the Attorney General for all documents between him and any other minister. The date range was only a couple of months.

Hon Simon O'Brien: For all documents between him and any other minister!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: For two months.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have got to tell the member that he had none. He had none, you fool!

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm): Order, members!

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I ask the fool to retract that unfortunate and unparliamentary term.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I would like to withdraw it but I do not know what to substitute it with.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It will be sufficient for you to withdraw the term without any qualifications.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do so and I apologise.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Before we went to the dinner break, Hon Simon O'Brien in fact asked me whether I have evidence of Hon Liz Constable, as shadow accountability minister, making statements about how, if elected, she would form part of an open and accountable government. I have mountains of evidence but I do not have mountains of time. I will just go through one media release. It is from *The West Australian* dated 20 August 2008. It is titled "Libs pledge strong FOI, not cover-ups". It is written by Kate Campbell. She wrote —

Mr Barnett and Independent MP Liz Constable, who has recently teamed up with the Liberals in a loose coalition, yesterday revealed their reform plans for the FOI process.

They promised to make it easier for the media and public to have access to information, even if it was embarrassing to the government of the day.

...

She said an extensive review, which would examine the way FOI requests were managed, would rid the public sector of ministerial interference.

“I don’t mind the idea of a warts-and-all government where, if things aren’t going well, people should know and then we should do something about making it better,” she said. “But to start fiddling around and pretending and even covering up and saying you can’t find documents is just not acceptable.”

Mr Barnett said Labor’s attitude to FOI was “the height of arrogance”.

“We won’t tolerate public service departments or their staff denying the existence of information or even destroying information,” he said.

The FOI system has a long history of delays, denials and stand-offs, with recent examples including emails between former Health Department chief Neale Fong and Brian Burke and important matters involving indigenous affairs and health.

That is what they said prior to the election. I will not, unfortunately, have time to go through all of these. I am going to deal with Minister Constable at another time, as I will deal with Minister McSweeney at another time, because we have had very long and protracted negotiations about who is able to access what information. Hon Robyn McSweeney, when approached by me as the applicant, said, “I’m not here to waste my staff’s time because the Labor Party want questions!”

Hon Robyn McSweeney: You pay for it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, that is right. Then she said, “If you want this information, you are going to have to pay \$1 500.” She does not tell me how many documents there are. I could have gone out and bought a new Kelvinator fridge with \$1 500! I would not actually buy that fridge unless I saw what it was and I was happy to purchase it. What the minister is asking me to do is to take her on trust that she has a number of documents and then I should, sight unseen, hand over \$1 500. I have no idea why I would want to do that sight unseen. We will leave that debate for another day. What is interesting of course is her attitude to that application. Also what is interesting is the fact that she does not seem to understand that what we are dealing with here is a law of the state—a law passed by this Parliament. This is a law. This is like the law that we cannot go and bash somebody. The minister’s argument is that she, as a member of Parliament, can take the law passed by this place and use it to whatever end she wants. For the minister to say that she will not give me any documents, and that she will not bother with any of this, is the height of arrogance. She is a member of Parliament who has been elected to this chamber, and she is expected to have the highest of standards, and to be open and accountable. The documents sought from her office were about election commitments she made to the people of Western Australia, and her response to the request was that she does not care about the FOI Act and she is not interested in giving Labor members any information they want. She does not know how many documents there are, but off the top of her head she places a charge on my request of \$1 500, and expects me to pay. I have got to tell the house —

Hon Norman Moore: I’ve gotta tell you; I’ve gotta tell you!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The Leader of the House can get on his feet and tell me any time he likes!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich is making a speech, and with this many interjections we certainly do not want the member on her feet to get the impression that people are allowed to interject.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If anyone can understand that, I can!

Now where was I? Oh yes—the minister has no idea what she is charging for but she going to hit me with a demand for \$1 500. I do not take to that kindly, but I will do the right thing and put all the minister’s FOI applications that have been rejected to one side. I will not put them in the same basket as those of the Minister for Education, but I will put them in separate baskets, next to each other, so that they can be dealt with on another occasion. I want to go through the sorts of problems I am experiencing from this open and accountable government. I have already said that the Attorney General is the top law officer in this state—the top man in the law. If the Attorney General does not understand this act, I am not surprised that all the other ministers and the Premier have a real difficulty in meeting its requirements.

Hon Simon O’Brien: Have I knocked you back on any?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, the Minister for Transport is not a problem at this stage. He should keep himself nice and tidy!

Several members interjected.

Hon Simon O’Brien: If there was ever a remark that needed to be recorded by Hansard it is that one, so stop interjecting.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I think the minister is so boring that he is not worth chasing, if the truth be known, but he will get over it!

We already know that, on the first application, the Attorney General was 22 days late. The deadline for dealing with an application is 45 days. If negotiations are taking place, the clock is stopped and then once the negotiations are resolved, it is started again, but the deadline is 45 days. We asked for very simple information relating to election commitments. The reason I did that was very simple. We know that this government was cobbled together by two partners. That is fine. They went to the election. There was not much lead-up time to the election. Therefore, they cobbled these policies together. I believe that the Western Australian public has a right to know what these policies are about and the detail within them. That is why the information was sought.

On 5 December 2008 I sought information from the Attorney General about the commencement of work on CCTV at locations across the state in cooperation with local communities. I asked for some information on the repeal of the cannabis laws, including tougher penalties for drug possession, the new juvenile prison facility for 18 to 22-year-olds and so on and so forth. These are all election commitments. The documents range in date from 23 September, the day the member for Bateman became the Attorney General, to 9 December 2008, which was when the application was received. It took four days to get there. We are not talking about a huge time frame. They were the early days of the new government, a period of two months, and we would not expect it to have mountains of paper. Given all the stalling tactics that go on and the toing and froing, half the time there are no documents anyway. I do not know why it takes so long.

I want to discuss some of those stalling tactics. On 13 March we sent a letter relating to overdue applications. By that time we had received nothing. We received a fax that same day saying that the documents would be provided on 18 March. This application was due to be completed within the 45-day time frame. That time frame was 23 January 2009. It was over two months late. I am talking about the chief law-maker in the state. Another application went out on 5 December 2008. It had the same date range. It requested some information on mandatory sentencing and the graffiti task force. Once again, it had the same date range. We got the documents; they were provided to my office. There would not have been more than half a dozen documents in each bundle. The documents arrived in my office on 18 March 2009. The 45-day time frame was actually 23 January 2009.

Hon Peter Collier: Were you ever early with any of your FOIs when you were minister?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I can tell the minister that I never charged for an FOI. All my FOIs were in on time. No, I did not meet the deadlines.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: How many did you receive?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It does not matter. Members opposite were very lazy.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I am asking a question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The fact that members opposite chose not to seek information on behalf of the Western Australian public —

Hon Peter Collier: I put in plenty of FOIs.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The minister did, and I dealt with his. Can he ever remember an FOI that came in late?

Hon Peter Collier: No, but it was always up to the last date.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, but it was within the time frame. Can the minister ever remember me charging him for an FOI application? He would not because I never did. I had a policy of not doing that.

The federal government has just released a new policy that will make changes to the Freedom of Information Act. I will tell members the difference. The federal government has made a determination that people should have access to information; in particular, they should readily have access to personal information. They should not have to fight to get personal information from departments, and anyone who wants information should not have to fight for it. The federal government's underpinning argument is that if people are well informed about all manner of things, it will add to a participatory democracy. This will mean that people will ideally —

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: — be able to make better informed decisions because at the end of the day they can make them based on good information, rather than having to make decisions in the dark. The federal government has said that in view of this sort of global policy framework, it will not be charging for applications. The federal government will not be charging for applications. If people want personal information, they will be able to get all of it for free. If people want other information, there will be charges, but they will be considerably less than they have been in the past. Therefore, the federal government is moving to a position whereby it will encourage people to access information and its agencies will respond by making the information more readily available and at lower or no cost. Compare this: somebody who is poor —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Would not want to look at my diary.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Somebody who is poor —

Hon Helen Morton: And wouldn't go on a fishing expedition across every single department.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No, somebody who is poor—let us say that person made the application to Hon Robyn McSweeney, but he could not get any information because he would not have \$1 500 —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: He would be asking for one specific thing; not going on a fishing expedition.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: At the end of the day, let me make this very clear: the act is very clear and there is no restriction on what information people can ask for. There is no —

Hon George Cash: Yes, there is.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Well, that is true; there is no —

Hon George Cash: There are some.

Hon Adele Farina: Cabinet deliberations.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay, cabinet deliberations.

The act has provisions for policy considerations, cabinet deliberations et cetera, but at the end of the day there are no restrictions on what people can ask for on the subject matter that is sought. However, what people can be denied is a separate issue. The act is quite clear in that I do not actually have to explain to the minister what I want those documents for. Quite frankly, I am within my rights to ask for those documents. I have had members tell me that I cannot ask for more than one lot of information in an application, but that is clearly wrong; people can actually ask for five or six things in an application. That is quite within the act. I have been advised that I have to narrow the scope and narrow the scope and narrow the scope—let me give members a case study. On 31 January 2008 I asked the Premier, who has made all these grand promises, for all correspondence between his chief of staff and any other minister's chief of staff relating to some issues. The Premier actually sent the cheque back. I do not know how many cheques the Minister for Environment has sent me back. I send an application to the Minister for Environment and she simply sends it back. I make another separate application and I send it to her, and now I have a few cheques for the Minister for Environment and she just sends them back. I do not know what is going on: why does she send the cheques back?

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Perhaps I'll send mine back.

Hon Adele Farina: Did she send you your cheque back?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: She sends the cheque back.

Hon George Cash: Do you know why? She wants you to sign the cheque; she wants you to sign it!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: But they are all signed, honourable member, believe you me, and there is money in the bank; I make sure of that. The cheques are all signed and there is money in the bank and, honestly, I would have to say that I have had no fewer than 15 cheques come back.

Hon Jon Ford: Fifteen?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Fifteen—honestly! I will —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: She is trying to tell you something!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am going to tell the member something, because I will come into this Parliament and I will put all this on public record—I will table it all. I will put all these cheques that have been returned to me on the table, all in the form that they were sent and returned. They will all be tabled and then I will invite the media to come in and shoot it, and I think that will make for very interesting Parliament; that is my view.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Riveting—it will be as interesting as —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, okay, just do not worry about it. However, I will go on because I want to discuss the Premier. On 18 February, the Premier told me that it was an invalid application and asked for the scope to, in fact, be limited. On 25 February we sent a letter providing additional information. It was accepted as a freedom of information application only on 11 March. We lodged the application on 30 January and, unbelievably, it was not accepted by the Premier until 11 March. On 20 October, we sought some information from the Premier in the form of documents relating to a matter. The 45-day period expired on 21 November 2008.

Hon Simon O'Brien: It hadn't been in for a month!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We were asked to narrow the scope, so we narrowed the scope. We then received a request for costs of \$120. We requested a schedule and a description of documents. We were advised that 13 documents fell within the request. We agreed to changes and the deposit was sent, but we protested the charges. We still have issues about that request. We are currently dealing with an FOI request to the Minister for Regional Development. We have had seven rounds of negotiations. Hon George Cash is smiling because he thinks this is quite funny.

Hon George Cash: No, I don't think it's funny at all. I'm reading the Freedom of Information Act 1992, and I'm comparing what you're saying with what the act says. There is a massive discrepancy; I am not sure whether the act is wrong or you're wrong, but I'm getting the hint that it's not you!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If I were a betting person, I would put my money on the fact that the act is wrong!

Hon George Cash: Okay; we'd better have a look at that, because that's where your problem is. I'm not being smart; I think this is very, very serious, if you must know.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: So do I.

Hon George Cash: I think you'd better learn to fill the form out properly the first time.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I can assure the member that there was nothing wrong with the way the forms were filled out.

Hon George Cash: Then why would you have to have seven different goes at it?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Exactly right. We will get the FOI commissioner to work out who is right and who is wrong.

Hon George Cash: Don't put in a freedom of information application for that alone, or that will take six months.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I know. It is terrible.

Hon George Cash: Forty-five days, or such other time as is deemed appropriate, under section 13.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Order!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am trying very hard to get a very clear message across. These examples are a fraction of what the opposition is dealing with in respect of the FOI act. There are a lot of tactics being employed by the government, including not accepting applications; writing back to say that an application does not conform or that not enough information has been provided; and claiming that it will take a mountain of time to access the documents. We have used the Total Records Information Management system, and we know that one needs only to press a button on a computer and all the fields necessary for accessing documents will appear. The opposition also has difficulties with ministers saying, "If you want documents relating to third parties, we have to consult all third parties." The policy of the act is quite clear: third parties do not have to be consulted on every single matter. There is a mountain of tricks being played by the government, and it is anything but open and accountable. The government is being deliberately obstructive. Frankly, I would not mind if the Liberal Party had not campaigned so strongly on accountability in the lead-up to the last election. It is one thing to wheel out the Premier and for him to say that everything is going to change, that he will not have departments or agencies hiding documents as happened under the Labor government, and that he will conduct a review of departments to make sure that they handle the process properly. I do not have problems with the departments. I have problems with the minister's office; I have really, really serious problems with the minister's office. How can we expect other than to have problems with the minister's office when the Premier has no respect for the act and when the Attorney General —

Hon Adele Farina: I thought he said that his government would be open and accountable.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: He said that his government would be open and accountable. Let me just say this, Hon Robyn McSweeney —

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Nowhere near as many questions as I have lodged. Is Hon Robyn McSweeney telling me that I have a problem because I am doing my job as the accountability shadow spokesperson? Hon Robyn McSweeney sat on this side of the house and was very lazy and very hopeless. However, with respect, Hon Peter Collier came into this place and at least had a go. With respect, he did his job. Now, I am not going to give him a big rap—everyone knows that—but —

Hon Peter Collier: I'm waiting for the clanger!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I have to say that he came into this place and at least he did some work. He actually sent me some freedom of information applications. I used to watch Hon Norman Moore. A person would basically have to kick it to make it go and ask a question in question time—honestly! It was really a great thing when Hon Robyn McSweeney actually found her way to this place. Those opposite would have been worried that she had wandered off in the hills or something because she was so unreliable.

Hon Simon O'Brien: It's good to see that you're finally enjoying yourself over there.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am loving it.

Hon Helen Morton: Putting in FOIs is smart work, but it is the laziest way of just undertaking a fishing expedition.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Oh, dear; oh dear! It must be terrible for the member.

Hon Adele Farina: Then why do you have a problem delivering the documents?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, what is the member's problem?

Hon Helen Morton: Nothing. I am just looking for some intelligent debate.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why do the documents not come to us?

Hon Helen Morton: Give us some intelligent debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Order! I think Hansard might be having a bit of a problem hearing the speaker—one speaker.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Thanks for that, Mr Deputy President. I will quickly touch on the Liberal Party's promises about the Freedom of Information Act. Certainly, it promised to retain an independent Information Commissioner and not refer the functions to the State Administrative Tribunal, as Labor proposed, and it was to review the manner in which the departments are administering the FOI process to ensure that government is accountable and open in accordance with the spirit of the FOI act. However, quite clearly, when we go back and trace through everything that has been put on record about openness and accountability and how this government would deal with those matters, we are finding in practice that what is happening is a far cry from what this government promised would happen.

I really take objection to the view that there is some magic number that an applicant must adhere to; in other words, there should be a limit —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I just asked you how many you had put in. I didn't ask you if there was a limit. I asked, "How many have you put in?"

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I can tell Hon Robyn McSweeney that at \$1 500 per application, I will not be getting a lot out, never mind how many I put in. However, the point is that I have a job to do. It is my job.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: So do we, and we want to get on with it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Part of the minister's job is to keep the public informed.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: I do keep the public informed.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Hang on. I am not asking the minister anything. If she is telling me that she can deny me access to a document —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: No, I haven't said that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If the minister is on the side of the law, she can deny access because it is a cabinet minute or a document that, as defined by the act, she does not have to give to me —

Hon Robyn McSweeney: You're putting words into my mouth that I didn't say.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Well, that is fine; I will cop that. I am not asking the member —

Hon Helen Morton: You have to use your research officer now, too.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do it all myself.

Hon Helen Morton: I thought so. We can tell.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I know that the opposition is going to the State Solicitor to seek legal advice on how to deal with this, and that there is a stream of uniform responses to the freedom of information applications. I know also that it is getting under the member's skin and I know that she wants it all to go away. Let me tell members that while I am on this side of the house, I will do my job. Quite frankly, when members opposite crow about the number of FOI applications that I have applied for, I take it as a great big compliment because that is my job, and I take it very seriously.

Several members interjected.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Order, members! One at a time.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We lost the election. I keep saying that. I understand that. Consequently, we are on this side of the chamber. On this side of the chamber, there is no doubt that we are in the same game but we have a different position. I am not playing defence anymore, so to speak; my strategy is to play attack. I have to keep the government accountable because that is an important role of an effective opposition.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I hope that is good!

Hon Ken Travers: He kicked six goals on the weekend!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Did he? Sorry; he must be a newcomer!

If members opposite are complaining that they are getting too many questions or too many FOI applications from me, quite frankly that indicates that I am doing my job, because my job is basically to hold the government accountable. That is the responsibility of each member on this team. I want to say this: this is a great team. Whether it is members of the lower house or the upper house, we are working hard and we are working together. Members opposite never even achieved that. They achieved it only when it was time to carve up the ministries. Suddenly they became pals and formed unholy alliances because they each had something to gain. Was there a team or a united group of people working together for a common cause when they were in opposition? Absolutely not. They cannot stand each other. If members opposite have a problem, it is their problem.

I think that I have said everything that I want to say. I am reserving a bit for another occasion in relation to Hon Robyn McSweeney and Hon Liz Constable but I think that that is enough for tonight.

HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West) [8.03 pm]: I do not know whether I can entertain this house for an hour or even 45 minutes because I have deeply serious things to talk about. First of all, I would like to say that I do not support either the motion or the amendment to the motion. I do not support the motion to accept the Governor's speech. That is not because the Governor is not a fabulous human being. He made that very clear. He actually did. He is a very competent and capable representative of the Queen and of Western Australia. However, the program that he had to deliver is hollow. The last time I heard one of those sorts of speeches, I thought that that program was hollow as well. I will explain why I find it difficult to support the motion, the amendment to the motion or even the previous motions.

Hon George Cash: You just do your own thing. Don't worry about them.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I do my own thing, and I am fully entitled to do that.

Several members interjected.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: This is a libertarian place.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Order! At least the house can let the member make his speech.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Thank you, Mr Deputy President, I was finding it hard to get a word in edgewise.

I want to draw the attention of the house to the catastrophic failure of our financial systems and to ask members to think about what it means in terms of where we are now and how, all of a sudden, we got from the point of worshipping the free market and neo-liberal economics to a point of having a crisis of faith. I am nearly on my knees now! We have reached a crisis of faith about whether our economic structures can deliver anything like a sustainable and secure future for not just Western Australians but the global economy.

I think it is because of a fundamental failure in understanding how the financial systems work—and I will deal with that later. One of the principal failures is a concept that the economy must grow year on year and that somehow or other that is in the national interest—or in anybody's interest. The interesting point is that they are probably talking about the numerical economy and that every year we should post a small but important increment in our gross national product.

In a finite world—that is, a vulnerable single planet—it simply is not plausible to continue to have a growth economy. While the numbers are increasing year in and year out, that is dragging with it a whole lot of unsustainable and almost unbelievable economic activity. In actual fact, the crash that we are experiencing was not just the sub-prime mortgage market, toxic debt or a whole series of indirect financial arrangements, it was also caused by a spike in international oil prices—if members remember. People lost the capacity to make their mortgage repayments because everything around them was increasing in price.

Everything has a resource or energy price on it: food, all materials, all clothing—name it and it has an energy price, including this glass of water. The sub-prime mortgage failure is a myth. Of course, we set up these outrageous, poorly constructed mortgages but what happened was people's failure to meet their mortgage repayments related to other structural issues. I contend that one of those issues was the continual growth in the economy and the depletion of oil that caused price rises all around the economy and created the friction that made the wheels fall off the American economy and cascade into ours.

This is just the introduction as a matter of fact members; just the start! No-one could have avoided reading in any reputable Australian or international newspaper that there seems to be a new deal coming forward, and it seems to have attached a word to the front of it, the "green" new deal. Why is that language coming into existence right now? It is because the only way that we can resolve the economic crisis we have and the social crisis that is following is to take account of the fact that we are living on a finite planet and to take account of green economics, in other words, the environment.

We have had a social economy and an economic economy, and we have tried to have a blind spot to the environment. In actual fact, we need to put a price on that. The good thing for all members—I am not attacking anybody so it will be uninteresting—is that it generates an enormous wealth of opportunities for rebuilding economies. There is only one green party in Australia, and that is the one I belong to. That party has been putting forward the green new deal not in the past three months or four months; in the past three years or five years or 10 years, we have been naming the economic packages that need to be in place. Lo and behold, our stimulus packages are starting to pick up a green tinge. We welcome people stealing those ideas. If the royalties for regions program is to work, the only way it will generate genuine long-term sustainability and wealth generation is if we start investing in a green new deal in regional areas. I would like to put forward a mini-critique of the royalties for regions proposal by the Nationals, because that is part of this new Liberal-National alliance. I think we need to put that under the microscope.

The interesting point about green economics is that it is closely related to an economic ecology. The economy has interlinkages, and once part of the system fails, there are catastrophic failures across the whole economy, and that is what we have seen. We have seen friction in one part of the economy leading to catastrophic failures across the whole economy. That is how ecosystems work. That is how the web of life works. That is how we get catastrophic collapses in ecosystems. That is how the climate modelling is working. People are realising that excessive carbon emissions are causing frictions in the global climatic systems, which are likely to lead to an analogue, an exact replica, of the global financial meltdown at an ecological and systemic global level. That is what is in store for us, and no less, if we do not adapt to our climate obligations. As I have said today, I am a climate sceptic on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. I do not necessarily care about that argument because on the other days I am persuaded by a considerable body of science that says, "Yes, it is happening." On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, I am the neo-Liberal rational economist; at other times, I am the green economist.

Hon Simon O'Brien: So today you're on the Liberal side!

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I do not even know what day it is.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Can I move a motion without notice?

Hon George Cash interjected.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I can keep track of days.

To make the point, we do not have to subscribe to left-right politics or to climate theory to come forward with a rational response to what is happening to the global economy and what is about to happen to the global environment. It is beyond the ideology of left-right politics.

I would like to consider the monetary system for a brief while, and I will quote from a book called *The Ecology of Money*. The book to which I referred was written by Richard Douthwaite, who is an Irish economist. He asks a number of questions about the monetary system. He says that we should ask some basic questions. For example, who issues the money? That is a good question. Who issues the money into the economy? There is deafening silence. Why do they issue money into the economy? Why do we need to have a monetary system? Again, they are good questions. Where was that money created? If members understand the financial system, they would know the answers to the questions.

Another question is: what gives money its value? This is a poignant question. Money can be in the form of a piece of paper, a digital transaction or a cheque. What gives money its value? If we cannot answer that cogently, obviously we cannot deal with what is happening to the financial systems at a global level.

How was money created? When was it created? These are good questions. If, as a Parliament, we cannot answer fundamental and basic questions about how money is created, when it is created, why it is created and where the

value streams are, how can we manage the economy in an intelligent way? I suggest that without that analysis, we will fall into a hole. It is evident that the economy has fallen into a hole because we failed to answer these questions. I will not answer those questions now, because posing them is more compelling.

Richard Douthwaite asks what is the purpose of money? It is a fundamental thing. It is a medium of payment or exchange, and members know that. Its function is to facilitate exchange and to make sure that that exchange can happen reasonably easily. Money should be a store of value; that is, if we create money now, we should be able to expend it into the future. Is it a reliable store of value? It is not a reliable store of value if the economy is growing exponentially at three, four or five per cent a year. It is worth less in the future than it is now. We know that we should spend the money now because it will be worth very little in the future. Our currency is not a very good store of value. Therefore, it has failed one of the tests of economic creation. It is not a particularly good way to store value.

Members should remember that we have other standards. We have the gold standard. In the past, people traded shells, rocks and pieces of paper, some of which have the words, "I owe you a couple of tinnies." That might be better than having one's money in the bank. Having the community owe people something might be more valuable than having a million bucks in the bank. When the cyclones hit, it is not the money in the bank that helps people, it is their neighbours. It comes down to the social capital—the social fabric—and the relationships that come into play.

Another thing about money is that it is a unit of account. Is the current monetary system a good unit of account? Yes, it is. Does it fail? Yes, it does. Why does it fail? It fails because it is extremely difficult to predict the value into the future. Why is it difficult to predict the value into the future? It is because markets fluctuate. We know that they are trending upwards, but because markets boom and bust and crash they cannot be accurately predicted into the future. If we ask an accountant to give us financial advice about whether we should buy a home unit, all we get is mumbo jumbo. That is evidence that the monetary system is not a particularly useful unit of account and that the monetary system, as we know, can fail. That does not mean to say that we should abandon dollars and cents and digital transactions. What it means for the green economy is that we need to invent other ways of fulfilling the functions that are currently fulfilled by money. We need to create mediums of exchange and local economies and local means of transacting. I hesitate to say this, but we would all know about barter. We need to set up similar schemes. Credit societies, and credit arrangements at the local level and at the national level, will provide other mediums for exchange and other mediums for the storage of value.

It is difficult to answer all those questions about how, and when, money was created. However, one of the ways in which money is created and credit is created is, as we all know, fractional reserve banking. In other words, banks can lend out 10 times the amount of money than they actually have in reserve. That fractional reserve banking system means that people who borrow against the money that is held in the bank have to pay interest on that money, and we then run the risk that that interest will create drag on the economy. It is because we rely on fractional reserve banking that we have persistent inflation in our economy. When we uncouple the monetary system from real value—the gold standard, for example—we are cutting ourselves adrift. As a result of that, we are going into the brave new world of very vague economic relationships. We are putting our trust in bankers, in Wall Street and in institutions, when we know they will rip us off. Who was making the profits? Throughout this whole boom, it was the banks that were making the profits. They were posting profits consistently, and they had to post profits, because they are the instruments that are creating the money. We have handed the power to create money to financial institutions—to banks. When we go to a bank and say we want a loan, the bank asks us whether we will be able to pay off that loan, and it gives us the loan. We then go out and buy real goods with that money. The bank will ask us to pay interest on that loan, and because we have to pay interest on that loan, when we come to sell the home that we have bought, we think, well, I bought it for \$100 000, and I have held it for three years, and I have paid \$35 000 in interest, so I will need to sell it for \$150 000 or I am not going to come out ahead. That is inherently inflationary, and that creates an inherent drag on the economy, because people think that they are entitled to earn millions of dollars, or more than is fair and reasonable.

Therefore, we need to address the banking system. I know that this is not something that we need to be dealing with in this chamber, but it is something that we need to understand as a Parliament if we are going to deal with the global crisis and if we are going to put forward rational programs at the state level. If we want to extract ourselves from the growth economy, and I would contend that we have become captured by this myth that our economy must keep growing, we will have to come up with completely new ways of transacting in the economy. We will have to invent local currencies, which is happening at a local level, and we will have to invent decentralised economies. I will give members an example that might relate to the royalties for regions program. If a community invested in its own power generation assets and sold power back to itself, it would create a local economy trading effectively in energy. That is another way of actually circumventing the global financial arrangements by relocalising the economy.

This brings me to another point. Having discussed the way in which money is created and the problems with the banking system, the remedy is to relocalise our economies, to renationalise some of our currencies and to trade at a local level as well as state and national levels. This will happen when the wheels fall off the financial institutions as we know them. This is what happened during the Great Depression, when people started trading and bartering locally. We will have to invent some financial institutions and programs to trade at a local level. People do it in Switzerland. Switzerland has an internal economy parallel to the national currency, which is entirely based on traded certificates. We need to have a look at those sorts of models.

To give some indication of how the growth economy in Western Australia has created drag and friction, I looked at the population statistics for Western Australia and compared population statistics. I received an email this evening from Brian Fleay, a member of the Greens, who wrote that the populations of Western Australia in the metropolitan area shown in the tables he provided are for 1997, 2002 and 2007 and an estimate for 2008. This information is from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development. It shows that the population has grown from 1.795 million in 1997 to 2.168 million in 2008. That is a 21 per cent growth in population. Between 2002 and 2007 there was a 15 per cent growth. Between 1997 and the present time there has been a 21 per cent growth. In real terms and in actual numbers that is 373 000 new people to feed, clothe, employ, educate and provide health services and all other basic services to. For a small economy of two million people that is a mammoth task. It is no wonder that the economy was overheating by 2008, because the state was trying to build houses at a rate that was almost unsustainable. The state did not run out of space in the metropolitan area; it ran out of capacity in the building industry and could not build those houses fast enough. Because people were making super profits from working in the north of the state and the economy was growing so fast, house prices increased so fast that housing became unaffordable. Even the rebates and the programs that the government is putting in place are not enough to account for that growth rate. We have got friction in the local economy primarily because our population is growing. We are not just growing in population; we are growing in per capita use of all these resources as well. I want to know how any responsible government can continue to do that and hope to deliver a balanced budget, hope to deliver a functional hospital system and hope to deliver a functional education system. That is almost impossible to deliver. We have experienced that at the local level in Western Australia.

I turn now to what it means to turn the economy around and literally put it on to a new, clean, green footing. This is the green new deal. It has been touted at the international level by Obama, Merkel and most of the European states. They are going to enter into a green new deal. It has been touted at the federal level in Australia. The stimulus package will be attached to environmental outcomes and the reasons are very, very clear. The reasons include investing in the green economy creates jobs at a time when we have actually lost thousands of jobs; it creates wealth at a time when wealth is being eroded; and it creates a sustainable, long-term economic platform to base our economy on. That is the fundamental objective of good governance. The fundamental objective of good governance is to create a sustainable, long-term platform for economic prosperity, economic security and giving people a decent life.

The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australian Council of Trade Unions got together to produce a document called the "Green Gold Rush". I would like to try and look past the fact that it was a trade union organisation and conservation movement initiative and appeal to the Liberal side of Parliament that in actual fact there is a mutual benefit in redefining the way we organise the economy so that we are investing in a clean, green future.

Let us look at the stimulus package that was put forward today. We will assume that the building industry turns down and that we lose 15 000 or 20 000 people in the building industry—and that is not implausible. That is in fact what is happening. We will lose thousands of people in the building industry. We have an enormous housing stock that is currently inefficient, energy guzzling and water guzzling. We could turn our efforts to increasing the efficiency of that housing stock and rebuilding that entire housing stock into a completely new industrial building endeavour such that we employ those 15 000 people who have become unemployed. That is what the green stimulus package is going to do by a simple initiative.

Households are inefficient. Twenty per cent of a household's expenditure is spent on energy and 25 per cent is spent on air conditioning. We can reduce the air conditioning load by simply efficiently insulating houses and redesigning and retrofitting houses. That is a massive industrial endeavour. We can rebuild the housing industry by refitting the housing stock that we already have. There are so many houses now where people have four or five bedrooms, three bathrooms and two people living in them. Two people living in a house in any of our suburbs, with four or five bedrooms and two bathrooms, is not very efficient. If we wanted to house people, we could retrofit those houses to fit two or three families into them comfortably and efficiently, using water, energy and space efficiently, and increasing population density and therefore increasing the efficiency of the use of urban spaces. I want to know how many people members might know who rattle around in very large houses with three underutilised bedrooms. We all know people like that. We do not have a shortage of housing space;

we have poor organisation and allocation of the assets and the space we already have. Those houses are so inefficiently used that we should be able, with a new deal, to create a housing policy that results in retrofitting large houses to become small units and flats, to house our young people, students and workers. There should be no homelessness in Western Australia. I guarantee that we have more houses, more beds and more bedrooms than we need. We do not have to tell people to do that; we simply have to put in place the right incentives for people to be able to see ways of redesigning their houses. There are architects setting up around the world to do just that. They are the green architects of the future. They are asking how we can take the materials and spaces that we already have and refabricate and refit them to produce the services that we really want.

I put a bill before the house, called the Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction (Hot Water Systems) Bill. It will place an obligation on anybody replacing a hot water service to replace it with an efficient hot water service. That could be a solar or a heat exchanger, but it should be the most energy efficient or solar equivalent hot water service. If 80 per cent of hot water services across the whole of the housing stock, business and industry were of this kind—that is the percentage in Israel—we will replace a 250-megawatt coal-fired power station in 12 years. In doing so, we will reduce household energy bills by 25 per cent. The average household currently running a hot water service on electricity would save between \$500 and \$700 a year by switching to an efficient hot water service. This is a nation-building exercise, because the people who will benefit are those who manufacture hot water services; that is, Western Australian industries. There are more jobs in manufacturing and installing hot water services than there were at the Ravensthorpe nickel mine. That is just one small example.

The interesting thing is to look at the macroeconomic analysis of the implementation of programs such as the one I just suggested. When the “Green Gold Rush” document was put together, the researchers looked at 30 sectors of the Australian economy and sought to identify a half a dozen sectors which would be very beneficial and from which Australia could get some traction and advance. Those key markets were named as follows. Renewable energy was the first. The second was energy efficiency. This is on page 3 of “Green Gold Rush”. The third market was sustainable water systems. Members should think about that. Australia could invest in the development of water-efficient appliances, water efficiency, in greywater recycling. We could eventually become industry and technical leaders in this area and then export that technology around the world. That is a growth economy. That is an area where we could expand our industrial capacity and create value. By investing in efficiency, we are reducing the energy and environmental intensity of the economy and reducing the global impact on the environment but expanding a productive part of the economy. That achieves two things. The fourth market was biomaterials—bioplastics and so on. These are advanced technologies for producing carbon fibre, plastics from plants and so on. The fifth one was green buildings. Australia could lead the way in a green building revolution, which could see our buildings become more energy and water efficient. The sixth one was waste and recycling technologies. Australia could still make considerable contributions into the research and development and commercialisation of high-tech waste treatment facilities. They are six areas of the economy where we could grow. Yes, I am talking about expanding the industrial base of the economy but at the same time as we are reducing the energy and material intensity of the economy. While we are getting this concept that we can grow in terms of economic activity, we are actually reducing the impact on the environment. We are achieving social, economic and environmental outcomes.

The interesting thing about all those technologies—renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable water systems, biomaterials, green buildings and waste and recycling—is that they are all inherently distributed and decentralised technologies. Renewable energy happens at the level of the local economy, it happens at the level of households and it happens at the level of the local district with renewable energy schemes. Energy efficiency happens at the household level, it happens at the enterprise level and it happens at the industrial level, so it is inherently distributed. Sustainable water systems generally operate at the household level and at the industrial level. We are talking about a refitting of the economy and a refitting of our homes, industries and businesses to become more efficient in the use of resources, creating a new economy, a new green-collar workforce and new economic opportunities that are not here right now and which are inherently distributed. The interesting thing about that is that some of those things are transacted at the local level so that plumbers, electricians, house retrofitters and so on all operate at the local level. Waste and recycling is distributed and operates at the local level. We would have more opportunities to introduce different trading schemes at the local level. This is more sophisticated than having a single monetary scheme. Members in this house would know that as a Greens member of Parliament I have discussed the idea of market-based mechanisms that involve trading in certificates, in some instances; that involve setting targets, rather than prescriptions; and that allow the economy or local enterprise to decide how they will meet those targets. That is the way of the future. That is a green economy; what we want to do is to reduce the energy intensity, the water intensity and the materials intensity of the whole economy, and we let it rip. If we let it rip—go off and solve those problems—we will find that green enterprise and enterprising people will solve those problems at the local, regional and national level.

It is interesting to see the enormous potential for creating jobs at the national level by going down this pathway. It is hard to summarise because, in actual fact, this information is often in the form of graphs. However, in the renewable sector in the Australian economy looking from where we are now, which is where we are talking about transacting \$10 billion, and going to 2030, where we can be transacting up to \$250 billion in renewable energy technologies, the mathematics is clear. If we start spending \$250 billion on a clean energy platform, we will create a lot of jobs. We will create green-collar jobs and we will create them in regional areas. We could do the same thing for any one of these technology platforms that we are talking about.

In my contribution to the renewable energy technologies motion of the past few weeks, I have talked about the investment of money that goes into the energy economy, and efficiency through energy efficiency and water efficiency. Saving energy and saving water is the best possible investment that we can make for the future. For every dollar that we invest in energy saving and water saving, we will save on the ongoing running costs for our homes, businesses and industry. We know that the payback periods for investment in efficiency are in the order of between one and four years for some appliances. If we can invest in technologies that pay us back in one to four years, it makes business sense to do so. The interesting thing about investing in those technologies is, again, that in the case of efficiency, it is generally about going through the entire business, household, industry and commerce sectors and retrofitting the industries to be more efficient. If we can throw out a large-scale generator or motor and replace it with an efficient one, take that old motor to the scrapheap, melt it down and do something else with it—re-use those materials—we would save enormous ongoing running costs. By going away from a fossil fuel based economy and moving towards efficiency, we will relieve ourselves from the vagaries of the international market and the price of oil. I said at the beginning that my contention was that it was not only sub-prime mortgages but also that mini oil shock that we experienced—that mini energy shock—that pushed people over the edge. It pushed households over the edge where people could not pay their mortgages. If we invest in ways to uncouple the economy from energy from fossil fuel sources, we will resolve the atmosphere and climate change, whether members believe it or not, we will breathe easily and we will resolve our dependence on limited supply.

Fossil fuels are in limited supply. Energy is at the heart of every economy. No part of an economy can run without the input of energy. If we could use energy that falls from the sky, and use it efficiently, we would be using fewer materials and we would be putting ourselves on a sustainable economic footing. There will be absolutely no loss of jobs; improved quality of life; improved environmental outcomes; and improved social outcomes. Public transport should be thought of as the green New Deal. Rather than investing in more highways, we should be investing in rapid transit systems throughout the city so that Perth can become a more compact city with high-speed public transport and electrification of our vehicle fleets. This is an entirely new industrial economy, and it is coming our way because President Obama is saying to car companies that they can no longer produce the cars they produced last year, and that they need to produce more efficient cars. Billions of dollars are being invested in a new public transport infrastructure in the United States. That is exactly what Western Australia should be doing. We should have no more highways; highways are expensive roads to nowhere; they are cul-de-sacs.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: What are we going to do, go on gravel?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: No, we can wean ourselves off highway systems and build public transport infrastructure. We can build connectivity in cities and create nice places to live. When one thinks of the best suburbs in Perth, they are the ones that are serviced by good rail services, are slightly higher density, have more trees and —

Hon Ray Halligan: It's all a matter of opinion.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: It is a matter of the market, it is not a matter of opinion. I suggest that if the member were to map real estate values, the higher value properties run along the foreshore, along the coast and alongside mass transit system paths. Subiaco is an example. There are always clusters of high-value properties around rail node developments. Through the Network City concept, we can increase the number of nodes in Perth that look exactly like that. It is not a matter of opinion, in my view; it is a matter of empirical measurement that good transport infrastructure will result in better outcomes. Throughout the world, the urban precincts that are becoming the more favoured places to live are those that have been redeveloped along these lines, with transport, public open space, higher density residential living, urban gardens and energy efficient solar-designed homes. They are better places to bring up kids. The global evidence on sustainable cities is clear. It is not a matter of conjecture. If one were to ask people whether they would like to live in a pedestrian-friendly, non-noisy suburb with convenient shopping and an easily accessible workplace, one would find that most people would prefer that to getting in a car and driving for 45 minutes in a traffic jam. That is the path we have put ourselves on. I think we can do a whole lot better than that, and I think we can do that by retro-fitting the economy with the green New Deal.

I will turn briefly to the royalties for regions proposals. I know that during the election some of my friends in the National Party thought that I was being unduly critical of the royalties for regions proposals. In fact, what I said was that I could not share the sentiment more that we needed to have regionally based redevelopment programs. It is patently clear that the Nationals misunderstood the way in which royalties were paid in Western Australia and the way in which the commonwealth financial relationships worked. They thought that we got \$2.9 billion, I think—I forget the figure, but I have the file here with me. We got nothing of the sort in Western Australia. By the time we had gone through the commonwealth grants program, we got something like 10 or 15 per cent of that. That is the amount of money that we had. As a result of making the audacious claim that “We could have royalties for regions and you could have all the dough”, the Nationals got a fair amount of political traction, but we are living with the consequences of that poor understanding of the royalties system. It is a simple matter of accounting that the money did not exist to do that.

As a regional member of Parliament, I fully endorse the need to reinvest in regional areas, but I think that we should take whatever money we have and put it into wealth-generating industries. We could build highways at great expense and at the expense of building new enterprises. I consistently use the example of energy. If we had to build the regional infrastructure and improve the electrical network to make it renewable energy ready, and if those communities invested in renewable energy generation technologies to sell power back into the city, they would become the natural energy producers for the urban areas and for industry. After all, farming in regional communities produces the energy for the whole human economy. It produces the food. This is no different. We are simply saying, “Feed the industrial economy. Feed the industrial nutrient stream with green energy.” Regional areas already provide the nutrient stream for industry—the materials and the minerals. Let us decentralise the power generation, plug those communities into a state-based grid and feed the industrial economy and feed the cities. That will create jobs and wealth in regional areas. We will need a lot of steel; we will need a lot of nickel; we will need a lot of copper. I believe that we need to continue those endeavours, but they need to be balanced against the way in which we are using the resources. If we squander those resources on building highways to nowhere and on owning inefficient, gas-guzzling vehicle fleets, we are committing ourselves to poverty in the future. That is the consequence. If we invest in wealth-generating technology platforms, and if we invest in efficient houses, cars and public transport, we will write ourselves into the history books of the future—a prosperous future. That is the green New Deal, and it requires not small-scale backyard tree-hugging initiatives; it requires very large-scale, forward-looking inventive public policy, and it requires that we be brave.

I totally commend the house for supporting the feed-in tariff today, because that is a nation-building initiative. It is a passport to the green economy and it is the way in which Western Australia will reassert itself as the epicentre for renewable energy in the world. That is where we once were. We will reclaim that mantle through the feed-in tariff. I hope that we do not water down the initiative because it is our passport to the green economy.

As well as Senator Christine Milne, Western Australia is very privileged to have an extremely well-informed and intelligent senator in Senator Scott Ludlum. He has proposed a nation-building train and light rail network transport plan for the city of Perth. I implore any government with a vision for transport infrastructure and the investment of large-scale resources on a new economic platform to look at that plan. Senator Scott Ludlum is not alone in that vision. It is a good plan to rebuild the transport infrastructure of Perth through light rail networks and interconnected networks of cycle trails and smaller road networks that would be more appropriate for our light vehicle fleet. It is not a matter of building new cycle networks; it is simply a matter of allocating a single lane on a road to bicycles. It is not as though we must build cycleways; we must make it easier to interconnect with the light rail network. That will build a healthier walking-based, cycling-based, small-car based community. The bills for our health system will drop as a result of investing in liveable cities, cycleways and more integrated transport systems. My children are putting on weight because they sit in the back of the car. They walk out of the house and ride on their high-powered motorbike or get into a car. We need to build health back as a natural consequence of the way in which cities are designed, and we must start with a light rail network. If members look at Senator Scott Ludlum’s proposals for Perth, they will find a template for a large-scale rejigging of our transport system. Look at the Australian Greens’ energy efficiency and saving initiative that would retrofit every household in Australia to be energy and water efficient. Prime Minister Rudd has picked up bits and pieces of it. The Greens are saying that the person who has the ideas on the table when the crisis hits is the person whose ideas will be taken up. The Greens have put ideas on the table. They are not small-scale ideas; they are large-scale ideas. We do not own them; they are in the public domain. We have done a reasonable job and it now requires the Labor governments and the Liberal government to bring their knowledge about business to realise the Greens’ initiatives.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Bruce Donaldson**.