

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 24 May 2001

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr Riebeling) took the Chair at 9.00 am, and read prayers.

## **REAL ESTATE AND BUSINESS AGENTS SUPERVISORY BOARD**

*Statement by Minister for Consumer Affairs*

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara - Minister for Consumer Affairs) [9.04 am]: As members are aware, the collapse of HIH Insurance has had drastic and wide-reaching effects on consumers and industry. The Gallop Government has sought to help wherever possible. The majority of real estate and business agents were insured through HIH Insurance.

Information provided to my office by KPMG Peat Marwick, the official liquidator, indicates that the liquidation and associated litigation may take up to 10 years to finalise. This puts both those insured and those making claims on the insured real estate agents in a very difficult position. The real estate and business agents guarantee fund exists to reimburse people who may suffer pecuniary loss or loss of property as a result of any criminal or fraudulent conduct by a licensed agent. The Act states people cannot start actions in relation to the fund until they have exhausted all other legal remedies against the agent, unless they have been granted leave to do so by the Real Estate and Business Agents Supervisory Board.

On 11 May, I issued a direction to the board that in dealing with any claims against the fidelity fund involving HIH Insurance, they are not to wait until all other legal avenues have been exhausted, but proceed to hear those claims. The board will then take on the burden of pursuing through the courts the outstanding civil claims in those matters where criminal or fraudulent conduct is found. This direction was to give some protection and remedy to consumers and was not a directive to make a finding in any particular case or all cases in favour or against any claim on the fund.

I have been advised that current claims against the board's fidelity guarantee fund total nearly \$3.9 million with potentially \$3.7 million of that relating to claims against agents insured with HIH. If these claims were successful, they could be adequately funded from the fidelity guarantee fund.

I shall quote a practical example. Mr Malcolm McDonald and his family have a claim for \$67 618.99 against an agent who was insured through HIH Insurance. Mr McDonald has been attempting to progress his case through the Supreme Court. As a result of the HIH collapse, even if he is successful, he is unlikely to receive money from HIH for many years, if at all. This has impacted on his ability to fund the necessary legal representation. After my direction to the board, Mr McDonald's case will now be heard as quickly as possible. This is a further example of the practical help being provided by the Gallop Government to people who have, through no fault of their own, been caught in the collapse of HIH. I table that letter of direction.

[See paper No 272.]

## **YALLINGUP LAND**

*Statement by Attorney General*

**MR MCGINTY** (Fremantle - Attorney General) [9.08 am]: The State Government is currently facing an action in the Supreme Court in relation to an important and valuable portion of beachfront land near Caves House in Yallingup. The land was originally acquired by the State in 1938 for the purposes of public recreation. The Supreme Court action attempts to force the State Government to offer the land back to the descendants of the persons from whom the land was acquired for approximately \$3 600, which is a fraction of its present value.

The ability of the State Government to defend the legal action taken in respect of the Yallingup land has been seriously compromised by the conduct of two former Liberal Ministers for Lands. Hon George Cash and Mr Doug Shave both claim to have instructed the Crown Solicitor's Office to waive rights the State had under the Limitation Act 1935. This Act required that legal action be commenced within one year of the cause of action arising or, by leave of the court, within six years of the cause of action arising.

The Yallingup land was acquired by the State in 1938 and compensation equal to the market value at that time was paid by the State to the owner of the land. Important community facilities such as a caravan park, a fire brigade depot, parking facilities and a picnic and barbecue area were established on part of the land many years ago. As such, causes of action based on these events were statute barred by the Limitation Act. The remainder and greater part of the beachfront land was left in its pristine natural state for the enjoyment of everyone in the community.

In 1992 the former Labor Government advised the plaintiff that the State Government intended to apply to have the existing action, as it then stood in the Supreme Court, struck out on the basis of the plaintiff's failure to comply with the Limitation Act. However, after the change of government in 1993, Hon George Cash became Minister for Lands. He advised the plaintiff's solicitors that the new State Government would waive the State's reliance on the failure of the

plaintiff to comply with the Limitation Act. That waiver was expressed to apply only to that part of the plaintiff's claim that sought a declaration to have the matter referred to the Governor under the Public Works Act 1902. That referral was sought by the plaintiff with a view to forcing the return of the land to the descendants of the original owner, at minimal cost, on the basis that the land had not been used and was no longer required for public recreation. Hon George Cash subsequently contended, in 1997, that his waiver was intended to apply to all aspects of the claim.

In 1997, Mr Shave became Minister for Lands. Extraordinarily, he instructed the Crown Solicitor's Office to withdraw the State's reliance upon the Limitation Act defence in relation to all aspects of the plaintiff's claim as it was then formulated.

In 1998, Mr Shave wrote to the former Premier recommending that the portion of the land which remained in its natural state - some 13.4 hectares - be offered to Mr Hammond, the son of the original owner for \$3 000. That proposal was not accepted and no offer was made to Mr Hammond on behalf of the State. If these actions by Hon George Cash and Mr Shave are found by the Supreme Court to constitute a waiver of the statute of limitations, this may severely restrict and hamper the ability of the State to successfully defend the action and retain this significant land, which is an important community asset, in public ownership. The real question is why Hon George Cash and Mr Shave, as serving ministers of the Crown, took action that had the potential to severely compromise the State Government's ability to defend the claim in the Supreme Court.

*Point of Order*

Mr BARNETT: I ask the Speaker to rule whether the concluding paragraph of that statement reflects adversely on a member of another House.

Mr Ripper: We have an accountable Government, but we don't have an accountable Opposition!

The SPEAKER: This document, the part that was crossed out -

Mr McGinty: That was not read.

The SPEAKER: My ruling is that the words were deleted. I am assured by the Attorney that the words were not said. I do not think that it impugns members in the other place. The point of order is not accepted.

**FUEL, MAXIMUM WHOLESALE PRICE**

*Statement by Minister for Consumer Affairs*

**MR KOBELKE** (Nollamara - Minister for Consumer Affairs) [9.11 am]: I will make a clear statement about the Government's intentions for the maximum wholesale price for fuel. It is true that since the maximum wholesale price was introduced on 12 April, the major oil companies have refused to supply fuel at the maximum wholesale price. Not only have the major oil companies obstructed the application of the new pricing regime through a failure to post prices and a failure to supply, but they have also, through subtle and not so subtle pressure, actively discouraged retailers from making complaints about this failure to supply to the Ministry of Fair Trading.

As I have said repeatedly, the Government encourages those retailers who have been refused supply to complain. My office has provided advice to retailers about the provisions of the Petroleum Products Pricing Act 1983 and the elements that must be established to establish a likely case for prosecution. When those elements are established, the Government will not hesitate to prosecute. The Act currently provides for fines of up to \$10 000 for corporations that breach the Act. Cabinet has decided to increase this maximum fine to \$100 000. An amendment to this effect will be moved to the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2001, which is currently before the Parliament.

The Government is also currently re-drafting the maximum wholesale price order. There will be two main effects of this re-drafting. First, the Prices Commissioner will now calculate the maximum wholesale price order according to the formula and publish the price on the FuelWatch web site by 4.00 pm on the day before the maximum price is to apply. Suppliers will no longer calculate and notify the price. Secondly, the order will make it explicit that a retailer who does not have an agreement or arrangement with a particular supplier from whom they seek to purchase fuel at the maximum wholesale price, is entitled to purchase the fuel at the maximum wholesale price. For example, a retailer who has an arrangement or agreement with BP Australia Ltd is entitled to purchase fuel at the maximum wholesale price from Shell Australia Ltd, Caltex Australia Ltd or Mobil Oil Australia Pty Ltd.

In the near future, the Government will gazette the second part of the wholesale price regime, the so-called transparency provisions, which will apply to all declared terminals from 12 July 2001, three months from the date on which the maximum wholesale price became operational. The declaration of terminals under section 22 of the Petroleum Products Pricing Act will also entitle people who are refused supply at the price the fuel is for sale to apply to the Prices Commissioner for a decision as to whether that refusal was proper. If the Prices Commissioner finds that supply was improperly refused, compensation may be awarded for loss or damage suffered as a result of the refusal to supply. All the Government's initiatives on fuel pricing are in accordance with the recommendations of the Select Committee on Petroleum Products Pricing in Western Australia, chaired by the member for Mitchell. The Government found, when it came to office, that the leadership vacuum in the former Government failed to provide the direction needed to put this regime in place.

Ministry of Fair Trading officers, who have worked tirelessly over the past three months on these initiatives, are commended for their excellent work. I am sure that with their continuing good work the Government will get on top of this and ensure that the law is complied with.

### SPEAKER'S GALLERY

#### *Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr Riebeling): Before we begin orders of the day, I will make a statement about the use of the Speaker's gallery. As members know, they must get permission to allow people into the Speaker's gallery. This is an opportune time to reinforce the rule as some members have not complied with it. The behaviour of people in the Speaker's gallery, especially in relation to talking, has interfered with at least one member's capacity to listen to debate in this House. When members use the gallery for visitors, it is their responsibility to make sure that those people know the rules about not speaking loudly and not having mobile phones turned on.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

#### *Motion*

Resumed from 23 May.

**MR BRADSHAW** (Murray-Wellington) [9.15 am]: I congratulate the Speaker on his elevation to that position in this House. From his performance so far, it appears that he will perform his duties in an equal-handed way. Members on this side of the House look forward to a good relationship with him over the next four years. I also pay tribute to the former Premier of this State, Richard Court, his Cabinet and his Government, which did a great job running this State for eight years. The incoming Government has criticised the way in which the State was run, but it will find that it was left in a much better state than when the coalition Government came into power in 1993. The coalition Government reduced state debt by nearly half and got things done for its money, such as the construction of roads, hospitals and schools, unlike the situation that occurred in the 1980s when big money was spent on petrochemical plants that were never built, and the Bell shares and other issues that left a big hole in the economy of Western Australia. Unfortunately, the taxpayers have had to pick up the tab on the failure of Governments in those years. I pay tribute to Richard Court and the former Government for their effort over the past eight years. The former Premier and his Cabinet, which approved many things, did an excellent job. Although the bell tower lost me a lot of votes in the election, it was a visionary achievement. I was always prepared to defend it because I believed it was a good thing for Western Australia.

Ms McHale: The bell tower which is now leaking?

Mr BRADSHAW: Is the member for Thornlie saying that the bell tower is not good for Western Australia?

Ms McHale: I am not saying that.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member is saying that.

Ms McHale: I am saying that the whole project was rushed, ill conceived and not properly planned. This Government now has to manage the problem. That is the reality.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member for Thornlie is blaming the previous Government because there may have been some deficiencies in the engineering or building of the bell tower.

Ms McHale: Your previous leader was so keen to have it finished that he didn't think about it.

Mr BRADSHAW: I do not care -

Ms McHale: Carry on; we would like to hear more from you.

Mr BRADSHAW: I do not care what building is built; they often have faults. That is a unique building.

Mr Johnson: That one was 100 per cent union, and proud of it!

Mr BRADSHAW: That is right. The other issue that seems to be in the melting pot, or disappearing pot, is the convention centre. That also probably lost votes for the conservatives at the last election. Again, it would have brought many benefits to the people of Western Australia. I hope the Government will keep that going and make sure that it is built, because it will bring many jobs and flow-on benefits to Western Australia. It is an important project, although I admit it cost me and the conservative parties votes in the last election.

I am concerned by the current Government's belief that super ministries will be the answer to saving a lot of money for Western Australia. I can remember the 1980s when the then Labor Government decided to make a monolith of the health system in Western Australia. It amalgamated the hospital and allied services, community health and psychiatric services into the current Health Department. I was in Parliament during that time and I opposed that move. I believe that big is not necessarily beautiful and I do not believe that creating super ministries is the way to go. It is better to try to retain control on a small basis than have monolithic departments that are difficult to control. I do not believe the Health Department has operated properly since those three departments were amalgamated. In the 1980s, the

Department of Conservation and Land Management was created. Last year it was deemed necessary to split it to make it a workable entity. CALM should be considered differently from the Health Department because of the conflict of interest in that department; however, it was set up as one ministry to try to save money.

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies has put out a paper on the subject of super ministries. Although specifically aimed at the mining industry, the comments are relevant to the general concept of super ministries. As the former Premier Richard Court said, super ministries need super ministers. I am not too sure whether too many parliamentarians are super ministers. Regardless of how good a minister may be, it is very difficult to run a large organisation or department. Ministers also have their own electorates to look after as they always have their eye on re-election. Sometimes they take their eye of the ball and do not come back after the election.

The AMEC document is entitled "The Essential Factors in Maintaining an Efficient and Productive Delivery of Government Services to the WA Mining Industry". The document is relevant to not only to the mining industry; but also the whole system of government. It states -

Change for the sake of change must be avoided.

Although the Premier believes he will save money, it is highly doubtful that he will. Change for the sake of change seems to be the only reason. The document continues -

The ability to deliver services in a cost-effective way must be a first priority and this must be achieved without loss of efficiency in the delivery of those services.

I believe the delivery of services will suffer as a result of the creation of super ministries. The document continues -

AMEC has noted Government's intention to amalgamate departments, dispense with some 60 members of the Senior Executive Service and to achieve savings in Government expenditure as a result.

While this initiative can no doubt be physically achieved, what will the eventual cost be in terms of the future efficient operation of departments and agencies and will the ephemeral lure of the savings to be made ever be achieved?

What will be the cost in terms of executive experience and ability lost to the community?

Mr Peter Browne of the Education Department has been hailed as one of the best directors of education that Western Australia has ever seen. Because of his association with the Liberal Party, I used to ask teachers in various schools what they thought of Mr Browne. I never had one person tell me that they did not like him or that he was doing a bad job. I only ever heard praise for Mr Browne. It is sad that a person of his calibre is about to leave the department. The document continues -

Super departments are often hamstrung by sheer size, which becomes a spectre which is never obvious when the concept is developed.

When the Health Department was created by amalgamating three other departments, I heard complaints that nobody knew who was doing what any more. People in the health system would try to contact the relevant individual but never got a satisfactory answer. If created, the new super ministries will be in confusion for some time. Even if those problems are overcome, they will not be as efficient as smaller organisations. The document continues -

Industry has discovered, particularly in big corporations, that a series of dedicated business units is the only way to effectively manage the corporate whole. "Super" departments present a very similar analogy in a Government sense.

I am concerned about what is proposed and it is sad that Western Australia is moving to a system that it will live to regret. Many people in the system are feeling the heat right now and wondering whether they will have a job in the future. The document states further -

AMEC again returns to the need to preserve the cohesive nature of the Department's functions and to resist any move to disperse the department's functions into other agencies or departments.

In conclusion, it states -

AMEC believes that if experiences in other States are any guide, mega departments have a nasty habit of losing touch with the community.

That is the big problem. We have to ensure that these departments remain in touch with the community. The member for Moore has already warned the Government about the Sir Humphrey Applebys of the public service who will end up running the departments and the danger that presents to ministers becoming isolated from the community. I think we will all live to regret it if we go down this track. Time will tell whether I am right.

Myalup, Preston Beach and Binningup are beachside areas in my electorate that cater for holiday-makers and permanent residents. Unfortunately, the quality of the drinking water in those areas is atrocious. In the past six months, residents have had several meetings with the Water Corporation but, unfortunately, there have been no guarantees about what

will be done to overcome the problem. Some analyses of the water at Myalup and Binningup have been done. I am not sure whether members are aware, but the water guidelines were changed in 1996. Even under the old guidelines, the quality of the water was at the top end of being unsatisfactory and unsuitable. In some cases the water was over the limit. Under the new guidelines, the poor quality levels are almost twice as bad. The Health Department has not yet adopted the guidelines. In some ways it lets the Water Corporation off the hook. If the Health Department enforced the guidelines, the Water Corporation would be forced to improve the water.

A report by Australian Environmental Laboratories on the Myalup water quality shows that, under the 1996 guidelines, the level of total dissolved solids should be 1 000 milligrams a litre. Two samples indicate that the Myalup levels are 1 100 milligrams a litre. That is 10 per cent above the guidelines. Even if the figures were below the guidelines, it is an unacceptable level. The taste of the water is dreadful; the scaling wrecks hot water systems, kettles and taps. The recommended maximum for sodium levels is 180 milligrams a litre. In Myalup the two tests show 190 milligrams a litre. That is above the guidelines.

The hardness equivalent of calcium carbonate, for which the guideline is 200 milligrams a litre, is 360 milligrams a litre in the two samples taken. The water quality at Myalup is just not acceptable, and the people are getting sick and tired of it. Tests done at Binningup produced similar results. One thousand milligrams a litre of dissolved solids is the acceptable standard, and the tested sample showed a result just below that, at 960. The Water Corporation has said that is within the guidelines, and that is correct, but it is just on the borderline of being acceptable, and it is just not on. All the Water Corporation has said is that a study is being undertaken on how this problem can be overcome, but that will take six months. In the meantime the Water Corporation is talking about installing calgon treatment plants, but all that would do is stop the scaling in hot water systems and kettles. It would not remove the bad taste or the salinity in the water. That is totally unacceptable, and it is time the Water Corporation did the right thing for those communities. Even without the construction of the new Harvey Dam, there would still have been plenty of water to supply the communities of Myalup and Binningup. It is estimated that the cost of a pipeline to service those communities would be \$5 million. Lack of decent water is probably holding back the development of Binningup, Myalup and Preston Beach. Those areas are still growing at a reasonable rate, but I am sure they would grow faster, and the quality of life for those living there would be much improved, with a better water service.

I will now speak about the planned drug summit. Before I was aware that the drug summit was to be held, I had made plans to visit clinics in Switzerland, Holland and England in July. I have an interest in the world drug problem, and I am very happy to take part in that summit.

Mr McRae: Is the member for Murray-Wellington still planning to make that trip?

Mr BRADSHAW: I am going, regardless of whether I use my imprest account or it is at my own expense, because those countries are undertaking studies and experimenting with programs and I would like to speak to the people involved, to determine the success of those ventures.

Mr McRae: What is the member for Murray-Wellington seeking to determine the success of?

Mr BRADSHAW: The various programs that are being trialled, such as free heroin and rehabilitation. I have also agreed to serve on one of the committees that is being set up prior to the drug summit, dealing with the treatment of drug-dependent people and their reintegration into the community. Those things are very important. The drug scene is a bad one in Western Australia; each year between 70 and 80 people die from drug-related causes, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. Another mass of people in the community do not die, but their lives are destroyed because of drugs, their families are affected, and they turn to crime to feed their habit. It is such a huge problem worldwide, and it is important to try to get on top of it as much as possible. Obviously, the drug scene has been around for years and will continue to pose a problem, so it is not possible for any one person to fully understand it. Work must be done at the bottom end, to try to stop people getting into drugs in the first place through experimentation, and then becoming addicts.

I am concerned about the financial state of Western Australia. When the new Government was elected in February, one of its first statements was about the parlous state of the State's finances, and how difficult it would be, as a result, to fund the new Government's programs. I received from the Treasury Department a statement dated 28 February 2001, which stated that for the eight months ending on that date a cumulative net operating balance of \$459.6 million was recorded. This compares with the projection of \$98 million for the full year. Revenue and expenses for the eight months to the end of February represented 70.8 per cent and 66.7 per cent of annual projections respectively. The sale of AlintaGas in October 2000 had a substantial impact on the eight-month cumulative result. According to that statement, there would be a positive result in the budget by the end of the financial year. I know that the new Government can spend money to upset that projected positive result and, even though the figures are above the anticipated level because of the sale of AlintaGas, the result would still be positive. I keep hearing from the Government that the State's finances are in a bad way. The Opposition, when in government, may have spent \$300 million or so on top of its original budget, but an increase of \$300 million in revenue from the oil industry accounted for that additional expenditure. I shall be interested to hear about the position at the end of the year, and I have asked for a

briefing by Treasury Department to explain those figures. It is no good asking the Government, because the Government will have a biased view on the issue because it will be looking for ways of getting out of its commitments.

Mr Logan: The Government would not do that!

Mr BRADSHAW: Never! I find this very interesting. One of the problems that Governments have is -

Mr Kucera: I can understand why the member for Murray-Wellington was never offered the position of Treasurer.

Mr BRADSHAW: That is right. I do not profess to know about Treasury. I have just read to the House from a Treasury Department document that stated there will be money left in the piggy bank at the end of the year

Mr Kucera: What is the date of that document.

Mr BRADSHAW: It is dated 28 February 2001. The budget was on target to end the year in surplus. I know projections for the next three years indicate deficits, as long as the Government keeps on spending the way it is. The problem is that once a party is elected to government, it suddenly finds out how much revenue it has. Some expenditure is already locked in to pay for hospitals and schools and their staff, which are fixed costs, and the new Government does not have a lot of money to fiddle with. It is interesting that the Government said it would be able to do all sorts of marvellous things. I was listening to the Minister for Health the other day when he said he would fix the health system. I hope he can. As I said the other day, the issues at the next election will be health, education, and law and order.

Mr McRae: And so they should be.

Mr BRADSHAW: But not for good reasons.

Mr McRae: The member for Murray-Wellington has got it right - they are the priorities.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member for Riverton has also got it right. They are the priorities, but they will still be a problem to the Government, whichever party is in power. There are problems in the health system. The population is ageing, and the new health facilities available today for open heart surgery and knee and hip joint replacements, are big ticket items. If the Government does not tackle the problem of providing those services in the short term, the waiting lists will just keep growing and growing. Unless we put a whole heap of money into it, we will not be able to make the health system much more efficient.

Mr D'Orazio: It cannot be any worse.

Mr BRADSHAW: We will wait for four years and see whether the member is happy with the results.

Mr D'Orazio: It could not be worse.

Mr BRADSHAW: I do not know about that. I hope the member is correct. I know people who cannot lie down or even sit down; they have to keep moving because of the pain from their hip problems.

Mr D'Orazio: I have been seeing them for the past four years and no-one wants to listen.

Mr BRADSHAW: We will see whether they are still talking to the member in four years, because that is a problem for whichever Government is in power.

Mr Kucera: It is a challenge and an opportunity to fix it.

Mr BRADSHAW: It is a problem as well. I hope the Government can fix it. The Government has to put a heap of money into the health system because it is like a big dragon that just gobbles up money like crazy - it goes in one end and does not come out the other, unfortunately.

On Monday a lady came into my office whose husband was sent to the Harvey Hospital. He was then sent to Bunbury Regional Hospital for X-rays, or something, to be done and came back to the Harvey Hospital to be admitted. He sat in a chair in pain and discomfort for about five hours because a bed was not available. I have not found out yet whether the hospital has reduced the number of beds or whether for some unknown reason the hospital was full. I have not known for many years of a bed not being available in the Harvey Hospital. Not long after that, another lady came in to my office whose mother-in-law, an elderly pensioner, went to the hospital on Sunday night with chest pains. She was told the hospital did not have a bed for her and that she would have to go to Bunbury Regional Hospital. This lady is from Harvey and she did not want to go to Bunbury. She was told to go home and rest. That is disgraceful. She is an elderly lady who lives by herself. The family may look after her after this experience, but the family complained that a bed was not available in the Harvey Hospital. I would like to know whether funding for the Harvey Hospital has been curtailed and whether beds are being reduced. If that is the case, it is not a good track record for this Government after only three months in office, because that problem has not existed before in the Harvey Hospital.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRADSHAW: I do not know who has caused it. It is not very good when an elderly pensioner who is having heart problems, and some other problems probably, cannot get a bed. It is disgraceful. That woman should have been looked after overnight at least, but she was told to go home and rest.

Yesterday the member for Dawesville referred to waterways in the Peel region being under-inspected and not being looked after properly by the Department of Transport. I am not necessarily blaming the Department of Transport, because it has a limited budget. However, four inspectors from the Mandurah Department of Transport have been given the task of patrolling those waterways. The waterways in the Peel region are enormous. I think the estuary alone is two-and-a-half times the size of the Swan River; and the Peel region also contains the Serpentine River, the Murray River and the Waroona dam. Erosion along the Murray and Serpentine Rivers is causing the banks to disappear; antisocial behaviour also occurs on those waterways. It is important that more inspectors are appointed, particularly at peak times, to make sure watercraft do not speed and cause problems.

I spoke to the Department of Transport about the issue last year and the interesting thing was that it had the biggest number of inspectors in Western Australia. It had one inspector in Esperance, one in Albany and four in Mandurah; however, four in Mandurah are not sufficient because they tend to go out in pairs for safety reasons. Many of the people in the boats often have a bit too much to drink and get abusive and aggressive if they are pulled up. It is safer, therefore, for two inspectors to go out, but that effectively halves the amount of time they are available. It is important to engage more inspectors, particularly over the summer months, to control the erosion and the antisocial behaviour on those waterways.

It will be interesting to see how the Government handles these issues over the next four years. The Government says it will do wonderful things with the budget, and I hope it does. We all want a better health system and a better education system. I am looking forward to seeing those things improve under this new Government!

**MR HOUSE** (Stirling) [9.48 am]: Mr Speaker, I add my congratulations to those of other members on your election to the position of Speaker and assure you of the support of the party I represent. I also extend those congratulations to members of this Parliament who have been elected to positions of responsibility, including the Government and Opposition Whips, and all other offices of this House that have been filled; they are responsible positions that make this House function and require the support of all members.

I also congratulate the Gallop Government on its election. While the disappointment of being defeated will always exist for us on this side of the House, democracy works, and in this case the Government was elected fairly and squarely. I look forward to seeing how the Government performs over the next four years and how it tackles the issues that confront it in governing this State. Government members now know that they have been what I would call mugged by reality in the past few weeks. However, the reality is, as I am sure the Minister for Health will agree, that it is not quite so easy controlling the levers of government when one is in government instead of in opposition. However, I wish the Government well.

I also extend my congratulations to all the new members of this House. It is the largest change I have seen, and I understand it is the largest change in membership in the history of this House. It is an honour to be a member of Parliament and, knowing that a lot of trust has been placed in us, we should all accept the responsibilities associated with being a member of Parliament with much humility. I am sure that all new members will do the best job they can to represent the people who elected them. I particularly extend congratulations to the member for Albany, who is in the House. He and I represent the same area, I suppose, because many members' electorates overlap, as do the electorates of Stirling and Albany. I have known the member for Albany for some years and I am sure that he and I will be able to work together cooperatively. I wish him well in his new post.

I use the word "post" advisedly. During the election campaign, I bumped into the member for Albany in the street. Members will know that in his previous occupation he had control of all the mail in Albany. The member took some time to explain to me that my pamphlets would not go anywhere during the campaign. To my surprise, they were delivered. Obviously, somebody with more authority took charge.

During Anzac Day some celebrations occurred in Albany to honour the centenary of government in this country. Anzac Day in Albany is a special event. Many members will be aware that it was the last embarkation port for the people who served and lost their lives at Gallipoli. Indeed, it was also the last embarkation point for many people in the Second World War, including my father. It is a moving experience to be part of those ceremonies, particularly the dawn service at the Desert Corps Memorial on Mt Clarence. If one has an opportunity to be in Albany on that occasion, it will be memorable. It is wonderful that so many people recognise those who served and lost their lives in two world wars so that we can enjoy the privileges we do in this great country. It is great that so many young people are involved in those services and that they recognise the achievements of those servicemen.

Over the past few weeks, I have re-read some books about the Second World War in particular. If one ever wants a reminder of what those people did, one should read the books that depict the hardships they experienced and the sacrifices they made; it brings one back to reality. I congratulate Mr Digger Cleak and the other people who were involved in the organisation of that day. I thank the Premier and his cabinet ministers for spending all of that week in Albany. It was a significant recognition not only of that region but also of those people who served and sacrificed their lives during two world wars and other wars, including Vietnam and Korea.

Although this Government has a mandate to govern, it appears not to understand the concerns of rural Western Australians, and it has significantly underestimated them. Already there are some signs that the Government will make

decisions that will affect detrimentally those of us who live in the regions and the rural areas of this State. Over the past few years in rural Australia it has been as tough as it has ever been. Many people live far from the source of government decision making and do not have the opportunity to have a direct input because of the distances involved, unlike those of us who live closer to the centres of authority.

Some of the decisions it is rumoured that the Government will make will severely impact on people in rural areas. Over the next few minutes I will outline some of them. I stress that, at this stage, they are rumours. I make a plea to the Government to consider the people who live in those areas. If the services provided by the Government to those areas are reduced, it will have a serious effect on those communities. I am not referring to the larger areas encompassing Geraldton or Bunbury; I am referring to the scattered populations in the small rural towns.

It is difficult in some towns to maintain a base population to support local sporting teams or to enable enough volunteers to be found to allow the fire brigades and ambulance services to function properly. People who live in the city probably do not think about those core services. The fire brigades and ambulance services in the city are staffed by people who are paid to provide those services, rather than by volunteers. The small groups of volunteers involved with the sea rescue service, the ambulance service or fire brigades play an important role. The Government's confidence in and support of those volunteers means a lot to them. Those organisations do not need a large amount of support. However, if the budgets to those services are reduced, the morale of the volunteers and the work they are able to perform will be affected dramatically.

I urge the Government to make sure that it does not cut the wrong end of the deal. The Government must understand the effect that budget cuts to those services will have on those people. Any budget reduction to those services will have a flow-on effect; that is, the morale of the volunteers will drop and some may decide to leave the small country towns. As a result, the country sporting teams will lose another player or the ambulance association will lose another volunteer.

I am proud of the fact that during our time in government, no hospitals in rural areas of this State were closed. The former Government closed only those schools that the local community had requested to close. Services that affect education and health must be maintained. It is easy to forget about these people and the small services they provide, but they are important. I urge the Government to not make any budget reductions that would cause that to happen.

I understand that the chief executive officer of Agriculture Western Australia was in Mt Barker the Wednesday before last. He told the staff of the Mt Barker research station that it was to be closed, along with the two other research stations at Badgingarra and Esperance. That caused some consternation among the local residents because of the services that are provided by those institutions. I understand that the Minister for Agriculture has issued a directive to review those decisions. I thank the minister in another place for making that decision. I urge him not to impose that decision by slow strangulation.

There are two ways of shutting services. One way is to make a surgical cut and take it out, and that was the original proposal. The other way is to pretend the service will not be closed, but to cause it to die by slow strangulation. That is done by removing the funding, services and staff and allowing the service to wither on the vine. I suspect that is what the Government will do. I further understand that the direction to Agriculture Western Australia is to reduce its budget by 10 or 12.5 per cent. If that occurs, after having had a series of increases under our Government, some services will be reduced in number and others will be cut.

Mr Cowan: That begs the question about the \$50 million that was promised for science and innovation and research.

Mr HOUSE: It does. It is not good enough for the Government to pretend that it will not do this and then allow it to happen by stealth. Other important services are provided by Agriculture Western Australia; for example, the former Government established 26 agricultural centres in small towns across the State that had not previously had a direct service. It would be easy for the Government to cut those services to reduce its bottom-line budget. However, it would have a dramatic effect on farmers who have been struggling to make a profit over the past few years. I will come back to some of those issues in a moment.

The same theory can be applied to hospitals or schools. Those services can be strangled by not appointing people to positions left vacant after someone retires or resigns, or by cutting the funding to those institutions. The method of slow strangulation is worse than the surgical approach because of the uncertainty that is created.

I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington: the health budget is a huge budget, but the health bureaucracy is also huge. Many parts of the bureaucracy are unaccountable for their actions. It is very easy to identify costs and effects in small country hospitals because they are small. Country hospitals are a vital service in the parts of rural Western Australia that I and my colleagues represent and that some members now on the other side of this House also represent. I implore those members to talk to their ministerial colleagues and have an impact on the budget deliberation.

The capital needs of rural Western Australia are as important as those of the city. In our term of government, we were able to provide capital upgrades to many services in regional areas. I am particularly proud of the capital refurbishment of Agriculture Western Australia. It is only one example, but an important one, of support for the regions. Those capital needs are as important today as they were in the past and their funding must be continued. Once again, they are easy to cut. The Government could cut funding to roads or to the capital needs of schools and hospitals, and it probably

would not be noticed for three or four years; however, the long-term effect would be dramatic. I make particular mention of the proposed new fisheries research centre for Western Australia, to be built just north of Perth. Planning has been taking place over the past two or three years. It has the potential to be a world-recognised research centre because we have commitments from the South Africans and others operating in the Indian Ocean that they will use it as their key research centre. It would focus attention on Western Australia and provide a major world-recognised centre for our ocean people - I use that term broadly, as it includes not only fishermen but also people involved in aquaculture and research into oceanography. It is proposed to cost between \$10 million and \$15 million. I urge the Government not to cut that funding. It is vitally important that it continue.

I refer to the amalgamation of departments and the proposed amalgamation of the departments of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. I have no problem with combining forestry and agriculture, as it is sensible to incorporate the production side of those departments. However, I have a huge amount of difficulty with the amalgamation of agriculture and fisheries and with the belief that those functions should go together. It makes sense to have one minister, as we did and as this new Government has, and it is sensible to amalgamate the accounting sections and some of the functionary services of staff, but it will not work if one chief executive officer administers agriculture and fisheries. I feel very sorry for the fishermen of this State. The fisheries industry is one of the unsung heroes of Western Australia. It produces a huge amount of income for this State on a renewable basis. It provides employment in both the metropolitan and regional areas. It is a very well-managed industry. It is one of the few world-recognised managed fisheries that is not in decline. That was emphasised by the world award the rock lobster fishery received in London last year as part of the recognition of sustainability worldwide. Fisheries WA has an enormous record over a history of administrators and Governments. Many people can take credit for that. It is facing the danger of being absorbed into a larger department and seeing its decision-making process lost. The director of Fisheries WA and the minister for fisheries must make tough decisions. Robin Gray, a former Premier of Tasmania, was fisheries minister during the last years of his parliamentary career. He told a meeting of fisheries ministers that of all the things he had done, the hardest job was to be minister for fisheries. I am sure many ministers would disagree with that. However, it is not easy to make decisions that ensure a sustainable fishery. We need to make certain that the decision-making processes are not lost in a bigger department.

The areas of rural Western Australia that produce much of the wealth of this State have in the past year or so been impacted by a very adverse season. It has been as tough as ever, from a seasonal point of view, and, at the same time, the prices for grain have been very low. As a consequence, the previous State Government was approached by farmer organisations to assist, and it did that in a number of ways. It provided just over \$10.5 million in direct state funding for special assistance and it applied to the federal Government for exceptional-circumstances funding under the guidelines. We established a group that was representative of farm organisations and other specific community groups. That group advanced a claim for exceptional circumstances funding that was partly accepted by the federal Government. That accepted portion of the claim incorporated the core area affected by the particularly adverse conditions. When the new Government came to office, the Minister for Agriculture thought that because there had been a clamour for an extension of the boundaries of the claim, he should make a big fellow of himself and put the lot in the one application. That appeased people at the time. However, he did not go through the committee that was established to vet those things; he sent the application directly to the federal minister. It was a rushed job by any measure, and he was told at the time by people who know and who have been through the process that it would not be accepted. He created false hope among farmers and, exactly as we predicted, the request for extended areas was refused. The sad thing is that many more farmers would have qualified had he gone about it in a more sensible way. He should have looked at the area and the criteria more closely and made sure that the application fitted the guidelines. He should not have created that false hope. I urge him to have another go at the application. He should swallow his pride and, instead of belting hell out of the federal minister and creating all the political mayhem he can by blaming somebody else, get his department to redo the application and deliver that badly needed help to those people, who are in fairly desperate circumstances. Country people usually suffer through adverse seasons with a lot of resilience. In this case, people have had three exceptional-circumstances grants in a row due to particular problems and they need some help. The onus and responsibility is on the Minister for Agriculture to prepare the application properly and not do what he did before; that is, play politics. It might have appeased some people at the time, but he knew full well that it would not get a result.

I make some comments about the proposed structural change to the operation of this Parliament. The proposal by this Government, for which I accept it has a mandate, is to introduce what is commonly known as one vote, one value; that is, the supposition that every person's vote will result in members representing equal numbers of people. Nothing could be further from the truth. I will have much more to say during that debate. I will point out in some detail how and why nothing can be further from the truth. There are many factual examples of elections in Australia where there is no return for the so-called one vote, one value.

It is ludicrous to suggest that anybody could swallow the idea that there is. Indeed, a simple mathematical calculation can be made. Everybody could vote equally, which would give a 49:51 result in every seat in the State, resulting in 100 per cent of members elected from one party. That means 49 per cent of the people would never be represented in the Chamber. It is nonsense to suggest that the so-called one vote, one value would mean people would have equal representation in this Chamber. I shall enlarge on that matter in some detail during debate on the Bill.

I can tell the House what it will do to members who represent people in far-flung areas and I urge members who intend to support the Bill, including members of the Liberal Party, to look at a map of Western Australia and see what it will do to some country electorates. The members who will leave this place tonight when the House rises at about 5.00 pm and calmly take themselves back to their suburban houses or electorate offices in 25 to 30 minutes should consider country members, like the member for Roe, who have the luxury of flying and then driving home tonight! It will take a couple of hours for the member for Roe to reach his home. It will take three and a half hours for the member for Warren-Blackwood, who does not have the luxury of flying and will have to drive his car, to get home. If the member for Warren-Blackwood has to attend a function in the farthest part of his electorate tomorrow morning, he will have to drive for a further couple of hours to get there. It takes me three and a half hours to drive home and it is another three hours drive to the farthest part of my electorate. We want to represent the people who live in those areas as well and as ably as do metropolitan members. We are not asking for any special privileges. However, we do ask members to examine the so-called one vote, one value system. I will listen with interest to those members who will attempt to convince me that one vote, one value means equal representation, but they will have a great deal of difficulty doing so.

That leads me to the resourcing of country members who have exactly the same resources as city members. Without exaggeration, a friend and colleague, the member for Albany, could jog around his electorate in the morning. Having been an Olympic runner, he could probably do that quickly, certainly quicker than I could, as I would take half an hour to reach Emu Point. It would take about three hours of driving, not jogging, for me to get to the farthest point in my electorate. No extra allowance is provided to country members above that provided to city members, who represent consolidated groups of people in more easily accessible electorates. Although most country electors do not see their members often, they have been very patient with them. The member for Merredin has 19 shire councils in his electorate and if he were to visit those councils twice a year he would use up an enormous amount of time, not to mention all the other matters to which he must attend.

I urge the Government to take account of those regional areas. I believe there is a solution; that is, a compromise between removing the vote weighting arrangement in some of the more easily serviced regional seats, such as Bunbury and Mandurah, and providing them with a quota different from the seats of Eyre or Kimberley or some other far-flung seats. I urge the Government to talk to other members of Parliament in a structured way through a committee of this Parliament before it introduces the legislation to the House so that members can have an opportunity to develop a system acceptable to the community.

One of the key issues currently affecting country people is the Government's proposal to withdraw police services from many areas of rural Western Australia. When the member for Murray-Wellington was speaking, a couple of Labor members interjected to say that the key issues for the Government were health, education and law and order. I do not disagree with that; however, I want to ensure that those key issues are accepted across the country in an equitable way. To that end, I am disappointed that the Government has decided to withdraw a large number of police officers from rural Western Australia. Once again, the Government has looked at the WA map, noted that 1 000 people live in a particular area and decided that the area needs only two police officers. What the Government has forgotten is that those 1 000 people are scattered over perhaps 100 square miles and the police officers who represent them must drive many miles to attend to a problem.

*Amendment to Motion*

Mr HOUSE: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regrets to inform Your Excellency that the Assembly notes the State Government's lack of commitment to providing an adequate police service to the people of country Western Australia and in particular its decision that will deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia and redeploy them to metropolitan areas

**MR TRENORDEN** (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [10.16 am]: This is a critical core issue. The Government is sadly mistaken if it believes that people in rural Western Australia will take this matter lightly and accept a reduction of this nature without being given an opportunity for considerable input. In the course of their lives, members have learnt that one of the first priorities of any Government, and why we have Governments, is to get away from anarchy. One fundamental responsibility of government is to provide security to its people. This amendment goes straight to that core issue, which is why prior to the last election the National Party made a commitment to increase funding to country police stations and increase the front-line presence of police. The National Party is critically aware that the number of police officers in those areas is insufficient to do the job, let alone a reduction in the number of those officers. The previous Government employed additional police officers and the current Government has a commitment to employ 250 extra police officers. The National Party's commitment is that the correct portion of those additional officers to be sworn in should go directly to country people, together with all the services that go with them, and to continue running all police stations in country areas. That is what I had in mind when a challenge was made a few days ago in this House to the minister to explain to country people why she was planning to remove police officers from the country, given that the Labor Government has a commitment to provide an extra 250 police officers. I particularly challenge her current

proposal to reduce by 23 the number of officers in the wheatbelt region. This is not a dreamt-up situation from an opposition member. Police officers from the central wheatbelt office attended a public meeting of 20-odd shires at which they were told clearly that it is a fact, not a proposal, that 23 police officers will go from that region. Days later a minister of this House said those claims were untrue. The minister is in a position to explain herself. She has either not been correctly informed or has deliberately misled the House. That may be of political interest to members. However, I can tell them that it is not of interest to the people in the central wheatbelt; they want their police officers to stay. Whether I can win a point with the Minister for Police is not the core game, although it is an important factor, because the minister has an absolute responsibility to report accurately to this House about the matters for which she is responsible.

Law and order in our society is a shared responsibility. For many years, and particularly during the time of the last three police commissioners, the relationship between the community and police officers has improved dramatically. Fifteen years ago when I was first elected to the seat of Avon, the police officers in Northam used to hold their social functions in the canteen at Northam army camp, which is on a reserve owned by the Department of Defence, so that they would not have any contact with the community. The interaction between the community and the police was ordinary to say the least. I would need to look at my files to get the exact figure, but I believe that in the first two years that I was the member for Avon, in at least 10 cases righteous rage was expressed against the Police Force because police officers had charged people in the community for serious offences such as assault, which they had not committed, in order to catch them for other offences which they believed they had committed.

We have moved from a situation in which things could not get any worse to one in which the interaction between the Northam community and the police is excellent, although I would not say it is all that it should be. We have also moved to a situation in which the Aboriginal community in the town of Northam at long last has some confidence in the way the Police Force performs its duties. That is obviously important. The number of Aboriginal people in the central wheatbelt is reasonably high compared with the average number throughout Australia, and in the past serious problems occurred between different sections of the Aboriginal community and the police. Even more serious problems occurred with youth. That resulted in a total breakdown in the community, and youth, Aboriginals, sporting clubs and a range of other groups were experiencing great difficulties. The reason that situation has improved substantially is that the police have had the time to do community policing and get onto the front foot. However, the police officers in the central wheatbelt have told me that if 23 police officers were taken out of the region, the response of the remaining officers would be totally reactionary; they would be in one of two places - their office or their car.

The member for Innaloo and I talked yesterday about the court case in which he was involved, and I am pleased that police officer got off. I say that from the heart, because I believe police officers have a tough life. We have just had the situation in the member for Merredin's constituency where a police officer was killed while driving home from duty. I do not want to go into that matter now, because there is a lot of pain, and that pain is very fresh, but the people in my community have been baking cakes and scones and taking them to the police station because they empathise with the pain that those officers are experiencing. That would not have happened 10 years ago.

We have done the right things in the wheatbelt. We are not perfect, and I am not saying that the interaction between the community and the police is as good as it could be, but it is substantially better than it was. We know what the outcome will be if we take away from those police officers the opportunity to be involved in the community on a proactive basis. We will be right back in the situation in which the minister will say we need more police. The minister wants to take police officers away from us, because we have had an outstanding outcome in getting the community and police officers together, and put those officers into communities which have not been successful and in which what has happened in the wheatbelt should have happened but has not happened. The minister will reward those communities that have been inefficient or not as successful as they should have been and will penalise communities such as mine that have been successful.

This proposal is based on a model which deals only with the outcomes; that is, the crime statistics. If the Government really wanted to fix up policing, it would not focus just on the tail end of the process. Industry has a well-known process called "cleaner production", whereby in order to prevent pollution, noise and other problems, it focuses on the front end rather than the tail end. Rather than worry about how to deal with a chemical pollutant, industry makes sure that that chemical does not come out of the plant in the first place. We should be putting in the time up-front. That is what my community has done, but because that is what it has done, it is to be penalised. I am not talking only about what police officers have done. In recent years, community members have volunteered to become involved in Safer WA, Rural Watch and Neighbourhood Watch. In addition, community policing has become an integral part of community life; police officers in schools have become involved at the front end of the process; and I and other country members have attended meetings at which community members and the police have discussed law and order and policing issues. However, because that has given us results, we are to be penalised; and in two years, after those officers have been taken away, we will be in the same sewer as everyone else.

If the Government thinks we will take that lying down, it is sadly mistaken. The community of Western Australia will be angry about this proposal. At the first meeting in Toodyay, which was attended by community members and the shire presidents and chief executive officers of about 20 shires, one of the first statements that was made - not by me or

any other member of this House - was: is it not amazing that these police officers will be taken from National and Liberal Party seats and will be put into Labor Party seats? That is the message in the community, and it deserves consideration.

These police officers will be moved from what is already an under-resourced area. I cannot speak for every electorate in the wheatbelt, although I can certainly speak for my own, but I am certain I am right in saying that none of the police stations in that region has been able to meet its roster in a decade. None of those stations has had police officers to spare, yet we have been told that we must live with this event. It really is a situation whereby we are being penalised for being proactive. That important interaction between the police and the community has been forgotten.

I do not really want to go through the history, because there have been painful times, but a decade ago there were some serious events in the communities of Northam, Kellerberrin and Moora. In fact, in my home town, the more serious problems with which police had to deal involved youths coming out of hotels at closing time and clashing with the police. The circumstances that caused those events have now substantially gone. That is due to the proactive work done by the police officers. However, it does not take into account the other things that police officers do. Unfortunately, the Commissioner of Police says constantly that the population of the wheatbelt is falling, therefore he must remove police officers. Where has he been? The growth rate for half of the wheatbelt region is greater than the growth rate of the metropolitan area. For example, Northam, Gingin, Moora and that coastal region are experiencing a growth rate of two per cent plus. Toodyay now has the second highest growth rate in the State. However, somehow, the minister and the commissioner say that they will take police officers out of the wheatbelt because the population is falling. Where did they get that information from? It is not correct. It is not even correct for the member for Merredin's electorate, which is at the eastern end of this area and which is experiencing an increase in population. Therefore, it is a furphy and it is very unfortunate that the commissioner keeps running with it.

There are policing issues in which the police have to be involved, including patrolling the Great Eastern Highway. It is the No 1 highway in the State and it links the eastern States to Perth. There is an enormous amount of activity up and down that road. Safety is a constant issue and police interaction with truck rollovers, chemical spills and the things that occur on that highway are ongoing. Drugs are also being transported up and down that road. Police are very aware of that and constantly tell me about it. That road is one of the arteries for drugs entering Western Australia from the eastern States. A commitment to that highway has to be met. However, how it will be met with a 15 per cent reduction in police officers is beyond me. Unfortunately, as was reported in the news two days ago, there is a growing drug problem in the wheatbelt region and, indeed, in rural WA. I do not like to stand in this House and talk about negatives like that, but it is a fact. Drugs are coming into our community and police officers have an important role - not the total role - to play in that argument. The community, health agencies and other people must also get involved, but the police must be part of the solution. Constituents visit my office regularly and say that they ring the police stations to tell them who is dealing in drugs, where they are and how to catch them, and the police officers tell them that they do not have the time to deal with the problem. They do not have time to act now and we are facing a 15 per cent reduction in our police force in the future! It is totally unacceptable.

I will not talk about the road safety and road deaths issues because I should not have to explain them to anyone in this House or discuss the role of police officers in those issues. However, every time there is a serious accident, the police must attend. I repeat: there are two places police officers in country areas will always be - in the police station or in a car. People would like to occasionally see a police officer walking down the street at Dowerin, or at a football match. In fact, they want to see a police officer playing football or netball or at the hotel.

Mr Pandal: Or waiting outside the hotel.

Mr TRENORDEN: That is right. However, there is nothing better in a country community than for a police officer to be seen walking through a hotel bar a quarter of an hour before closing time and saying to people, "Fellas, it is closing time and I will be outside." That can be done in a country town if the police officer has the time to be in the hotel before closing time. However, if 15 per cent of officers are taken away, that will not happen. They should also have time to have a talk with young Bill or Joe down the street and say to them, "Look, I know you are a bit bored. However, I know, because I have been told by everyone in the community, that you are breaking into houses and so forth." He can then do something to get them off the street by getting them involved in community activities and sport. That is what is done in country areas and that is why the crime statistics are down in my electorate. They are not down because police officers are not needed. It is not acceptable to penalise the community just because it has been proactive. If the minister and commissioner think that because they give the people of the wheatbelt what they believe to be a rational argument for a reduction in police numbers they will accept it, then they are sadly mistaken. The one thing that country people value the most in rural WA is their lifestyle. Lifestyle is the No 1 commodity and providing a harmonious community for people to live in is what we do best. This is a direct attack by the Government on the wellbeing and the welfare of country people.

**MR OMODEI** (Warren-Blackwood) [10.36 am]: I join the member for Avon, the leader of the National Party, in supporting this amendment to the Address-in-Reply. It is interesting that the member spoke for 20 minutes and the Minister for Police has not shown up in the House, nor has the member who conducted the review into country policing, the Minister for Health. It appears that the member for Innaloo is the de facto Minister for Police.

Many of the comments I will make will be similar to those made by the previous speaker but they bear repeating. The presence of police in country areas is fundamental to the wellbeing of small communities. We should talk about early intervention when we talk about schooling, drugs and crime. The best method of early intervention is integrating a police presence into a country community. The member referred to police being involved in sport and playing football and so on. The Belt Up program is being promoted by country football at this time and the member for Wagin knows about the connections between country football and road safety through his previous life in the Western Australian Country Football League. The importance of that and a police presence in country towns cannot be underestimated. The member for Avon said that there are very low levels of crime in country towns because people know who the police are and the police know who they are. It is because we have good understanding and communication in the community that we do not have the kinds of problems experienced in the metropolitan region.

At the same time, the drug issue, even in small country towns, is becoming a serious one. Some of the young people I know, particularly members of my family such as my son, have told me that if I want to make a real contribution and make a mark on society as a member of Parliament, the one thing I should do is to get young people to stop taking drugs. It starts off with people smoking cannabis and they graduate from there. Amphetamines are readily available now, even in the smallest country town in WA, including the wheatbelt towns to which the member for Avon referred. It is a real problem for the police in those areas. It is a serious problem in places such as Margaret River, which are large growth areas and areas of changing demographics. To suggest that police will be moved from those country areas borders on the bizarre. If the changes being proposed for the police and citizens youth centres are similar and involve another internal review - the Government has not been able to provide a response on this matter yet - alarm bells will really start to ring. Organisations like the police and citizens youth centres have been around for 60 years. Police officers are present at blue light discos and the officer in my town of Manjimup runs and chairs the domestic violence group. These officers organise events such as the police ball to fundraise for those kinds of things. The police cadet program is another initiative that has had a major impact on the relationship between policemen and families and young people. I cannot believe that the Government is seeking to remove police from country areas. When the coalition Government was in power, it built 28 new police stations. The whole Police Service was in an absolute shambles when the previous Government was elected.

Mr Johnson: They didn't even have fax machines at some stations.

Mr OMODEI: The Police Service did not have petrol for some of the cars at one stage.

Mr Kobelke: That was under your Government.

Mr OMODEI: Was it? The previous Government's record will stand up well against any Labor Party performance.

Mr Kobelke: Your record was to have the worst levels of crime in Australia.

Mr OMODEI: The Leader of the House should know that the levels of crime were dropping under the coalition Government.

Mr Kobelke: Only because you took the Australian record.

Mr OMODEI: Crime has not stopped just because the Labor Party was elected. The only difference now is that *The West Australian* does not blame the Government for crimes such as breaking and entering; it blames the crooks. When the coalition was in government, *The West Australian* blamed the Government for this problem because it wanted to get rid of that Government. Is it not remarkable that since the Government changed, the hospital scenario and all those people in crisis are no longer the fault of the Government? Whose fault is it? The truth is that nothing much has changed, has it, minister? The Minister for Labour Relations has found that, once in government, the situation is a bit different from the carping and criticising of his time in opposition.

Mr Kobelke: I can actively go about fixing it.

Mr OMODEI: Is that right? That will be watched with close interest. On any day of the week, the coalition will stand on its record for the provision of physical facilities and service compared with that of the Labor Government. The coalition will debate the matter with the Government until the cows come home, as the member for Moore would say. The minister is now in government and has the capacity to travel around the State. Instead of sitting back in his city domain he can go and see the work done by the previous Government.

Mr Kobelke: No-one can doubt that what you did to improve the physical facilities for the Police Service was excellent. Let us be factual. The fact is that the overall level of service did not meet the needs, and crime got out of control. The previous Government gets a tick for facilities - it did a good job - but the overall performance was simply inadequate.

Mr OMODEI: That is nonsense.

Mr Day: Crime levels in many areas came down over the past eight years.

Mr OMODEI: The last police budget was \$440 million, up 77 per cent, which was an increase of \$191 million on the previous Labor Government's budget. I will not go through all those figures. I am pleased that the Minister for Health is back in the Chamber because I understand he played a significant part in the review of country policing and it would

be interesting to hear his response during this debate. The Liberal Party is saying that the Government should not discount country Western Australia. Most of the wealth of this State is created in country Western Australia. In days gone by every country person had a city relative. I do not know if it is the same now, but I imagine it is because people are gravitating to regional centres and to the cities. The relationship between country and city was a productive one. It would be a great shame to see a gulf appear between city and country people. The previous Government made every effort to make sure schools, hospitals and housing were provided in country towns. If one travels the length and breadth of country Australia, it can be seen that Ministry of Housing accommodation for aged persons, hostel accommodation, nursing homes, multipurpose service buildings and hospitals were built. In the eight years that I was a minister, I was proud to be able to travel to any town in Western Australia and see the work that my Government had done. If the Labor Party can achieve that in its term of government, it will get my congratulations. However, it has a long way to go.

It is wrong for the Government to begin by suggesting that it will remove police from country towns. Police are the glue that holds communities together. A great number of police officers have come through country towns. One Assistant Commissioner of Police was a saw filer in the Northcliffe mill in the early days and played football for the Southerners Football Club. I am currently the president of the local football club and was at the football last week. Two of the umpires for the game between Bridgetown and Pemberton were police officers. Last year, when our team won the grand final, Ros and I went to cook breakfast for the boys on the morning after the grand final. As we arrived, a guy was getting out of his car. Ros asked me who he was and I told her that he was the local copper. He had actually slept with the guys in the clubroom. It is that kind of activity, that getting together with the boys -

Mr Kobelke: Do you want to rephrase that?

Mr OMODEI: Okay. The guys, after having a great celebration, took their sleeping bags and bunked down in the clubrooms instead of getting out on the road and creating a nuisance, which possibly could have caused an embarrassment to them or created some kind of accident. That is the extent to which these officers have gone to create closer relationships with young people in my community. At one stage a police officer coached the colts team at Pemberton. Some members may recall Sandy Pense's brother, who was shot, in the wheatbelt. That was one of the disastrous things that has happened. Sandy coached Cuballing for three premierships in a row and put some of his footballers in the clink overnight to make sure that they were available on Sunday morning. He was already in his thirties when he moved south and continued to play football for many years. He established good relations not only in that town, but also with other communities through interaction with other football teams and clubs in the league. He was a credit to the Police Service and to himself.

I have just about covered all the issues that I wanted to cover. In every town around the State, police have been integrally involved in programs like Neighbourhood Watch and Safer WA committees. If it were not for the local copper, there would be no Safer WA committee in many towns. Moving from the old community policing system to the Safer WA program has been positive. It was initiated by the previous Government in concert with local government. Those sorts of things will be undermined only by a move to shift country police out of country towns. I urge the Government to reconsider its view. If it has a problem with providing extra police officers, it can cut some of the fancy programs that it promised during the election and put that money into providing them.

Mr Kobelke: We will deliver all our promises.

Mr OMODEI: The Government promised to keep police in country areas. It is fundamental to those communities. A person can still go to most country towns in Western Australia and, although it is illegal, leave the keys in the car and the car will still be there when he comes back to it. People leave their vehicles in the middle of town and there is never a problem. In the city, a car can have double door locks, be parked in a place where it can be seen, and the damn thing still gets pinched. No-one wants that sort of thing to happen in Western Australia.

More resources are needed in country Western Australia to attack the issue of drugs among young people, because in the end, as everyone in this House knows, that destroys families and children's futures in the long run. It is fundamentally important that the Government does not remove police from country towns.

**MR BIRNEY** (Kalgoorlie) [10.48 am]: I support the amendment. My electorate of Kalgoorlie was promised a number of things during the election campaign. I compliment the Labor Government on the various promises it made to the Police Service in the Kalgoorlie region. The problem is that I am experiencing a lot of trouble in getting those promises implemented. I sent a letter to the Minister for Police on 28 March. It is unfortunate that the minister is not in the House today because perhaps she might have taken this opportunity, after some five or six weeks, to answer my questions.

I refer to the Labor Party's commitment during the election campaign to introduce a 44-hour working week for officers stationed at the Kalgoorlie Police Station. The promise was well received by the community and by the police officers at the Kalgoorlie Police Station. One officer told me that if and when they get the 44-hour working week, officers would be lining up to work in Kalgoorlie. Police officers are generally underpaid for the work they do, and the opportunity to work an additional four hours a week adds to their bottom-line pay. Many officers voted for the Labor Party because it had offered them a 44-hour working week.

In my letter of 28 March, I asked the Minister for Police whether she intends to honour that promise and, if she does, when the 44-hour working week will start in Kalgoorlie. The minister has failed to respond to my letter and it is disappointing to see that she is not in the House today given that two or three members have spoken on the policing issue. She must be at morning tea.

Mr Johnson: It has been almost two months and the member has not received a reply?

Mr BIRNEY: Yes; a little under two months. Members may be aware that, during the election campaign, the Labor Party promised to introduce 40 new Aboriginal liaison officer positions. The proposition was well received in Kalgoorlie as there are fairly well-documented problems concerning indigenous people. Some of them are homeless and the fringe dwellers are causing a lot of problems for people who are trying to go about their daily lives unhindered. Some individuals are engaging in antisocial behaviour and many refuse to recognise laws on things such as littering and what have you. If a number of positions for Aboriginal liaison officers were filled, it would go some way towards fixing those types of problems.

In my letter of 28 March, I asked the Minister for Police whether she intended to allocate any of those positions to the Kalgoorlie Police Station. To date, I have not received a response. I take the opportunity to congratulate the Labor Party on its election commitment to Kalgoorlie-Boulder to fund what is called the Wunnagutu patrol. The Wunnagutu patrol comprises indigenous people who patrol the streets of Kalgoorlie in a van. They deal with any unruly behaviour being exhibited by other indigenous people. To that end, they solve a number of their problems. The patrol is terribly under-funded and it is trying to scrape money from all sources. It has approached the chamber of commerce in Kalgoorlie - I also sit on the board - and a meeting was held with patrol representatives last week. They came cap in hand to the board for money. They have also approached the Aboriginal Affairs Department, the local council and the private sector for money. I congratulate the Labor Party on its commitment to provide \$300 000 in funding to the patrol over the next four years. However, I cannot find out whether and when the money will be forthcoming. I call on the Government or the Minister for Police to advise when the \$300 000 will be available. I am aware that it is a four-year commitment and I expect approximately \$100 000 to be available in the near future. The patrol is in danger of folding. If the Government does not come good with its promise, it will have to bear the responsibility of the patrol folding. The patrol has prepared its forward budgets on expectations that it will receive \$300 000 and if the money is not received, it will be a blot on the copybook of the Labor Party.

During its campaign, the Labor Party also promised to provide a mounted police unit in Kalgoorlie. It was received as a good idea. The Labor Party must have had some good contacts in the Kalgoorlie Police Station. A suburb of Kalgoorlie that was once a state housing commission area is widely recognised in Kalgoorlie as having a bad juvenile problem. Many of the juveniles run through laneways and jump over fences to escape the police. There is a clear need for a mounted police unit to deal with such offenders. The Labor Party has promised Kalgoorlie a mounted police unit but, once again, it will not say when it will get it. As recently as today, the inspector of police in Kalgoorlie had not heard anything about it. Nobody from the police or the Government has told the inspector that the station will get a mounted police unit. I wonder whether the Government now wants to brush that promise under the carpet. Mounted police units are fairly expensive things to run. Looking after horses can be expensive. The unit is needed as there are specific duties for it to do.

In the past month or so, some school-based police officers have been removed from schools and put back on the beat. Kalgoorlie had two school-based police officers but now it has only one. There has also been a downsizing of the alcohol and drug unit. There were three members but now there are only one or two. I am in favour of putting more police officers back on the beat, but there is a strong need to retain the staffing levels for the alcohol and drug unit and for schools.

I address the empty chair of the Minister for Police and ask her whether she could respond to my letter and advise me and the people of Kalgoorlie whether and when she intends to implement the Labor Party's election promises on policing.

**MR WALDRON** (Wagin) [10.57 am]: I support my National Party colleagues and the members for Kalgoorlie and Warren-Blackwood in this matter. If country areas of Western Australia lose more police officers, there will be an increase in crime rates and problems in country areas. Many communities are concerned about this issue. They believe there is not enough police presence in country areas now. If more police are lost to these areas, the problems will only get worse. In my maiden speech yesterday I referred to drug-related crime and domestic violence, which are becoming growing problems in our towns. There have been recent problems with crime in Katanning. Last week I met a lady who has a restaurant in that town and she is very concerned about her business because of the crime rate. More police are needed to quell and manage the crime rate. In 10 days I will attend a Safer WA meeting in the town to try to deal with the crime problems in the town. Smaller communities, not just regional towns, also have problems. Drug-related crime and domestic violence also exist in small communities. If police are removed from the regional towns, smaller communities will have no chance of obtaining a police presence. Broomehill is a small community located south of Katanning in my electorate. Previous speakers have mentioned how small communities are very keen to work with the police. The local community in Broomehill has identified certain problems. Although there is a police presence in Katanning, there is none in Broomehill. Through lobbying, the commitment of resources and the help of local

government, a police officer who works at Katanning now resides in Broomehill. The presence of a police officer in that community and the sight of the police car makes people realise that there is authority in the town and people who are inclined to offend think twice about doing so. It also gives the community some confidence. Domestic violence in these smaller communities does cause some problems, and if there are sufficient officers in a country area for an officer to be located in one of these smaller centres, he will have an affinity with the people and can probably head off violence by knowing and understanding the people. If the police have to travel 50 kilometres to get to a place where they do not know the people, it may be too late to help. It is very important that the Government realise that country areas need a police presence, even in those small centres. I cite the town of Darkan, which has no police officer at present. Darkan is a small to average-size country town, and the nearest police are at Collie and at Williams, which are approximately 40 or 50 kilometres away. I would like to think that, if a police officer could not be stationed there, at least one could live there, as is occurring in Broomehill. I am sure the Darkan community would support that, and it is something I will be pursuing.

It is vital to the confidence of people in country communities that no more police officers be lost from country Western Australia. I spoke in my maiden speech about inequities between the city and the country, and this is just another example. Country people do not want special treatment or any bias towards the country; they just want fair and equitable treatment. Two hundred and fifty new police officers have been promised, and I assume that some of them will be assigned to rural Western Australia. I think it is a fair assumption, and I ask that it does happen, because the people out there are expecting it.

**MR COWAN** (Merredin) [11.02 am]: Police numbers in rural Western Australia has been an issue for over two years. It first came to light when members holding seats in the eastern wheatbelt were notified by officers of the Police Service that the gurus in Perth had made the decision that police numbers in the wheatbelt region were to be reduced. The suggestion was that the number would be between 34 and 37 officers, which was quite substantial. We have one factor on our side, and it is that the senior police officer in the wheatbelt has served a lot of time in the Police Service, does not have any great ambition and knows that he can tread on the toes of the senior officers in Perth without too much recrimination, because he is very close to retirement age. Treading on toes is exactly what he intends to do. He succinctly told the metropolitan-based people who deal with the allocation of police numbers to leave it to him to work out how best to deliver a police service in his region, and he would tell them how many officers he could offer for transfer. I was encouraged by this very genuine attempt by Superintendent Gascoyne to work with the community and his officers to meet the requirements of the metropolitan-based personnel executives while at the same time sending them a message that they do not always get it right - and in this case they did not. I understand the demands that are imposed by Northbridge, where there is quite clearly a shortage of police officers, as well as the growth area of Rockingham. Most of the wheatbelt police officers were to be relocated in those areas. It would be clear to most people that a statistical assessment of demand for police officers in any region is impossible. It may be possible to use statistics as a yardstick, but not as the rule. It was clear that in this case statistics were being applied as the rule, instead of reaching an understanding of the particular needs of the area. A great number of separate communities do not have any police representation at all, and police can be at least 35 to 40 minutes, and sometimes up to an hour, away. This has nothing to do with the lack of desire on the part of the Police Service to attend an incident; it has everything to do with transport logistics. Often they simply cannot get there within an hour. Putting a further handicap on officers serving in those areas, and as a consequence delivering a lower quality of service to people in the bush, should be avoided. Within a month of this Government coming to office, when there was a great deal of expectation, and to some extent anxiety, about the outcomes for people living in rural Western Australia from a change of government, this issue arises. It is being quoted as an example of the attitude of the Government to the delivery of services in the country. Country people may not have been particularly happy with the previous Government, but they are certainly less than ecstatic about the new one. On 18 April the Leader of the National Party issued a statement to the media indicating that the issue of the relocation of police officers from the wheatbelt had become serious. The number of relocations has now been reduced to 18 or 19, compared with the original 34 or 35, but the word is out that a minimum of 18 police officers will be removed from the wheatbelt in three tranches, spread out over a period of 12 to 18 months. The member for Moore, whose electorate was one of those to be affected, asked a question of the Minister for Police on 2 May -

- (1) Can the minister confirm that 18 police officers - almost 15 per cent of the establishment - will be withdrawn from the wheatbelt region over the next 12 months?
- (2) How is this consistent with the Government's election promise to increase police numbers by 200 officers?
- (3) Will it become standard government policy to centralise services in the city at the expense of regional areas?
- (4) Will the minister give an undertaking here and now that no staff will be removed from country police stations during this term of government and that officer numbers will be increased in high population growth regions?

The minister replied -

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) No.
- (4) I guarantee that this Government will increase the number of police officers in this State by 250. As the member is aware, deployment of police officers in this State is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police. I raised this issue with the commissioner this morning and I have sought a briefing. I understand that the comments made by the Leader of the National Party are entirely inaccurate.

There has been no confirmation by the Minister for Police that the comments made by the Leader of the National Party, to the effect that 18 officers would be withdrawn from the wheatbelt over the next 12 to 18 months, are inaccurate. There has been no withdrawal or follow-up by the minister. I recognise that it is perhaps an operational matter.

The Government can also make some policy injection on this issue. The minister has not made a clear, unequivocal statement that police officers will not be withdrawn from the wheatbelt district. I can draw only one conclusion from that; that is, that those police officers will be withdrawn, that the Minister for Police was wrong and that she misled the House when she indicated that the Leader of the National Party had, in his turn, been inaccurate in the public statements he made. We need a statement and a commitment from the Premier or the Minister for Health recalling some of his activities as a senior police officer - I do not think it would be appropriate for him to do that - one way or the other. We need an unequivocal commitment from the Minister for Police that she was right, that what she said in the Parliament on 2 May was correct and that she did not mislead this House. It is important that the minister does that, for the simple reason that this is the first example of government showing a lack of care for the eastern wheatbelt region. I am pleased that the minister is now here to be able to respond to this debate.

Mrs Roberts: Yes, I have listened to your speech.

Mr COWAN: We all look forward to hearing what the minister will say. We hope the minister will be in a position to announce unequivocally that those police officers will not be withdrawn from the wheatbelt district in Western Australia. If the minister does that, she will provide a lot of satisfaction to the people represented by me and the members for Moore, Avon, Wagin, Kalgoorlie, Warren-Blackwood and, indeed, some of the members behind the minister who support the Government, because it is important that we see the retention of those essential services that are delivered by Government.

Everybody on the other side of the House, as well as those on this side, recognises that there are three critical areas of government responsibility: health, education and law and order. We could add a few others, but they are the three critical issues. This is the first challenge for this Government in respect of law and order. As the Leader of the National Party has said, it is important to take an active interest in police officers and their integration into the community so that they are at an advantage in the discharge of their responsibilities.

That reminds me of a story going around Narembeen. A couple of young lads used to go to football training and afterwards they preferred to do their circuit work with a utility or motor vehicle somewhere down the track. They were tapped on the shoulder by one of the police officers in Narembeen and told that they had better not do that again. One of them was somehow able to procure a cardboard cut-out of a police officer - one of those that are usually stationed in a supermarket saying that shoplifting is a crime, don't do it, we are watching - and strung it up on a pole out of town with the name of a police officer on it. It was regarded as a joke but was treated by the media very seriously, to the extent that Channel Seven sent a journalist and a helicopter all the way to Narembeen to photograph this cardboard cut-out. The lead story in the news that night was that a criminal element had taken over the town of Narembeen. I reassure this Parliament and anyone who is silly enough to listen to me that, at the time the journalist was in the helicopter doing his job, the two police officers concerned were playing at an invitation bowls match with the remainder of the Narembeen community at the local bowling club and thoroughly enjoying themselves. I really do not think that a criminal element had taken over Narembeen, but although there may well be the odd prankster or loose cannon - an expression some people may use - in the area, in the main, members of rural communities have a genuine intent to integrate police officers into their society. For that reason they are able to do a better job, but if we start to reduce police numbers and it reaches the stage at which police officers become totally detached from the community, we effectively overturn things that make for a safer Western Australia and the other community policing programs they are meant to put in place.

This is not a competition; I am reminding the minister that the delivery of essential services is very important to all Western Australians, particularly to those in country Western Australia, where - often because of the numbers - we find that services are withdrawn. Here we have an opportunity to demonstrate that they will not become a forgotten people, and the minister can put the stamp of her ministry and the Government on the fact that the essential services will be retained.

**MR QUIGLEY** (Innaloo) [11.16 am]: I will take interjections during the course of my speech. I do not want to be a wilting flower. I was shown a couple of interjections in writing that held up four to six.

Mr Sweetman: It is six to four on now.

Mr QUIGLEY: I think the member was indicating how many of the Opposition might vote with the Government to defeat this amendment. The amendment is fatally flawed - I have the Governor's speech in front of me - because it seeks to criticise the State Government's lack of commitment to provide an adequate Police Service to the people in country Western Australia, and, in particular, the decision that would deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia. Neither the Governor's speech, nor the policies of Premier Gallop's Government, contains decisions that will lead to the depletion of police numbers in country Western Australia.

Mr Trenorden: But there has been a decision.

Mr Cowan: The superintendent has spoken to the chief executive officers of all shires affected and has instructed them to withdraw something like 30 police officers; he said that he was trying to restrict it to 18 and that he would commence with that number.

Mr QUIGLEY: Who instructed him to withdraw them?

Mr Cowan: The senior executive of the Police Service -

Mr QUIGLEY: Who instructed the senior executive to withdraw them?

Mr Cowan: It would be one of the station commissioners.

Mr QUIGLEY: Exactly. I do not want to reflect on any particular member. The conduct by the Opposition smacks of hypocrisy. I recall, when a metropolitan sector of the community was concerned about crime in Northbridge and called for the reintroduction of an Asian squad, there was quite a clamour in the city about that. On that occasion the Minister for Police had the temerity, in the view of the Opposition, to voice that community call and say that we should have more Asian squad police to deal with the issues in Northbridge. The Opposition howled with derision that the Minister for Police in Western Australia sought to interfere with the deployment of the commissioner's troops. The media criticised the Minister for Police for seeking to interfere in the deployment of troops by the Commissioner of Police. No members, so far, either through their interjections that I have invited or in their speeches, have identified any decision made by the Western Australian Government or the Minister for Police that would lead to the withdrawal of police officers from country Western Australia; on the contrary. Last year I had the pleasure of attending the Fremantle town hall one evening when the then Leader of the Opposition stood before those assembled and announced that the incoming Gallop Government would provide 250 extra police. The following day, the then Minister for Police joined the Commissioner of Police and said that Western Australia and the Western Australia Police Force did not need more police; it needed more computers.

Several members interjected.

Mr QUIGLEY: Members opposite want to argue the semantics, but the truth is the truth. The day after Geoff Gallop announced the Labor Party's policy, the Government said that it wanted more computers; that was its agenda for country Western Australia.

I am proud to say that I am a life member of the Police Union (WA) and have spent a lot of time in police stations in country Western Australia.

Mr Cowan: You are an honorary member.

Mr QUIGLEY: I will not argue about that. I have spent a lot of time in police stations with country police officers. They want to be in the country and they have an affinity with the country people. I nodded continually during the member for Avon's speech because I agreed with his comments. There is no doubt that more police must be deployed to country Western Australia. Achieving that requires an overall increase in the numbers of police in Western Australia. After that happens, it is up to the Commissioner of Police to deploy them.

I am proud to serve on the backbench of the Gallop Labor Government. I have followed the issue of police policy for about 20 years. In 1991, I had discussions with the then opposition spokesman for police, Hon George Cash. He was a gentleman who appreciated the function of a police minister; that is, to question the Commissioner of Police, but not to direct him. It is the job of the Minister for Police to question what the Commissioner of Police is doing and then to explain that to Parliament. It is not the job of the Minister for Police to direct the Commissioner of Police. Hon George Cash had a strong handle on that concept. The former Premier did not dare appoint such a man as the Minister for Police.

I notice that the member for Darling Range is here. As the police minister, he, and his conservative predecessor, unquestionably defended the actions of the Commissioner of Police in this Chamber. During each of the controversies that occurred in the Police Service, conservative ministers for police would defend the actions of their commissioner at all costs.

Mr Day: You have no idea what occurred in private discussions between me, my predecessor or my successor and the Commissioner of Police.

Mr QUIGLEY: I have a pretty good idea because I was shown the file of correspondence between the conservative Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police over the Weir/Wall fiascos. The Government decided, as a matter of policy, to stonewall the Police Union and Senior Constable Tomkinson, who had a complaint to make. Contrary to the funding guidelines issued by the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, the Government decided to fund Sergeant Weir and his codefendant in the civil suit that had been brought against them. I saw the correspondence that instructed the Government to defend the police administration at all costs and to not question it.

I stand here dripping with envy. During the early speeches, I heard members speak about the high schools and facilities in their electorates. The electorate of Innaloo has two police stations. The Scarborough Police Station is a great big edifice built by the previous Government. When it first opened, it was manned by 27 officers. Under the previous Administration, the number of officers slid to 19, two of whom are probationers. I am envious of the people in the wheatbelt with their one-station towns and one police car because the police station at Innaloo has one police officer and no police car. If there is a call-out, he must catch the bus. That is scandalous.

Several members interjected.

Mr QUIGLEY: The bus company has been privatised and cannot be relied upon. The only way I can increase the number of police, as I have done since I came to this House, is through the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police - although I have been told that that is not the correct etiquette. I will keep demanding that more police are needed urgently in the electorate of Innaloo. I understand the points raised through interjections about the electorate of Avon and the wheatbelt region.

Mr Cowan: We want only to retain the numbers we have.

Mr QUIGLEY: I would like to see more. The officers in single-manned stations in those areas feel vulnerable. The Police Union and police officers want more police so that, for their own safety, at least two officers are in each station. However, we are not in a position to direct the Commissioner of Police. The Government is taking the responsible approach; that is, it wants to give the commissioner extra manpower. The Government has told the commissioner that it is concerned about the safety of the community in the metropolitan area and country districts, but it is up to the Commissioner of Police to make a decision.

Members opposite have pointed out vociferously that the Government cannot direct the Commissioner of Police. The Minister for Police sought to do something about the Asian gang problem in Northbridge. The Minister for Police did what I have never seen a conservative Minister for Police do; that is, she invited the commissioner onto the streets with her to view the problem directly. The Commissioner of Police said that it was a beneficial exercise.

Several members interjected.

Mr QUIGLEY: I do not want to mention any person in the community. However, because the member for Warren-Blackwood has raised that issue, I will refer to it. During the previous Government's Administration the best drug fighters in Western Australia were waylaid. They were not convicted of corruption or disciplinary offences. With the acquiescence of the then Minister for Police - a conservative - they were stood down, suspended and left in that state for two or three years. Some of them have been stood down since 1997.

The best crime fighter and drug detective in Western Australia was waylaid. That officer snuck across Australia in a hired vehicle so that no other policeman could reveal his operation, to track down Bruno Romeo - the silver fox - about whom I heard a lot when I was in Adelaide. The officer tracked him down and arrested him in an underground dugout in Lismore, New South Wales, and brought him back to Western Australia to face the law and be imprisoned. Under the previous Government's system, that crime fighter par excellence has been under suspension for over three years. It is a scandal. I recall that at one stage, 15 of the 32 people on the metropolitan drug squad were under suspension, and they remained under suspension for over a year. People were on annual leave, which left a working squad of about four or five officers. It was shameful.

Mr Cowan: All that does is tell us that you need to do something about the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Mr QUIGLEY: I agree entirely. That must be looked at. I wrote to the former Premier, as the minister responsible for the Anti-Corruption Commission, pleading for something to happen. His response was to forward the letter to the chairman of the ACC for him to respond to me. It was absolutely pathetic. Everyone has an event in their lives that trips them into politics. Mine was that great sense of injustice. However, as I said in my maiden speech, my view of society and of what needs to be done is now broader than that. That is what happened. It is no good opposition members standing in the Chamber and saying, "We want to fight drugs; there is cannabis in Narembeen, or wherever". The tap must be turned off at the top. It is no good opposition members rabbiting on about Labor being weak on drugs because it has a policy of a cautioning system, when it was their Government's cautioning system that was trialled in the northern metropolitan police region. It does not sit well. We must attack the top end. It is no good opposition members coming in here with the rhetoric that they will attack the top end and the Mr Bigs when they countenanced a system that gives favour to them and the false allegations they peddle, while waylaying good officers under suspension. There is no particular decision. The Opposition has totally and hopelessly failed to identify any particular decision of this Government that would deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia. I invited interjections, and I invited

further interjection from the member for Merredin, so members could identify which decision of this Government will lead to a depletion of police numbers in the wheatbelt, if any. No-one has identified any decision.

Mr Cowan: That is the problem. It started two years ago with about 30-plus officers. That has now been reduced to 18. I want someone to tell me that the decision has not been made and that we will retain our officers. You keep asking me about a decision that has been made. This has been going on for two years. I want someone to tell me that that plan has now been rejected by the commissioner and that we will retain our officers.

Mr QUIGLEY: I do not argue with that. However, this Chamber is being asked to pass a serious amendment stating that this Government has made a decision that will result in the depletion of officers. The Opposition has not identified any such decision.

Mr Trenorden: Yes, it has: on 2 May, the Minister for Police said that the allegations made in the public arena were true.

Mr QUIGLEY: I do not speak for the minister, but I quote what was said on 2 May. The question was -

Can the minister confirm that 18 police officers - almost 15 per cent of the establishment - will be withdrawn from the wheatbelt region over the next 12 months?

The answer was that no, she could not confirm that.

Mr Trenorden: What about the rest of it? Keep going, there is more. It is like Demtel.

Mr QUIGLEY: The answer continues, and the minister answered "no", "no" and "not applicable". She then stated -

I guarantee that this Government will increase the number of police officers in this State by 250.

I listened closely to the arguments of members opposite. Not one even attempted to identify any decision made by the Gallop Labor Government that would see this happen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am allowed a reasonable amount of latitude, given that a number of us are new to this place, but I remind members that under Standing Order No 93, they must refer to other members in this place by their position or electorate.

Mr QUIGLEY: Opposition members have not identified any decision -

Mr Cowan: You're not talking to the judge now, but to a group of people who make judgments differently, and they will judge you on whether the police officers stay or go. We want a commitment that they will stay.

Mr QUIGLEY: I understand. The judgment here will be cast by sensible Western Australians who, normally, are probably more capable of making reasonable decisions than judges can find in a straitjacket of evidence in these matters. I understand what I am talking about; members opposite do not understand that the public of Western Australia will readily appreciate that the Opposition has abysmally failed to identify even a half-decision we have made that has led to this concern. How can they? The only policy decision in this regard has been to provide 250 more police, when the Opposition wanted 250 more computers. The amendment should be rejected and I hope that my friends on the other side of the House, realising they have totally failed to identify any such decision, will join me in voting against the amendment. I have been informed that the mover of the amendment is likely to be on the public accounts committee, which can sit in this Chamber and question the Commissioner of Police on the deployment of his resources in accordance with his budget.

**MR PENDAL** (South Perth) [11.37 am]. I do not know whether I have become more marginalised or wiser as I have grown older. I disagree with everyone who has taken part in the debate. That is why I tend to think I must have become more marginalised. The last time a similar, but briefer, debate took place in this House was several years ago when the member for Darling Range was the Minister for Police. He had a view about the matter, which I think was incorrect but which has been perpetuated through the generations, and that is perhaps being tackled for the first time by the current Minister for Police. I do not know the outcome of that; I hope she tells us in her response to the debate. My problem with the debate is that we have been told for years by Ministers for Police in this place, including the member for Darling Range, that the Government of the day does not have the power to direct the Commissioner of Police. I say that is a nonsense. It is one of the reasons we have this problem. In past debates, people have quoted things like the separation of powers. That has nothing to do with what is at stake here. On other occasions we have debated the outmoded nature of the Police Act which, incidentally, was written and passed by this House in 1892. It is a joke; it is an anachronism. Members were promised that the Parliament soon would be in a position to deal with a new, modern police Act. Successive Commissioners of Police have successfully snowed successive Ministers for Police. In that snow job they have relied on section 5 of the Police Act. Section 5 of the Police Act has nothing whatsoever to do with the minister's power to direct or not to direct the Commissioner of Police. There is nothing in the Police Act, in any other legislation or in the Constitution that says that a Minister for Police cannot have the same role in the Police Service as other ministers have in other portfolio areas. There are peculiar difficulties in the Police Force; for instance, a police minister could not direct a Commissioner of Police in a prosecution. However, that is no different from many other ministers of the Crown who do not have the power to decide who will be prosecuted at law.

The real capacity of a Minister for Police lies in directing the commissioner in the deployment of the force. It is a nonsense to say that a Commissioner of Police can refuse to take an instruction from a Minister for Police who could perhaps direct that more personnel be deployed in the drug squad or more officers be put into an Asian street squad in Northbridge. Not only is there no impediment to a minister giving that instruction, but also I suggest to the House that the minister has that direct obligation. The minister would draw the line at directing the commissioner on operational matters, particularly the way in which prosecutions are launched.

A direct analogy can be seen in the role of the federal Minister for Defence and the Army. Members can imagine the Government of the day deciding that because of the security position of the nation, we are at war, and the Chief of Army must be told to deploy the forces accordingly. What would be more absurd than to have the Chief of Army say that he does not believe we should be at war and he will keep the troops at home? A myth has grown that the Commissioner of Police in Western Australia has a magical power to tell the Minister for Police that he or she has no grounds to direct the Police Force. One of the problems is that the mythology is perpetuated in section 5 of the Act and we continue to operate under an Act that is now 109 years old. I do not know - because I do not recall - the way in which the current Minister for Police ultimately solved that apparent stand-off when she came to office; clearly it was resolved. I hope it was resolved in such a way that she instructed the Commissioner of Police to deploy those forces by way of an Asian police squad in Northbridge. Why? Because if she did not do that, she would be negligent, just as I suggest every previous minister has been negligent, by giving over to an unelected official the power to operate the Police Force.

Section 5 of the Police Act in part states -

. . . every Commissioner of Police shall be charged and vested with the general control and management of the Police Force . . .

I repeat that all it says is that the Commissioner of Police shall be charged and vested with the general control and management of the Police Force. That means that the Commissioner of Police is obliged at law to do what the minister directs.

Mr Trenorden: We got legal advice and found that was correct.

Mr PENDAL: I hope that is the case. I hope another thing the minister will do is tell this House when it will get an up-to-date and modern police Act so that this mythological nonsense can be disposed of, because it has been said on every occasion that it has been drawn to my attention in this House, and in another place over the years, that nothing can be done about it. In effect, the police commissioner could act against the elected Government of the day. The Commissioner of Police has no greater powers, as the head of the Police Service, than any other departmental head when those powers are spelt out by individual statutes. I have read the full extent of the powers of the Commissioner of Police, yet we have been told by every Minister for Police, except the current one, since I have been in Parliament that they cannot do it because they cannot direct the Commissioner of Police.

That brings me back to the point properly raised by the member for Innaloo. The amendment that the House has been asked to deal with bemoans the decision of the Government to deplete police numbers in rural Western Australia and redeploy them in the metropolitan areas. I am not without sympathy for the member for Stirling's amendment; however, it is not just a country problem. Under the previous Government, the deployment of police in South Perth was dramatically reduced at a time when it should have been on the increase. South Perth was the state capital of home invasions and offences of that nature at that time. Every electorate reflects the anger and sense of frustration about inadequate police numbers.

As one or two members have said in the past, what do we do? Do we put a police officer on every street corner in Western Australia? Clearly the answer to that is no; we do not have the capacity to do that. However, my complaint today is not necessarily against the contents of the amendment, albeit I will not support it for the reasons I have said. Members cannot have the argument both ways. The outgoing Government probably stretched its resources to the limit, albeit they did not suit me in South Perth. However, the outgoing Government continually said that it could not direct the police on how it deployed its force. If the previous Government were in a position to do that - I believe a false position - then the current Government is in no better position to say how these forces will be deployed.

I want to finish on a note that I believe is the most important note in the whole debate. We must bring to an end the mythological nonsense that says the Minister for Police of the day does not have the power to deploy or direct the forces that the Government provides to the Police Force. Two Governments have been successively elected on a program of putting more people into the Police Service. Both the Court and Gallop Governments were committed to putting greater numbers of police into the Police Force. Does the Government mean to tell me that a Government with any sense of self worth or pride would be silly enough to add hundreds of new officers to the Police Force and then find that it does not have the power to say how those officers will be used? As I said earlier, that would be as absurd as a country going to war under declaration of its Cabinet and then finding that its armed services do not think along those lines and will not send troops to East Timor after all. The scenario I have just outlined is silly. I hope the current Government will, perhaps for the first time that I am aware of, stand up to this nonsense and say that is not what section 5 of the Police Act means; section 5 merely confers on the commissioner powers that are no greater, and certainly no less, than those

that are conferred on many other permanent heads, and the Government has the power to say where police personnel will be deployed, because it is elected by the people of Western Australia to do that. On that ground, I find it difficult to support the amendment.

**MRS EDWARDES** (Kingsley) [11.50 am]: I support the amendment, which refers to the State Government's lack of commitment - not decision, to pick up the member for Innaloo's comments - to provide an adequate Police Service to the community of rural Western Australia. The community will blame that lack of commitment on the Government of the day, because it does not draw a distinction between a Government's lack of commitment or decision and a police commissioner's decision. The Police Service is fundamental to the people of Western Australia. I am concerned also that the events that have taken place in the past few weeks, and perhaps for even longer, have the potential to undermine the confidence, morale and self-esteem of the Police Service, and the loyalty that it is required to have to the Government of the day.

That brings me to the member for Innaloo's comments. The member for Innaloo and I have known each other for many years - I will not say how many - and I have always found him to be totally open in his statements. He absolutely believes in what he says.

Mr Pental: He is a bit shy.

Mrs EDWARDES: "Shy" is not a word that comes to mind when I describe the member for Innaloo. He is passionate in what he says and does, and he fights very hard for the people whom he has represented in the courts. I have no doubt that as the member for Innaloo he will fight equally hard for the rights of his constituents, and he will stand up to the Government of the day, or anyone else, if that is what he must do to protect the rights of the people whom he represents. However, the member for Innaloo's representation of a police officer in court last week and his comments since that time have the ability to undermine the confidence of the community of Western Australia in the Police Service; and as someone who firmly believes in that essential institution, I have some concerns about that. A potential conflict of interest exists between the member for Innaloo's role as a member of Parliament and his role as a defence lawyer.

The Premier said last week that that court case was one of the member for Innaloo's last cases, and he was just finishing it off. However, on Monday, 21 May, the member for Innaloo told the community that if a case came up and it was a matter of public interest, he would like to reserve his right to act in that matter. As a member of Parliament, the member for Innaloo's role is to take up all matters of public interest. That is absolutely critical. However, there is a place and a forum for doing that. The member for Innaloo is great media copy, and we as the Opposition do not mind at all if a backbencher goes into the community and criticises the Government; the member for Innaloo can go for his life any time he wants to do that. However, if the member for Innaloo's comments have the ability to undermine the confidence of the community in the Police Service, then that is an issue that not only should concern the Government and Minister for Police of the day but also should be treated seriously by all members.

I know that the member for Innaloo has high regard for the role and function of police officers, and that in the main police officers also have high regard for the member for Innaloo. However, it is essential that we maintain the confidence of the community in the integrity of the Police Service. If the member for Innaloo has any concerns about the administration of the Police Service, he has a better than even chance of raising those concerns directly with the Minister for Police and with Cabinet and the Premier. He does not need to raise those concerns publicly, although, as I have said, we on the opposition benches will not mind if he does criticise the Government publicly. However, it is critical that the confidence of the community in the Police Service is not undermined.

**MR AINSWORTH** (Roe) [11.55 am]: I support the amendment and agree wholeheartedly with the comment by the member for South Perth about the need for the Police Act to be brought into line with modern practice and thinking, and also about the need to make it absolutely clear that the role of police minister includes the power to direct where police personnel can be placed in the community, because if the police minister and other ministers did not have the power to do that, then their hands would be tied behind their backs in undertaking their duties.

Mrs Roberts: You should read some of the speeches by the former member for Wagin.

Mr AINSWORTH: I recall with great pleasure some of the speeches by the former member for Wagin, but if they included a statement that he as police minister was not able to direct the deployment of personnel in the Police Service, then I believe he was mistaken; and if the minister were to say the same thing she would be mistaken also.

Mr Kucera: You do not understand the separation of powers.

Mr AINSWORTH: I understand the separation of powers very well. The point is that we are arguing very strongly for the retention, and an increase in number, of police personnel in country areas. Ravensthorpe is one town that is currently understaffed. Recently, a police officer in Ravensthorpe was relocated in rather unfortunate circumstances; and I will not go into that, because it is another issue. To my knowledge, that police station is still one officer short, and the community is very concerned about that for obvious reasons. In addition to the normal reasons that a community would be concerned about its police numbers being down, in the next few months that community faces the likelihood of the shire population doubling because of the major mining activity that is taking place in the district. One nickel mine has been operating in Ravensthorpe for the past 12 months, and the Ravensthorpe nickel operations mine, which is

projected to commence at the beginning of next year, will bring another 1 200 people into the shire, which will effectively double the shire population. I am not suggesting in any way that the people who will be coming into the shire to work with that mining company will automatically bring with them a lot of crime and other issues, but when a population increases to that extent, obviously matters will arise that require police attention, and if the police station is already undermanned, that will only exacerbate the problem.

It is important for the ongoing physical security and for the peace of mind of country communities that the Government retains the existing number of police in those communities. There are many instances in which additional officers would be beneficial and there is plenty of evidence to support that. I urge the Minister for Police to take on board the comments that have been made and, if necessary, to give directions about where those officers are employed so that country communities, and other communities, do not suffer from a lack of police officers.

**MR EDWARDS** (Greenough) [12.01 pm]: I thought, just for a while, that I must be invisible; however, I do understand the reason.

My comments will be brief and broad. I agree with the member for Avon and support the amendment. I recognise the effectiveness and proactiveness of police officers in country regions. It is important that that be recognised. Over the past five to eight years the Police Service has become more involved in the community by working with the Education Department, Neighbourhood Watch, Safer WA and the police and citizens youth centres. I congratulate the service for that. However, country people will see the rationalisation of the Police Service in country towns as yet another slap in the face. I am aware that the Geraldton-Greenough region - my backyard - is short of officers. My colleague the member for Geraldton, who unfortunately is not here, has made a commitment for that to change. I now question that commitment. Any watering down of police services in country towns is unacceptable. I do not have a problem with sensible staffing levels across country Western Australia; however, I have a problem with the withdrawal of police officers from country areas. I remind the Government that country people consider the presence of police officers in their communities as a right and a recognition of confidence in their towns and where they live, as of course do people in the metropolitan area. I urge the minister to carefully reconsider the removal of police officers from country areas.

**MR MARSHALL** (Dawesville) [12.03 pm]: Yesterday I identified -

Mrs Roberts: Don't you want any more police officers in your district? You are one of the main beneficiaries under the regional and district allocation of resources scheme.

Mr MARSHALL: I certainly do. However, I felt compelled to speak because, unlike the member for Innaloo, I spent about 10 years commentating football on television, and I had to talk facts because everyone watching, the 500 000 or 700 000 people a week, all believed that they knew everything about football. I had to produce the credentials on the job.

I once again talk about my electorate. As I said yesterday, my electorate is in the fastest growing area of Western Australia. The Dawesville electorate was running at 17 500 when the Electoral Commission said it should have 12 000 constituents and Mandurah city was reaching 50 000. I also made the statement that the Police Service doubled over that time. However, I forgot to say that the region desperately needs more police. This was identified in the regional and district allocation of resources model. It identified that Mandurah and the Peel region needed 35 extra police. At present, Mandurah has 51 officers and the region has 86 officers.

Those officers have the highest respect of the community and myself, yet they find it difficult to achieve job satisfaction. One need only look at the area that they must cover. The Peel region goes from Dwellingup to Serpentine, to Boddington and Coolup. It takes in North Dandalup on the extreme eastern side of the region. Then there are highly populated and new urban development areas such as Furnissdale and Yunderup. Mandurah has developed and the region extends to Lake Clifton. The area contains diverse living areas, with close-knit urban development, Homeswest areas and special rural areas in which people want the alternative lifestyle that comes with living on five to 100 acres. There are also environmental problems. A Police Force that can feel involved in the region is needed. It is very difficult when the police are under pressure and outnumbered. There has also been a need for stability in the area.

The new Delta program is working fruitfully and has provided more intimacy with the Police Service. However, there have been a number of changes in the Mandurah area in the past five years. Assistant Commissioner Kingsley Porter lasted only a few months. He was followed by Assistant Commissioner John Standing, who went to a higher position and is doing well.

Mrs Roberts: Then you had the best one of them all.

Mr MARSHALL: Then we had a good, wholesome person who I backed as the best thing that would happen to the region. He had the time, the leadership and the expertise, as a person who works at the ground level, to get among the people, firstly the leaders of the town and then the runners on the football field. He had that knack and I thought we had the right man. His name was Assistant Commissioner - what was it again? - oh yes, Bob Kucera. He lasted five minutes down there too. The next person was Commander Daryl Balchin. He was a fly-by-nighter too. All of a sudden the officers did not know to whom they were answerable and the community did not know who was in charge of the

Police Force. I am pleased to say that Superintendent Ross Napier is doing a fabulous job. He is almost a chip off the old block of Bob Kucera. This superintendent, Ross Napier -

Mrs Roberts: He is the superintendent. You actually still have Daryl Balchin.

Mr MARSHALL: I am talking about the bloke who is doing all the work and who is making his mark on the community - Superintendent Ross Napier. He has been there for only a short time, but he understands country policing.

Mrs Roberts: Ross wouldn't want you to get offside with his commander. He didn't disappear after five minutes. He is still there.

Mr MARSHALL: Mr Speaker, if I were a schoolteacher, I would chastise the people who keep talking.

The SPEAKER: I was severe. I call them to order.

Mr MARSHALL: Ross Napier is the kind of police person -

Mrs Roberts: You can't complain; you were my coach. You taught me everything I know.

The SPEAKER: The member for Dawesville has indicated that he does not want interjections.

Mr MARSHALL: I think the world of the member for Midland but she does talk too much!

Ross Napier has made an impact in the area. He has met the leaders and listens to them. He goes out into the community. At the moment he is trying to set up a music foundation. He is part of the place; he is at every show that is on. Someone is representing the Police Service. However, because of the lack of staff, none of his officers can do that and they should be involved. An officer should be given time off to play football in the local Peel league. Officers should play the odd game of social bowls. Officers should go to the art shows and be seen and interested in the community. How can they do that when they are never given a holiday? They should be doing it in the firm's time. That area is understaffed.

I am pleased that fatalities in the area are down on last year. However, that does not stop the need for a dedicated traffic unit. The small unit should be enlarged. It is a safe bet that there will be a number of accidents every Easter and public holiday. Hopefully, there will not be any fatalities. However, this has happened annually on the strip of the Old Coast Road towards Lake Clifton. Drivers get frustrated; it is bumper-to-bumper traffic. They must get over the estuary bridge and through the 60, 70 and 80 kilometre an hour speed limits of the suburban areas of Falcon and Erskine before getting over the Bouvard bridge. When they do, it is like a racehorse that has been backed, but which has been boxed in on the rails and cannot get out. However, somewhere up the straight there is an opening and away he goes and the backers get their money. They drive bumper to bumper until the big straight stretch at Lake Clifton and then the drivers say, "Let's get out of this pack; let's go". Then it is one wide, two wide, bang, and there is a fatality. The police officers must attend the accident from quite a distance away. They cannot get there quickly enough and are consequently under pressure. We should all support them. This Government should double-check all areas to see whether additional officers are required. If they are, it is a must that the areas get extra officers.

My electorate is experiencing a high level of drug-related crime and burglary. I am ashamed to admit that a large proportion of those crimes are committed up the road from my office in Falcon. These problems were identified four years ago. The police were very cooperative; they used to send a community van from Bunbury and, twice a week for eight weeks, it was set up outside the local shopping centre. Officers took inquiries from the local community. We used to check how the community was getting on with the police. Unbelievably, the reaction surprised everybody. In today's fast-paced age, where can a person just walk off the street and talk to a police officer? It cannot be done. In the little suburb of Falcon people went to the van and told the police everything that was going on in the area. A lot of houses in the area are holiday homes and are often vacant; hence the high level of burglaries. Anybody can be a crook in that type of environment. The houses often have newspapers and mail hanging out of their letterboxes. People do not have to be smart to find out which houses are unattended. The area has Neighbourhood Watch but it becomes too easy once houses are unattended. The response from the community to the police van was so good that the police cracked three drug cases and a number of burglaries, and received a lot of information on other crimes. It was evidence that a police station was needed in Falcon. Thanks to the then Assistant Commissioner of Police, Bob Kucera, a location was identified in Falcon. Falcon is a suburban area only 10 kilometres from Mandurah and the residents were pleased to know that they would have a police station. They knew that if they contacted the police they would not have to wait one or two hours before the police arrived. Falcon was once the country area of the city of Mandurah, but it is where a lot of the growth is now occurring.

Mr Bradshaw: People in Pinjarra wait days to get somebody from Mandurah.

Mr MARSHALL: That does not happen so much these days in Mandurah. Due to the high-tech communications and computerisation put in place by the previous Government, things are much more streamlined. It does not detract from the fact that a police station is needed in Falcon. I am sure the area will get one. The lack of a police presence was made evident earlier this year when the school year started and the Coodanup Senior High School had its school-based police officer removed. That was shameful as Coodanup is in an area of Mandurah that is largely controlled by Homeswest. It is a low socioeconomic area, and needs a lot of help. There are not enough police in the area. The

officer was removed and transferred to more mainstream police duties. I ask the minister to look at the situation, as it is necessary for youngsters to have interaction with police officers and develop an affinity with them.

I said yesterday that Mandurah is the most popular one-day destination tourist town in Western Australia. Thousands of people go to the area on holidays and weekends. Just two years ago the town had a series of bag snatches; there was a run of young people who had no respect for society who walked down the streets spitting and swearing at people. That sort of thing is no good for a town. People leave saying that they will never return. Six years ago the town had a police presence on the streets and things were fine. The police got to know the shopkeepers and locals. They would talk to people. People would tell them what they had seen. One can imagine the police being told about stolen cars and the like. There was interaction with the community. That is not happening now as the police officers are not there.

Last Saturday, on my bridge to bridge jog, I saw a car underneath the estuary bridge on the western end of the estuary. The car had obviously hit a tree - only a sapling, not more than six inches in diameter - yet the front of the car was bashed in. It must have been travelling quite fast. The two front doors were wide open; I looked in and saw the open glove box. I knew that the car had been robbed. I rang the police who said they would look into the matter. I went for a jog on Monday and looked at the car again. The wheels had gone, it had no headlights, the boot was open and everything inside the car had gone. Everything had gone except the body of the vehicle. I again rang the police and I was told that abandoned cars were the responsibility of the council. The council ranger was contacted and told about the car. The car was still there this morning. There is a breakdown of professionalism in service. I understand that when things are busy some may say, "Oh, that is just another car" and that serious crime has a much higher priority. I would like to think that in the community in which one lives everything that is reported will be investigated and that people will be informed of what will happen. That is what people call service, and if it is not provided in members' electorates, members may not be here in four years. People want service; everybody in business provides service, as they want to earn a living. Why can it not be provided in other government agencies?

The team of officers in Mandurah is relatively small and another 30 are needed - although I would be happy with 12 - but the morale is fantastic. I try to meet local police regularly. I like to hear what is going on in town. I have never met a police officer who I would call a dud. They deserve the highest level of respect from our community. The moment people stop respecting the police is the moment our society and communities are finished. We must support the police. I want the police in my area to get more staff. It is a bit like football: the Eagles cannot win if they do not have any interchange players. They need enough players to be competitive. When 18 players are competing and there are six good players waiting to go on and give some of the others a rest, all the players will be able to run and play at their best. One then has a team that wins. How can the Police Force, with no interchange reserves, perform at its best? I challenge the minister to provide the extra police needed - not just for my electorate; the debate is about the lack of police in country areas. I hope that the needs of the country areas will be appraised properly and that the speech I have made today will help in achieving more police in country areas.

**MR DAY** (Darling Range) [12.19 pm]: The issues raised in the member for Stirling's amendment are very important to residents of rural and regional Western Australia. I know this from my own observations, and from my time as Minister for Police. Members of the Government, when they were in opposition, made a lot of noise about crime levels and did everything they could to create the perception that crime was out of control in Western Australia and they would fix things overnight. Contrary to the perception created by the then Opposition, which in government it is doing its utmost to back away from, the incidence of crime did not increase across the board during the past eight years of the coalition Government. Certainly, there were increases in some areas, but there were decreases in others. It has been three years since I was Minister for Police, so my recollection may not be entirely perfect, but, in particular, the rate of home burglaries has decreased in recent years. That has been due to the success of the Pawnbrokers and Second-hand Dealers Act 1994, introduced by the previous Government. This legislation requires people who take goods to pawnbrokers to provide clear identification, which must be recorded by pawnbrokers so that in the event that the goods are identified as stolen, the police can track the ownership and the offenders could be readily identified.

The rate of car theft in Western Australia has also decreased in recent years. This has not only been the result of very good work by the Police Service but also has reflected the effectiveness of the immobiliser scheme introduced and funded at a high level by the previous Government. I will be interested to hear from the minister whether the current Government will continue this scheme. I acknowledge that the levels of crime in other areas have increased, particularly armed robbery and assaults.

Mrs Roberts: And unarmed robbery?

Mr DAY: That is related to assaults. It sadly reflects the fact that the community has become more violent. In spite of the good work done by members of the Police Service and the community, unfortunately actions by the previous Government failed to halt the increases in those areas. I will be interested to hear from the minister how she thinks the present Government will do better in those areas than the previous one. The previous Government gave strong support to the Police Service in every area. The police budget almost doubled during the term of the previous Government, from about \$240 million a year to about \$430 million. I do not expect the present Government to highlight this fact, because it is not in its interest, but the figures will show that the rate of increase in funding for our Police Service increased at a greater rate over the past eight years than it did during the term of the previous Labor Government.

The last Government also performed strongly in providing legislative support for the Police Service. When I was minister, I introduced the Weapons Bill, which was later passed as the Weapons Act 1999 and gave the police much-needed greater powers to deal with weapons other than firearms on the streets. To the best of my knowledge, that legislation has been effective in controlling weapons such as knives and knuckledusters. The previous Government also passed the Surveillance Devices Act 1998. This was introduced when I was Minister for Police but completed its passage after I had left that post. Long debates about that legislation took place in this Chamber. The passage of that legislation was not facilitated by the former Opposition, but it has given the Police Service much-needed increased powers to conduct surveillance on people suspected of involvement in serious crime. Legislation was also introduced to control street prostitution in Western Australia more effectively. Contrary to some of the comments made in an earlier stage of this debate, the previous Government gave strong support to the Police Service to carry out its important task.

The Minister for Labour Relations acknowledged in an interjection that the last Government performed more strongly than any previous Government in Western Australia in providing new police stations, and other resources and facilities. New police stations were opened in places such as Australind, Roebourne - where an existing station was doubled in size - Kununurra, Nullagine and Dunsborough. Closer to your heart, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Dean), a new police complex is under construction in Bunbury at this moment. The previous Government provided about \$42 million to construct a magnificent new world-class police academy, now nearing completion in Joondalup, which will allow the police academy to move from its present site in Maylands, where the facilities are substandard. The current Government has had to find about \$24 million to assist the completion of the police academy, because it is refusing to realise the sale of the very valuable land at Maylands. That in part explains the need for the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill, which was debated in this Chamber earlier this week. The previous Government also provided 800 additional operational police officers. This number was made up by recruiting 500 additional officers, and releasing 300 officers from administrative duties and replacing them with unsworn personnel. Many of these officers were deployed in country areas. Whichever way it is looked at, the previous Government gave strong support to the Police Service, in particular in rural and regional parts of the State.

The minister must explain what is happening in country policing in Western Australia and what changes are being made. I am sure the minister would have had detailed discussions with the Commissioner of Police on this issue. I was somewhat surprised that the minister was not in the Chamber for the first hour of this debate. I know from my own experience that when a debate concerns a minister's portfolio, that minister drops everything to be in the Chamber for the whole of the debate. The minister may have had good reason to be absent; and, if she does, she should explain that as well. If the current Government does half as well as the previous Government in providing support for the Police Service, it will be doing very well indeed, and I look forward to a full explanation from the Minister for Police about the changes that are being made to country policing in Western Australia.

**MR BRADSHAW** (Murray-Wellington) [12.30 pm]: I support this motion. I have found over the years that one of the worst jobs around is being a police officer, because they often have to deal with the lesser lights in our community - there are some real evil people out there. When we were dealing with the Weapons Bill two or three years ago, the police produced a startling array of weapons - flick knives and knuckledusters with spikes that could do a lot damage if someone was hit over the heart.

It is important for communities to have their police stations and police officers in their area. I have found over the past few years that police numbers have not been adequate. People who ring up for assistance want an immediate response. Things often do not happen as quickly as people want, particularly in the top end of my electorate, around the Murray Shire and Pinjarra area. I am not saying police officers are not doing their jobs; However, there is a limited number and they are rostered on at certain times. The Pinjarra police station is not a 24-hour police station - it has to rely on the Mandurah police station - and the number of police officers on call during the night is very limited. By way of example, over Easter when all the traffic is flowing through Mandurah, certain roads are made one way to move the traffic through more quickly, and extra police are put on patrol to control it. A person from Pinjarra rang for assistance - I cannot remember what the complaint was - and was told that all the police were out directing the traffic and they could not help. This is disgraceful. It is about time more police were put into the Mandurah area. I will be speaking about the southern end of my area in a moment, but the Mandurah area is under-resourced and that is not good enough.

One of the old chestnuts for me is the Brunswick police station. After the opening of the Australind police station it was decided to take the two police positions - those officers had done a fantastic job in Brunswick - and transfer them to Australind. Considerable community concern was expressed at that time. During the hearings of the Estimates and Financial Operations Committee, I asked the then Minister for Police, Hon Bob Wiese, what was happening about the Brunswick police station. He said that he had already made a public announcement that the police station would stay as it was; that is, that two officers would remain stationed at Brunswick. Sitting next to him at the time was the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police was obviously aware of what the minister had said. A couple of weeks later I was speaking to the officers at the police station and they said their information was that they were going. I found it interesting that the Minister for Police was saying that the police station would stay as it was, yet the police officers had been told by their hierarchy that they would be going.

I had several conversations with the then superintendent for the south west, Kingsley Porter, and he kept on telling me how much better off the Brunswick area would be if it was served from Australind. I did not believe that that would be the case. The reason I say that is because the two police officers who were in Brunswick at the time had a great rapport with the local community and knew the areas in which there could be problems, and they managed to keep a lid on any problems that occurred. They also took part in community activities. One of them coached the football and one put out a newsletter; they were a great asset - they mixed with the community and did a good job. I know the police officers are not there to prop up the community, but the fact is that, because they are there, they keep a lid on problems that may arise in certain sections of that community. Eventually it came to pass, after many discussions and verbal fights, that the minister, Bob Wiese, went weak at the knees and said that there would be some changes, and as a result we have only one police officer. The two who were there decided they would take off because they were under the impression that if they stayed they would not get any overtime, and various other issues, so they were put into other stations. The new fellow was a young police officer who did not have the same influence, and as a result crime and vandalism have increased.

The community and I have been trying since 1996 to have that police station reinstated, as was promised by a former Minister for Police, but that has not occurred. Earlier this year, I wrote to the current Minister for Police requesting that that station be reinstated to its former glory. The minister replied as follows -

The allocation of police officers and the location of police stations throughout the State is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police. The Superintendent in Charge of the Police District has the responsibility to allocate personnel in a manner which reflects both efficient and effective policing practice.

The superintendent in charge said he would love to put two police officers there, but he is handicapped by the number of officers he has available to allocate in the area. He has to make the most of his allocation. It is not a matter of whether he wants to or not; it is a matter of putting the police officers where he thinks best according to the numbers he has available. We certainly need more police officers in the south west. The minister also stated in this letter -

The crime rate and social disruption has remained static and I am advised that the community of Brunswick is well served under the current arrangements.

The minister is being fed incorrect information. If she speaks to anybody in Brunswick they would say that crime, vandalism and break-ins have increased, and that is not good enough. Whoever is feeding the Minister this information is not correct. Maybe the police have a way of putting down their statistics that is not related to what is happening in the community. It is time that the minister went to Brunswick to speak to some of the people to find out that what she is saying and being told is incorrect. When changes are made there is a bit of a stir - before and after the event - but this is now five years later, and the community is furious that its police station has gone and the crime rate has increased and nothing is being done to overcome that problem.

I also found it interesting that the Minister said -

Currently, I understand there are five police officers and one aboriginal police liaison officer residing in the town of Brunswick.

Does the minister expect those people, who happen to work somewhere else and live in Brunswick, to be still working 24 hours a day in that town? As I said, one of the police officers used to coach footy. I do not know whether any of these officers do; to my knowledge, they do not. I think they live there for a quiet, peaceful life.

Mrs Roberts: The point is that they are part of that community, and the member is the one who has been talking about how important it is to have police officers located in communities.

Mr BRADSHAW: It is still better for them to be in uniform and be patrolling the community, instead of going home and taking off their uniform and parading around in civvies. It does not have the same effect.

Mr Hyde: The member just said that having a footy coach was having a great effect.

Mr BRADSHAW: These officers are not footy coaches; one of the officers who was stationed there was. The two officers who worked in the town were fantastic. They lived in the town and they loved it. They were a part of the town. These new officers do not appear to have the same input as the previous two. It is interesting that the minister says that because I live in the town, I should have some effect. I may have some, but it is pretty minimal, and is not like it was in the past.

The ratio of police per head of population in the south west a few months ago was one to 574. In the metropolitan area the ratio is one to 384. Why can the country not have the same number of police officers per head of population as the metropolitan area?

Mr Whitely: The figure is none to 6 000 in my electorate.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member should worry about his electorate and I will worry about mine.

Mr Whitely: I am worried about it.

Mr BRADSHAW: The member for Roleystone should also get stuck into the Minister for Police.

The ratio of police per head of population in the metropolitan area is one to 384. In the south west it is one to 574. During the forests protests police officers were redeployed. My electorate has fewer police officers than it should have. It is about time that the south west got a fair shake of the tree instead of the resources going to the metropolitan area.

A similar situation occurred at Agriculture Western Australia. Some 10 years ago I asked some questions about how many people worked in the department and I was told it employed about 1 800. I also asked how many people in the department worked in the country and how many worked in the city. I was informed that approximately 1 200 or 1 400 worked in the city and the rest worked in the country. I assumed that the majority of people who worked for the agriculture department would work in the country where crops and vegetables are grown. Instead, however, the majority of employees worked in the city. The minister in the previous Government began to employ people to work for that department in the country. That is where they should have been. They should not have been allowed to gravitate to the metropolitan area. I am not sure what the ratio is now, but, as far as I know, the majority of people employed by the department work in the country.

Will the Minister for Police give us the current ratio of police per head of population in the south west? The figures I gave are a few months old. Will the number of police in the south west be increased or decreased? I also want to know the figures for the Peel region, including the Murray shire, which includes part of my electorate and that of the member for Dawesville.

Currently, the police take hours or even days to respond to people's complaints, and that is inadequate. However, that is not a new development; it has happened for a few years. It is important that police officers be reallocated to those areas that have poor response times. I do not think 250 police officers will make a big difference, as the member for Kalgoorlie stated. If the police worked a 44-hour week, it would put many more officers back onto the beat. I hope that the minister will provide me with the information about how many police per head of population operate currently in the south west and whether there will be an increase or decrease in police officer numbers in the south west.

**MRS ROBERTS** (Midland - Minister for Police) [12.44 pm]: I thank most members for their genuine and well-meaning contributions to this debate. Unfortunately, the amendment before the House is essentially a lie in two parts: first, because the Government has a complete commitment to provide adequate police services to people in country Western Australia and, secondly, because no decision has been made to deplete the number of police in rural Western Australia.

While I am on the topic of blatant untruths, I will mention another untruth that has been perpetrated by the Opposition and again today by the member for Kalgoorlie. The member said that the Government had made a decision to withdraw police officers from police and citizens youth centres. That is not the case. Read my lips: police officers will not be withdrawn from PCYCs throughout Western Australia. That is my position, the Government's position and the position of the Commissioner of Police. We will put that lie to bed.

Mr Day: Where are they going to be?

Mrs ROBERTS: It is interesting that the member should ask that. A report into PCYCs was initiated by the previous Government. That report commenced in December 2000 and concluded in April 2001. As a result of that report, some changes may be made to free up police officers from administrative duties at PCYCs so that they can spend more time with the kids at the 26 PCYCs throughout Western Australia. Interaction between the police and the kids will be increased at the PCYCs. The police officers will remain at the PCYCs and contribute more fully to the program of events rather than being stuck in the office of the PCYC doing administrative work.

The member for Innaloo pointed out the hypocrisy of the Opposition's position. When the coalition was in Government I called for action on policing throughout Western Australia. Time and again, I was told by members of the Government that the Minister for Police could not direct the Commissioner of Police. I had to put up with that throughout the election campaign. That issue has been addressed adequately by the members for Innaloo and South Perth. The member for South Perth looks at the issue from both sides. His seat remained static when the Government changed. It is interesting that the very members who sat on this side of the Chamber and said that everything was a matter for the Commissioner of Police are now saying that everything is a matter for the Government and the minister. The Opposition cannot have it both ways.

Mr Day: Have you changed your views?

Mrs ROBERTS: Unlike the member for Darling Range, I will not be a weak Minister for Police. I will not have a master-servant relationship with the Commissioner of Police; we will collaborate in a cooperative way.

Mr Day: You have changed your views since you were in opposition; admit that and we will know where we stand.

Mrs ROBERTS: It is interesting to hear these complaints about policing in members' electorates from members who lost their voices when in government. Time and again I had to sit in opposition and listen to the member for Mitchell say that police services in his area were fantastic and that the police commissioner and the police minister were doing

great jobs. He said that he was happy that crime levels were under control and there were no problems. That was the catchcry of most members when they were in government.

When I said that there were problems with regional WA policing because stations in Western Australia did not operate at their authorised strengths, many members on this side of the Chamber sat dumb struck. Many of the previous Government's members had a word with me and told me that I was right. They were aware that the police stations in their electorates were not operating at their authorised strengths. A couple of members in this Chamber have benefited from police stations that have been brought up to strength already. The police stations in the electorates of Kalgoorlie and Geraldton are operating with a greater number of police officers than they had when the previous Government was in office.

Mrs Edwardes: He congratulated you on that.

Mrs ROBERTS: The member for Kalgoorlie appeared to be interested in this debate for a short while, but he has been absent for the past two hours.

Several members interjected.

Mrs ROBERTS: Every time the member for Kalgoorlie speaks, he seems to take some perverse delight in commenting that I am out of the Chamber. Members on that side should not complain when I highlight the same fact. We need some clarity in the debate. The comments of the member for Warren-Blackwood indicate that he is not aware of the matter under discussion. He referred to the review of regional boundaries as the cause for any proposed changes. The changes have nothing to do with the review of regional boundaries, which was signed off by the member for Yokine in his previous capacity.

Any proposed changes have resulted from a review called RADAR. The Western Australia Police Service project team conducted a review of how and where to best deploy police in Western Australia. RADAR is an acronym for "regional and district allocation of resources guide". I highlight the word "guide" because, unfortunately, when they came up with the acronym they did not call it RADARG. It is not clear that it is simply a guide to the deployment of police officers. There has for some time been a consensus in the Western Australia Police Service that inequities in staffing levels exist between regions and districts as well as between police stations within those districts. That is why the RADAR assessment was conducted. As a result of that assessment, a formula has been developed for the deployment of police officers based on a methodology that incorporates population, crime categories, offences reported, traffic fatalities, injuries and remoteness data. Based on that model, there inevitably will be some changes to full-time employee allocations in policing districts, with some areas receiving a boost in staffing levels and other areas experiencing a reduction. RADAR is a tool to assist the Western Australia Police Service to prioritise police resources in consultation with district officers and regional commanders. It will also take into account local policing issues throughout Western Australia.

The Western Australia Police Service is committed to providing resources at levels that are appropriate to and commensurate with policing demands throughout the State. On 16 and 17 May this year, the officers in charge of stations and sections in the wheatbelt police district - that is, senior sergeants, sergeants and senior constables - met with the management team and Commander Balchin to examine resource allocation in the wheatbelt district under RADAR. That seems to be the cause of the concern raised here. The outcome of that conference is that an implementation plan is to be formulated for submission to the commander of the southern region, Commander Balchin. That proposed implementation plan will then be forwarded to the Commissioner of Police. I make it clear to this House that there has been no finalisation of the number of officers to be deployed from the wheatbelt district to the Peel and south west police districts.

Mr Trenorden: That's not what the shire in Toodyay was told.

Mrs ROBERTS: The Commissioner of Police has reiterated that in writing this week. If the member for Avon has an issue with that, I suggest he see the commissioner and tell him he is lying.

Mr Trenorden: That's your job.

Mrs ROBERTS: I thought a number of people would be very quiet during the debate because, through the RADAR guide, it has emerged that some areas in this State are very much underpoliced. They include the south west, Peel and the Kimberley. Those areas have a real claim to more police officers. I was interested to see that the members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington had the guts to stand in this House and say that their areas need the extra officers. The member for Murray-Wellington said he wanted a fair shake of the tree. That is a reasonable request. He said he believed that police resources in this State should be allocated on a fair and equitable basis, and that his electorate and the electorates of Dawesville, Mandurah, Mitchell and Bunbury have real demands in terms of policing needs and population. They need more police officers. The member for Vasse also has a growing electorate in that area.

The problem is that we have a finite resource. We have a limited number of police officers. I cannot wave a magic wand and make those extra 250 police officers suddenly appear. A big part of the problem is that during the last four years of the coalition Government, not one extra police officer was employed in this State. It had to be shamed into

making its election promise of an extra 200 officers. It was not long after the estimates hearings in this place that I asked the former member for Albany, the then Minister for Police, how many additional police officers would be put into Western Australia over each of the next four years and what the cost would be. The answer was “none” and “not applicable”. Shortly after that, we made the commitment for an additional 250 police and shamed the then Government into making a similar commitment for 200 extra police. Members must question that commitment of that Government. Had it been really committed, and had it been genuine about answering the demand in Western Australia, it would have immediately put extra money into the budget to start training police so that, within 12 weeks, more police officers would have been on the beat. We would then have more police officers to distribute to the Peel and Bunbury areas and maybe to the Kimberley. We would not need to develop a model in which police officers are taken out of regions with declining populations and lower crime rates.

Mr Trenorden: The population is not declining.

Mr Hyde: The census tells us. The Australian Government conducts a census.

Mr Trenorden: The population is not declining.

*Point of Order*

Mrs ROBERTS: There was an interjection of a most unparliamentary nature.

Mr Trenorden: What was unparliamentary? I just called him a drop kick.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): The minister may continue.

*Debate Resumed*

Mrs ROBERTS: This is an interesting debate and I can assume only that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was rolled when his side came up with this topic because, while people from the National Party are crying and bleating that police officers are to be taken out of their areas, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is strangely quiet. I thought the members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington would also be strangely quiet. I thought they would be mum, knowing full well that any redeployment of police officers would mean that officers would be taken from the wheatbelt to the electorates of Mitchell, Dawesville, Murray-Wellington, Mandurah and Bunbury. Interestingly, we have not heard from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I can assume only that he would rather that I tell the Commissioner of Police to leave every single officer in the wheatbelt, that I do not want any extra officers in Mitchell or Bunbury because they are not needed and that we would much rather they stay in the wheatbelt, where they have historically been. He has not said that, and I think he might now contribute to the debate. It is interesting that the members for Dawesville and Murray-Wellington are putting up their hands and saying they want extra police officers. They are asking me to send them their way because they need them. I know, because of representations from the member for Mandurah and you, Mr Acting Speaker, the member for Bunbury, that those police officers are needed in the south west. Those members have made numerous representations to me about the need for officers.

Mr House: The issue is not that police officers are being taken from an area of need. The issue is having sufficient police officers to do the job.

Mrs ROBERTS: The member should tell me why his Government did not provide one extra police officer during the past four years.

Mr House: You are trying to play off one side against the other.

Mrs ROBERTS: That is the issue. The previous Government did not provide any more police officers. It did not provide enough.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 495.]

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**PETROL PRICES, 50-50 LEGISLATION**

**55. Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN to the Premier:**

I refer to the Government's proposed 50-50 fuel supply legislation and the widespread community concern over fuel prices, and ask -

- (1) Is the Premier aware that the Minister for Consumer Affairs said during debate in Parliament yesterday that 50-50 legislation would not make a huge difference?
- (2) Does the Premier recall an article in *The West Australian* of 25 January which reported his saying that 50-50 legislation would increase competition and “would produce significant cuts in petrol prices”?

(3) Who is right?

**Dr GALLOP replied:**

(1)-(3) I know exactly what the Minister for Consumer Affairs said about this matter, and he said it again on the radio this morning; that is, following the recommendations of the parliamentary Select Committee on Petroleum Products Pricing in Western Australia, the 50-50 amendments have to be made in this Parliament. In themselves they will not make a huge difference, but they are part of a package of measures that will make a difference. That is precisely what the Minister for Consumer Affairs said and that is precisely the situation. It is strange that the chairman of that committee raised the question, when that was the very import of his own report to the Parliament last year. No doubt that is one of a number of measures that the Government is taking to put downward pressure on prices. We have a very difficult job in front of us but, unlike the previous Government, we are not squibbing it. We are working hard to find out how to set the wholesale price cap so that it can be effective. The previous Government made no effort in that area. It is a difficult task but we are proceeding to develop it. As the minister said on radio this morning, we will increase the penalties associated with a breach of those regulations. We will increase transparency by requiring the wholesale price to be declared and we will toughen up the 50-50 legislation to ensure competition.

Mr Speaker, members should be under no illusion: we have set a tough agenda for ourselves. However, we will proceed to do what we said in the election campaign we would do, unlike members opposite who, at the first whiff of grapeshot, went back to their quarters and put up the white flag to the multinational oil companies. This Government is fighting on behalf of Western Australian consumers. It is not easy and many steps must be taken; however, we are doing it. I applaud the Minister for Consumer Affairs for the frankness he has shown to the public about the difficulties of this issue; more importantly, for the commitment he has shown on behalf of the people of Western Australia to improve the situation.

#### PETROL PRICES, 50-50 LEGISLATION

**56. Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Is the Premier refusing to confirm his previous unqualified statement that his 50-50 legislation will lead to a significant cut in fuel prices?

**Dr GALLOP replied:**

Of course it will lead to a fall in the areas on which it will have an impact. Where are those areas? I am sure the members for Stirling and Kalgoorlie will tell me where those areas are; they are in regional Western Australia. The Government is fighting for regional Western Australia and I remind the members of this Parliament who voted against the 50-50 amendments when they came into this place. The members who voted against those important amendments were the Liberal and National members of this Parliament.

#### LABOR GOVERNMENT, FIRST 100 DAYS

**57. Mr McRAE to the Premier:**

Will the Premier report to the House on a speech he gave to a Department of Contract and Management Services business breakfast this morning on the first 100 days of the new Labor Government?

**Dr GALLOP replied:**

The Labor Government can look with pride at its achievements in its first 100 days in office. The Government is laying the foundations for a better society in Western Australia. It is the hard work of the current Cabinet that will make it possible for the Government to make a real difference to Western Australia along the lines we spoke of in the election campaign. It is interesting to note that, although we have been in government for only 100 days, many of our promises have already been fulfilled. It was with great pride that we increased the minimum wage for low-paid workers. We did that in the context of a system that had been set up by members opposite with the deliberate intent to make the lowest paid workers in our community the most vulnerable in the labour market, a despicable policy which we have reversed.

We have stopped the logging of old-growth forests in Western Australia, something that no other Government in any other State of Australia has done. We say with great pride that no old-growth forests are being logged in Western Australia.

We have reduced the size of the Cabinet. It is interesting to note that ministerial offices under the coalition Government had 217 staff and 87 motor vehicles; the Labor Government has 160 staff and 48 cars. All the money saved will go back into providing core services for the people of Western Australia. On that subject, we have abolished the Metropolitan Health Service Board, and the money formerly required to support that board will go back into health care for Western Australians.

We have reduced the TAB turnover tax to assist the racing industry in Western Australia, something the member for Murray-Wellington will applaud. We have directed government departments to pay their bills within 30 days; we have

scrapped fees for access to beaches at the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park; and we are bringing commonsense to the resolution of native title.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to reflect on the achievements of the Liberal Party in its 100 days in opposition, and when I do that there seems to be a constant theme on the opposition side that takes me to the number three. Three was the number of party room meetings it took for the member for Cottesloe to become party leader. Three was the margin of votes between the member for Cottesloe and his main rival, the member for Ningaloo, when he won the leadership 16-13. It is also interesting to note that he received exactly three more votes than the former Premier when he defeated him 17-13. I wonder who are those extra three. I wonder whether they are in the Legislative Assembly. However, the number three that really tells us about this current Liberal Opposition is the paltry three press releases it has issued since the election. There is another number three, Mr Speaker.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the wall of noise emanating from both sides of the House means that I cannot hear the Premier and I am sure the Hansard reporter cannot either. I ask members to please keep the noise to a minimum.

Dr GALLOP: The other number three relates to the goals set by the member for Cottesloe for the Liberal Party as reported in the *Mosman Park-Cottesloe Post* on 10 March 2001. According to this article, the three goals for the Liberal Party are "good fun, stimulation, satisfaction". I do not see much of that when I look at members opposite.

#### LADY LAWLEY COTTAGE, GOVERNMENT GRANT

#### 58. Mr BARNETT to the Minister for Disability Services:

I address my question, which is not about good fun, to the Minister for Disability Services.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the Australian Red Cross (Western Australia) is about to begin a \$4 million redevelopment project at the historic Lady Lawley Cottage in Cottesloe? This facility provides specialist respite care for children with acute physical and intellectual disabilities and other special needs.
- (2) Is the minister aware that the redevelopment project is dependent on a capital grant of \$1 million from the State Government?
- (3) Will the Government honour the previous Government's written commitment to provide \$1 million towards this redevelopment project?

#### Ms McHALE replied:

- (1) Of course I am aware of the proposal to redevelop the Lady Lawley Cottage, and I am also aware of the history behind this issue because I am across my portfolio.
- (2) This is a very expensive redevelopment commitment - in fact, it would cost the Government \$1 million. The commitment made by the previous Government has a great deal of history. I know the member for Cottesloe was involved, and the former Minister for Disability Services has commented on this commitment. I also understand their former leader was heavily involved in this proposal. The Lady Lawley Cottage is in need of major refurbishment. It is perhaps indicative of the services provided in the past to people with disabilities. It is still regarded as an institutional centre and it needs to be brought up to date. I am fully aware of the claims by the Red Cross for the refurbishment.
- (3) The funding has been allocated in the budget, and I am conscious of the need to provide more services to people with disabilities. That can be compared with the announcement by the federal Government in its recent budget of plans to reduce the allocation to this area from 2002 onwards. That money is needed in this State for accommodation. The Liberal federal Government has decreased the allocation for 2002 by between \$50 million and \$100 million. That is the legacy with which I am left when planning for the future of people with disabilities. I am very well aware of the commitment and the funding needed by the Red Cross. I will consider it in all seriousness as part of the budget process.

Mr Barnett: You have just backed out.

Ms McHALE: No, I have not. I have said that the commitment was made, it was in the forward estimates, and I have no intention of undermining the services provided by the Red Cross.

#### LADY LAWLEY COTTAGE, GOVERNMENT GRANT

#### 59. Mr BARNETT to the Minister for Disability Services:

Given the response by the minister, which I found equivocal, will she now confirm in writing -

#### *Points of Order*

Mr KOBELKE: A large number of new members have still to come to grips with the standing orders, but one would expect the Leader of the Opposition to have some understanding of them. As you, Mr Speaker, have pointed out

previously, it has been the practice of this House that supplementary questions be permitted only when they are to the point, they comprise one question and they have no preamble. The Leader of the Opposition started to make statements as part of a preamble, and now expects to be given the right to ask a supplementary question.

Mr DAY: The Leader of the Opposition had hardly begun his supplementary question, and I believe the Leader of the House is deliberately trying to take up question time. Therefore, Mr Speaker, question time should be extended by five or 10 minutes.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House gave his opinion about the area into which the Leader of the Opposition was about to roam. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition intended to ask a specific question, and I ask him to continue.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr BARNETT: Given the minister's response to my question, will she now undertake to immediately advise the Red Cross in writing that the \$1 million grant from the State Government will be paid, to enable the Red Cross to enter into the building contract which is valid only until the end of May?

**Ms McHALE replied:**

I am happy to answer that question. The letter from the former Premier to the Red Cross was sent on 9 February, the day before the election. It was 9 February or thereabouts. I have had several discussions with the Red Cross and I am aware of its need for that project. I have indicated to the Red Cross that the matter is being considered.

Mr Barnett: Yes or no?

Ms McHALE: The Leader of the Opposition is not listening.

Mr Barnett: They will lose the \$4 million contract.

Ms McHALE: I assure the Leader of the Opposition and the House that we will deal with this as a matter of urgency.

CANCER FOUNDATION OF WA, MORNING TEA

**60. Dr WOOLLARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the minister's hosting a morning tea for the Cancer Foundation of WA and the encouragement implicit in that. Has the Government sought legal advice on the implications for employers, following the decision of the New South Wales Supreme Court which awarded \$460 000 in damages to an employee for cancer caused by passive smoking in the workplace? Will the Government take action to ensure that its employees, including those at Parliament House, are protected from passive smoking?

**Mr KUCERA replied:**

I thank the member for her first question in this House. I have already met with the Health Department in relation to the legal advice. A review process will be in place by 1 January next year, by law. In the meantime, we are awaiting advice on the full outcome of that ruling.

The Labor Party generally is committed to caring for the health of workers in the workplace. It does not take the matter lightly. While answering this question, I put on notice those employers who have a responsibility to their workers. The key point arising from this ruling is that they themselves may be further liable in the future.

The brilliant work of people such as Robert Vojakovic with asbestos diseases in this State and the liability that now abounds in every workplace in this State from the use of asbestos, mean that all employers, particularly those in the hospitality industry, should take clear notice of the decision. It may very well be that in due course there will be no necessity for the Government to intercede. Those responsible for their workers may very well heed the message that is clearly given, and was given from those tragic days in Wittenoom, that they must look after their workers.

The Government has examined the decision. I am awaiting a full report on the ruling, but I assure the member that the Labor Party is committed to every worker in every workplace in this State.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES, EQUAL REPRESENTATION

**61. Ms RADISICH to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:**

Does the Government intend to ensure that all state government boards and committees comprise equal representation of men and women?

**Ms McHALE replied:**

Obviously, as a new member and as a young woman, the member for Swan Hills is keen to ensure that the voice of women is heard in government decision-making forums. This Government is totally committed to increasing the number of women on boards and committees, and increasing their role in leadership positions in public life. The Government will encourage women to register for those boards and committees; however, it really needs to do other things. It needs to be more creative to ensure that women are supported and encouraged, firstly to come forward, and

secondly, once they are on those boards and committees, because we are clearly not addressing this issue as quickly as women in the community expect of a good Government.

In relation to gender ratios, I am sure members opposite who have been around for a while will remember the words of the then Premier and member for Nedlands in the first term of the coalition Government. On 19 October 1994 it was recorded in *Hansard* that he said -

. . . the make-up of the Liberal Party in five years' time would be quite different from today. I like to think that over the next couple of elections we will have a 50-50 split in our party.

There is a split in the Liberal Party, but it is not a gender equity split on a 50-50 basis. It might be worth looking at the make up of Parliament to see how well parties are doing. The Government has 30 members, of whom five are women.

*Point of Order*

Mr DAY: Mr Speaker, the issue being addressed by the minister has absolutely no relevance to the question. This is an abuse of question time and it is a further reason for you to extend question time by at least 10 minutes, as was commonly done by your predecessor. I ask you to ensure that the minister answers the question, which I think she has now completed.

The SPEAKER: The point of order is an opinion about whether the minister is straying from the original question. Whether the member likes the answer or not, the minister is entitled to an explanation. I am sure that she is about to bring her answer to a conclusion.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Ms McHALE: Comments like that indicate why the previous Government failed women. Its members do not understand the reform agenda. The former Premier said that in five or six years time that party would have 50-50 representation. This House is the ultimate committee in our community in which women should be represented. There are two women among the 16 members on the other side.

Mr Carpenter: They did try to get another one, but she couldn't get in here.

Ms McHALE: The Liberal Party did try to bring in a woman. The former member for Nedlands wanted her to be the leader, but he forgot to tell the member for Cottesloe. The Government is committed to placing women on boards and committees. Its record stands, as can be seen. The Liberal Party should be ashamed of what it has done.

Mr Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am reluctant to call the Leader of the Opposition to order. However, because of comments that I thought I heard from him I will call him to order and start a count that he will not enjoy. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to show some restraint in his comments in relation to the Chair.

POLICE OFFICER, DEATH, CLAIMS BY MEMBER FOR INNALOO

**62. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Police:**

The minister would be aware that the member for Innaloo, in his employment as a lawyer, this week represented a police officer on a charge of dangerous driving causing death. I refer to the member's comments as reported in today's *The West Australian* -

There were about eight balls-ups . . . that exposed the patrolmen that night to danger of life - and a life was lost - and that was none other than a management balls-up.

- (1) Does the minister agree with the member for Innaloo's comments?
- (2) What action is the minister taking to address each one of these eight balls-ups, as the member so eloquently put it?

**Mrs ROBERTS replied:**

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for the question. However, if he wanted a detailed answer on each of those events he should have given some notice. If he had, that information could have been given to him. I believe that nearly all those matters to which the member for Innaloo referred have been remedied. It seems to me that the member for Vasse is well and truly behind the game. Had he sought the information and done some research he would have found that quite a number of changes have already taken place. That incident took place a considerable time ago. Police have been aware of a number of the issues that have been referred to as balls-ups and have dealt with those issues.

INNALOO ELECTORATE, POLICE PRESENCE

**63. Mr QUIGLEY to the Minister for Police:**

Given that during the term of the last Court Government numbers at the Scarborough Police Station fell from 27 to 19 and that only one police officer, without a police vehicle, is left at the Innaloo Police Station, what will the Police Service do to satisfy the community's demands for significantly increased police numbers in the Innaloo electorate?

**Mrs ROBERTS replied:**

I commend the member for Innaloo for his strong and proactive stand on police issues and for his diligent representation of his electorate. He has constantly called for more police in his electorate, especially for the Scarborough beachfront, which is a known trouble spot. I am pleased to say that his perseverance is about to be rewarded. More police officers will soon work in his electorate. As a result of relocation of staff in the Mirrabooka district, 28 officers from the district support group will be shifted to the Innaloo Police Station. This will assist on a number of levels. Members may not be aware that the Mirrabooka district complex was designed to accommodate 137 people. There are currently 169 officers at the Mirrabooka complex. The relocation of the district support group and its complement of 28 officers to the old Innaloo station will alleviate the issue of overcrowding, decentralise district resources and provide for a more appropriate utilisation of the Innaloo complex. The relocation will enable the Police Service to more strategically locate a resource, which will be deployed more effectively and efficiently to known trouble areas such as the Scarborough beachfront.

#### HIH INSURANCE LTD, TAX ON SMALL BUSINESS

**64. Mr TRENORDEN to the Premier:**

Does the Premier stand by his claim in a media statement this morning that small business is a top priority for his Government, when two days ago, on Tuesday, 22 May, the Government passed a Bill to make small business pay for the total amount of the workers compensation liabilities caused by the collapse of HIH Insurance Ltd?

**Dr GALLOP replied:**

The Government is committed to the interests of small business in this State, unlike the previous Government, which was strong on rhetoric, but not strong on delivery to small business. It was weak on performance. This Government has already instructed its departments to pay their bills within 30 days.

Mr McNee interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Moore to order for the first time.

Dr GALLOP: This Government has drafted legislation to reduce stamp duty on workers compensation premiums for small business. It has reduced the Totalisator Agency Board turnover tax, which essentially puts money back into one of the biggest small business sectors in this State, the racing industry. This Government is beefing up the local content and purchasing policies in Western Australia, which I announced this morning in my speech. However, the collapse of HIH is a contentious issue. A scheme was set up in Western Australia in 1980 by the former Premier, Sir Charles Court, to take into account situations like this, which may emerge. Unfortunately, when he set up that scheme, the allowance in place for the levy was not sufficient to deal with the crisis that the Government now faces.

We took the responsible course of action to introduce legislation into the Parliament to deal with it. It has been strongly supported to make sure that the crisis can be dealt with. According to the Leader of the National Party, there is an alternative: leave all the businesses exposed to workers compensation claims. That seems to be the only alternative he has in mind. The Government is very conscious of the impact on small business but it believes it is the best course of action available. It is based upon the wisdom of Sir Charles Court - a lot more wisdom than currently exists on the other side of the House. He knew these situations could emerge and that is why he introduced the original legislation. It is proving to be very good legislation for the people of Western Australia that can be activated at this time of need. The Government does not just use rhetoric on behalf of small business; it is working for them. The Government will show a real commitment to small business. I have still not received an answer to the question I put to the Leader of the Opposition. When will he organise for the \$800 000 that was passed from HIH Insurance to the Liberal Party to be sent back to the victims of the crisis?

#### MAYLANDS POLICE ACADEMY SITE

**65. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:**

I refer to an article in *The West Australian* of 20 February that states that the Minister for the Environment will overturn the plans to redevelop the police academy site at Maylands and "rip up" the metropolitan region scheme agreement that would have allowed for a housing development. Under what legislative authority did the minister announce the overturning of the sale of land at the Maylands police academy site?

**Dr EDWARDS replied:**

I thank the member for this question. My comments were made as the member for Maylands. I made it clear to the journalist at the time that the comments were being made by me as the member for Maylands. As the member for Maylands and Minister for the Environment, I have had discussions with my ministerial colleagues. As the member rightly points out, decisions are up to other ministers and not up to me alone as the Minister for the Environment. As the member for Maylands, I will push as hard as I can to obtain the best outcome for my community.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES, APPOINTMENT

**66. Mr D'ORAZIO to the Leader of the House:**

In the interests of accountability, will the Leader of the House please advise when the Public Accounts Committee and the three portfolio-based standing committees of this House will be established?

**Mr KOBELKE replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. He is one of a number of members on this side of the House who are very keen to get the committees established and to be part of them to ensure that they perform their roles properly. The role of the committees is a very important one: they are part of the mechanisms of Parliament to ensure that the Government of the day is accountable. One would think that all members of Parliament would be keen to see the committees established as quickly as possible to ensure that we have good government in this State. The Leader of the National Party wrote to the Clerk of the Assembly on 23 May and put forward names of National Party members who wished to be appointed to committees. I have been approached by Independent members who wish to be appointed to the committees. I spoke to the leader of opposition business in this Chamber and Independents and others almost three weeks ago indicating that we needed to move this matter along and that I wished to do it this week. On Tuesday and Wednesday of this week I went into a round of discussions with various players including Independents, the Leader of the National Party and the leader of opposition business so that a motion to establish the committees could be proposed in the House. More members want to be appointed than there are positions. I wanted to allocate positions according to the percentage of members in the House with allegiance to particular parties or in the group that I roughly call Independents. However, as some members would obviously miss out, an agreement was reached. Decisions had to be made about which members could be appointed according to their specific interests. I saw the Leader of the Opposition yesterday and asked for a list of interested Liberal Party members. I was told that they could not work out a list; it was a bit too hard for them as they had only been told three weeks ago! The National Party was told a month ago and it still has not provided any nominations. This means that the issue will have to be left until next week because we do not want to fill the committees on a motion -

Mr Barnett: We deferred normal business so that the Government could put two Bills through.

Mr KOBELKE: So that got in the way of your decision-making? The Opposition is obviously having considerable difficulty getting its act together. Yesterday, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition sought an extension of time to speak that involved a motion of the House. I asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition whether that meant there would be a large number of speakers, and he told me that he had three more speakers to follow and that the speeches would be short. There were four speakers - he could not even get that right! I am not calling the Opposition a disorganised rabble; in fact, the Opposition would make a disorganised rabble look good! The committees should be established and I hope the Liberal Party will make up its mind so that the motion is put early next week, the committees are established and they can get on with the very important tasks that are required of them by this House.

The SPEAKER: Question time is now finished.

*Point of Order*

Mr BARNETT: My point of order relates to Standing Order No 76 and the right of members of Parliament to address questions to the Chair. I would like the opportunity to address the Chair.

The SPEAKER: My reading of the point of order is that if a motion is put on notice it will be considered.

Mr BARNETT: I do not canvass your ruling, Mr Speaker, but it is difficult for us to discuss the administration of this Parliament if the Chair is unable to take questions.

The SPEAKER: I am happy to address particular issues as they arise but I must comply with standing orders. The member must put forward proper notice. I am happy to discuss the conduct of question time with the Leader of the Opposition at any time outside the sitting of the House.

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY***Amendment to Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MRS ROBERTS** (Midland - Minister for Police) [2.38 pm]: I have had numerous discussions with the Commissioner of Police about the regional and district allocation of resources guides and I have raised with him the concerns of the country shires in the wheatbelt. I assure the House that any changes made to staffing levels will be based on the principles of fairness and equity. They will be undertaken on a phased basis and they may take between two and five years to implement. We have inherited a lot of problems from the previous Government; it did not increase police numbers in the past four years. It now wants this Government to draw a rabbit out of a hat and to provide extra police officers to some areas without taking them from others. It is a nonsense argument. Other inherited problems include an inadequate police operational budget. In the past few years the previous Government cut \$10 million out of that budget. Members would be aware that meant that a lot of transfers were delayed and positions remained unfilled in country

stations. The Government has given a commitment to inject an additional \$20 million over the next four years into the police operational budget. Despite numerous requests in recent years, the previous Government failed to provide an appropriate incentive package for Kalgoorlie and other hard-to-staff locations. By contrast, the Government has made a clear commitment there. The Government will be deploying 250 additional police officers, and freeing up as many officers as possible from administrative areas to the front line. The Government will increase the police operations budget to support police officers at the front line. The mounted police unit will also be expanded, and a 44-hour week introduced for police officers in Kalgoorlie.

**MR BARRON-SULLIVAN** (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.40 pm]: It has been interesting listening to the minister responding to the concerns raised by members on this side of the House, both in the Liberal Party and the National Party. She has failed dramatically to explain what the current Government will do to maintain a police presence in country regions.

Mr Trenorden: She has done the opposite.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: In fact, she has done quite the opposite, as the Leader of the National Party has said. Members on this side will be more concerned than before the minister spoke about the implications for country areas.

Mrs Roberts: The proposal from the Police Service, under the regional and districts allocation of resources scheme, suggests that the Bunbury area requires more police officers. The previous Government did not provide any additional resources. Is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggesting that no officers be taken out of the wheatbelt and none be placed into his electorate?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I am keen to get as much of what the minister says on the record. I would like the minister to answer two things by way of interjection. Under RADAR, how many extra police would be sent to Bunbury?

The SPEAKER: Perhaps the minister could cease interjecting, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition could direct his comments to the chair so that debate can move on.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I am happy for the minister to interject briefly, because she is suggesting that additional police will be allocated to the south west, or more to the point, that the RADAR guide recommends more police for the south west. I would like her to place on record the number of extra police RADAR recommends should go to the south west.

Mrs Roberts: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had been in the House while I was speaking, he would know that there is no finalisation of RADAR. It is but a guide.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I know why the minister is avoiding the question.

Mrs Roberts: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would like a briefing on the guide from the Commissioner of Police or the Police Service, he is welcome to have one. But a guide is only a guide.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister is avoiding the question because RADAR recommends taking away four police officers from the south west.

Mrs Roberts: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be incorrect in believing that.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Would I? How many extra police will be sent to the south west?

Mrs Roberts: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants a briefing on the guide -

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: How many officers does RADAR suggest should be taken from Midland?

*Point of Order*

Mrs ROBERTS: Mr Speaker, I believe that you asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to direct his comments through the Chair. You asked me to desist from interjecting. Are we having some kind of debate, or is the member for Mitchell making a speech?

The SPEAKER: I do not think that is a point of order, but I think it is wise for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to address his comments through me rather than through the minister, because question time is over.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I will stick to the points I have here, and if the minister would like to provide some facts at some stage, it would be a novel idea.

Mrs Roberts: Why does the Deputy Leader of the Opposition not place a question on notice for a change, and then he might get some facts?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: What we heard earlier today, if I recall correctly - perhaps the Leader of the National Party might confirm by way of interjection if I am correct - was the minister saying that she would reallocate police from the

wheatbelt region to other regions such as Peel or Perth. She used the word "reallocate". That is what I heard the minister say - move police officers from one region to another. I find it sad that the minister is pitting region against region. She has no comprehension of the difficulties faced by people in regional Western Australia. She cannot take 17 police away from the wheatbelt without closing police stations. These police have children who go to school. Remove those children from those schools and in some cases that might result in fewer teachers. The minister has no comprehension of what this sort of policy means for country Western Australia. In cold, harsh rationalist terms - that is an expression used by the Labor Party against the Liberal Party - the minister is ordering the police to be moved from one place to another. I suspect I might know a little about what this RADAR guide might entail, because the minister actually provided the criteria by which RADAR assessed the needs of different regions. There was one particular criterion that was not on that list: the social impact. A number of factors were included - the crime categories in each region, the details of offences, details of traffic accidents, injuries, remoteness - but nothing about the social impact. The minister does not give one iota about what happens in regional Western Australia. We are not talking only about numbers here, we are talking about police officers, their families, their children, the local teachers, the local school, the local community. The Labor Party made a big hullabaloo over "community". I do not think the minister has a clue what the word means. The minister could achieve what she wants to do in the south west without taking police away from the wheatbelt. They can be sent to Innaloo and places like that to look after the minister's mates, but she does not have to do it at the expense of country Western Australia. Augmenting police numbers will not happen tomorrow morning, the day after a directive is issued; it will be implemented on a gradual basis, and can be implemented quite smoothly. All the minister needs to do is look at the Government's policy, which is not much different from the coalition's policy in the lead-up to the election; that is, to employ more police. We appreciate that it takes six months for recruits to complete their training at the police academy. Fifty, sixty, or a hundred extra police cannot be placed on the beat tomorrow morning. However, their placement can be done gradually. Consequently, police numbers in an area such as the south west can be built up substantially over a year or a year and a half without the wheatbelt towns being affected. The police presence can be left in those areas. I agree that the south west needs more police. I have not yet had from the minister a firm commitment on the number of police that will be put into the south west to boost -

Mrs Roberts: That is because the plan has not been finalised, and if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had been listening, he would know that.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I was listening. The minister is having a go at the Opposition for saying that she will pull police out of the regions. She is admitting that she will pull police out of the wheatbelt. However, when the Opposition puts her under the pump, she will say what is happening in Innaloo, in the electorate of one of her mates. She will say what is happening in the wheatbelt, where she wants to rip the police out of the local community. When the Opposition asks what she will do in places such as Peel - the member for Dawesville put up a very strong argument for more police being needed in Peel - she will say all that will be done, but she cannot give details. This is what I find interesting, because the Minister for Police, when in opposition, has said that it was up to the Government to take action on this matter. Now that she is in government, she is wavering, and going weak at the knees. In fact, in my neck of the woods, the Labor Party candidate who ran against me in the election said that the Labor Party was committed to increasing police numbers in the south west - not the Minister for Police, not the Commissioner of Police, but the Labor Party. Can the Labor Party determine where police go?

Mrs Roberts: The Labor Party has policy provisions which will be implemented by the Western Australian Police Service.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Will the Labor Party tell the Police Service where to put the police officers? Will the Labor Party say to the Commissioner of Police that it has a policy to provide more police in the south west, and call on the commissioner to put them there, and at the same time take officers away from the wheatbelt, where they are not needed?

*Point of Order*

Mr McRAE: Mr Speaker, in referring to the Labor Party policy on police, the member for Mitchell is going into tedious and repetitious argument, and I ask you to draw his attention to proceeding with his line of argument.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is the first time I have referred to the Labor Party policy on police.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order at this stage, and I call on the member for Mitchell to continue his comments.

*Debate Resumed*

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I am a relatively new member myself. I have been here only one term, but one thing I have learnt is that one should not try to stifle debate in the House, one should encourage it.

Mrs Roberts: All the member has done is try to be nasty and insult people rather than deal with the issues.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I will be nasty when I am standing up for my region. I am standing up for the police officers in country Western Australia, for their families and for local communities. I will argue as strongly and as hard as I want. That is an interesting point. Earlier the minister stood there and said that the member for Mitchell -

Mrs Roberts: You said you would wait for the new police officers to come on strength; and asked me not to redeploy any to his area.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: No, I did not.

Mrs Roberts: You said you would wait for the new recruits. That should be a headline in your local paper: you are happy to wait for the local recruits.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister said that the member for Mitchell, in effect, was prepared to toe the line and that he was prepared to wait, and so on. The minister has a short memory. I indicated a headline from the major paper in my area "Sullivan takes on party". I did not do what the member said. I came out strongly for my community, because I believe in looking after police in my region. Consequently, that is how it was interpreted.

Mrs Roberts: You are all talk and no action.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Not at all. It will be interesting to see whether members, such as the member for Collie, the member for Bunbury and the new member for Mandurah, who are now representing areas that are under-policed, will be on the same side of the House when the vote is taken. If those members truly care for the police officers in their areas and for their communities, and they want to bolster police strength, they will move to this side of the Chamber. This motion is totally in support of regional Western Australia.

The minister did not adequately explain why she should not leave the police in the wheatbelt and bolster the numbers elsewhere on a more gradual basis. It is certainly my understanding that under the previous Government the Police Service had commenced bolstering resources in country regions. For example, the \$9 million regional police complex in Bunbury that is currently under construction ultimately will receive a fair complement of police. The police in that region will be able to get on with their work in an effective manner. The previous Government was on top of it, through the Police Service, by allowing the Police Service to determine priorities, and so on.

Mrs Roberts: It is too late now. The previous Government had eight years to do something and it did nothing.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister should have asked for an extension for her speech; I think she has spoken longer than I have, but it is my session.

Mrs Roberts: You have addressed all of your remarks to me rather than the Chair.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister went to great lengths to explain that this new RADAR assessment of police numbers in various regional areas is only a guide and is based on the fact that there are finite resources and so forth. How, in that case, do we get from the guide to the ultimate result? There was no explanation.

Mrs Roberts: There was, actually.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: What the minister has not explained, in areas where RADAR perhaps recommends that there should be a reduction of officers, is whether she will commit the Government to reducing the number of officers in accordance with that report.

Mrs Roberts: If you had listened to the explanation you would have heard that there was ongoing consultation.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I have reached the conclusion - we heard it during question time when the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the facility in Cottesloe - that the current Government has two words missing from its dictionary: yes and no. We want some straight answers; that is all - not only us, but the community we represent in regional Western Australia.

Mrs Roberts: I want some straight answers from you. Do you need some more police officers from now on or not?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Where will the minister take them from?

Mrs Roberts: Do you need them in the course of the next few months?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I would be delighted to have more police officers in my area - that is, if the minister could find any - as long as it was done on a fair and equitable basis. If the minister is saying that she will pit people in my region against people in the wheatbelt, I can tell her that the people of Collie, Bunbury and Mandurah understand that that is the way to go about it. Small country towns and the community would suffer. The way to go about it is to increase police numbers overall and bolster the numbers in areas where they are required.

Mrs Roberts: Why did the previous Government not do that?

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: I seem to recall that we went to the election with a commitment on additional police very similar to that offered by this Government.

Mrs Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! The interchange between the minister and the member may be of some interest, but this is supposed to be a debate and not a conversation. I urge members to address their comments through the Chair.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: What we will be looking for from the minister, apart from the fact that we have made our point clear, is a firm commitment to regional Western Australia unlike what we have heard today. All we have heard today is that the Government will take police away from certain country areas, which, in a social sense, will suffer the most. I have said previously that my area does require additional police, particularly when the new regional police complex is opened. I want to see more police in Australind and Bunbury. The south west has a requirement for more police, particularly at holiday times when we receive all the tourists and so on from the south west. The Peel region, as the member for Dawesville said, is growing at a very rapid rate and requires more police. However, I understand, as do the people I represent and those in the region in which I live, that the fairest way to do this is not to rip the heart out of small country centres. I suspect that the way decisions are being made on this issue has no bearing on the social impact of this policy.

Mrs Roberts: I can give you some policies for the south west. Your current authorised strength for the south west is 189 and the RADAR guide recommends 199.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Can I have a firm commitment, by way of interjection, that the minister will provide the full number recommended by RADAR this year?

Mrs Roberts: No firm commitments are being given for any increased numbers, just as no commitments are being given for any decreases. I do not think members representing the wheatbelt electorates would be pleased with me as Minister for Police if I gave this member a firm commitment for an extra 10 positions at this time, because the people in those other electorates know that the numbers will come out of their areas. I said I would consult with the people in those areas.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: The minister has already made it clear that she will go in and gut the police numbers in the wheatbelt areas and the country towns. That is not the way that we want the police numbers increased in areas such as the south west and Peel. I think I have explained that in full.

As the details come out, we will be looking intently to see what happens to police numbers and how they relate to recommendations in the RADAR guide referred to by the minister. Is it possible for that RADAR guide document to be tabled?

Mrs Roberts: It may well be a document that could be tabled. I do not have the document with me today, but I will investigate that possibility and get back to the member.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: Tabling that document next week would help us understand the background behind the planning for any changes in regional Western Australia. Although the minister said that I was starting to get aggressive, when she indicated that I was getting a bit stroppy over this, she must understand that at the moment regional Western Australia is looking for more confidence from Governments of all persuasions to ensure that the strength of the local communities is maintained. My region is about to suffer enormously as a result of policies this Government is putting in place.

I do not want to bring issues such as these into the debate, but in my neck of the woods the price of firewood is about to double as a consequence of the policies of this Government. Throughout the south west more pensioners and a larger proportion of people rely on firewood for their heating than is the case in the metropolitan area. These sorts of policies hurt people in local communities. So if I get a bit aggressive, it is because I am standing up for my local community, as are all the other members who have spoken today.

Mr Trenorden interjected.

Mr BARRON-SULLIVAN: During question time we heard that if someone is the minister's mate, they are looked after and they get extra policing in their area, but if a member happens to represent a wheatbelt town they lose their police, and if a member represents an area in Bunbury they are made to feel guilty because the police positions are coming from the wheatbelt. People from Australind and Bunbury may have extra police cover, but it will be at the expense of their country cousins. Many people in my electorate are retirees from the wheatbelt. How will they feel when their sons and daughters experience a reduced police presence? How will they feel when the local school and community is affected so that those retirees can get more local police? The Minister for Police is pitting region against region and she should not be surprised if members on this side get a little hot under the collar.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

## Ayes (16)

Mr Ainsworth	Mr Day	Mr House	Mr Sweetman
Mr Barnett	Mrs Edwardes	Mr McNee	Mr Trenorden
Mr Birney	Mr Edwards	Mr Masters	Mr Waldron
Mr Board	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Sullivan	Mr Bradshaw ( <i>Teller</i> )

## Noes (27)

Mr Andrews	Dr Gallop	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Bowler	Mrs Guise	Mr Marlborough	Mr Templeman
Mr Brown	Mr Hill	Ms Martin	Mr Watson
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr Murray	Mr Whitely
Mr Dean	Mr Kucera	Mr O’Gorman	Dr Woollard
Mr D’Orazio	Mr Logan	Ms Radisich	Ms Quirk ( <i>Teller</i> )
Dr Edwards	Mr McGinty	Mr Ripper	

## Pairs

Mr Omodei	Ms McHale
Mr Johnson	Mr Hyde

## Independents

Dr Constable	Mr Graham
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Amendment thus negatived.

*Debate (on motion) Resumed*

**MR AINSWORTH** (Roe) [3.06 pm]: I will place on the record some concerns that I have about a shift in society’s attitudes and some of the detrimental affects that will create. We are becoming a society of blame. We take the attitude that someone else is to blame for anything that happens to us. We are not prepared to take full responsibility for most of the things that happen to us as was the case in the past. That has lead to some unfortunate circumstances. With the support of the legal profession, in many cases we are able to push away the responsibility we would normally accept and blame other people.

Some people claim compensation for things for which they should have been made responsible. That attitude has lead to some very sad consequences in the country areas in which medical services have been affected. In towns with small populations, women who give birth in country hospitals find it more difficult for a general practitioner to be involved in the assistance of childbirth because of the high cost of insurance. In places where few patients give birth, the insurance cost per patient is so high that the general practitioners are not prepared to assist with childbirth. Women must go elsewhere because the cost of insurance for doctors is extraordinarily high. That situation has occurred largely because we blame other people for the things that happen in our lives.

I am not suggesting that doctors should not be responsible for the actions that might prevent a safe childbirth or other medical procedure. Some problems that occur during childbirth are natural and have happened for centuries regardless of the best services that modern medicine can provide. Doctors are forced to pay horrendous insurance premiums to cover themselves against lawsuits because of the litigious nature of society. We have reached an absurd state in which doctors are refusing to provide the services that they swore to uphold under the Hippocratic oath when they first became doctors. They are breaking that oath by not being able to provide their services to women who give birth. It is a sad situation.

Schools are caught up in the same situation. We hear more and more from parents who say it is the school’s or the teacher’s fault that their child has not been taught the basic life skills, including good manners. When we were old enough to understand those things, we took it for granted that that was the responsibility of parents, not somebody else. We increasingly hear from the community that it is the fault of teachers or the Education Department that children have not achieved certain life skills or that they have not been taught right from wrong. Schools obviously play a big part in the training and upbringing of young people. However, they have those students only from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm five days a week. For the balance of the time, the majority of a child’s life, children are with their parents or guardians. That is where the main responsibility lies. Yet, more responsibility is pushed onto schools and the resulting pressure on teachers is horrendous.

We recently concluded a debate on workers compensation insurance premiums. The same situation applies in that area. Most people would apply commonsense to actions they may take in the workplace. However, many people who do things that are plainly stupid choose to blame the employer and, through that employer and the insurance policy, get

some form of compensation. There seems to be an overemphasis on the responsibility of one side of the equation, the employer, and very little responsibility is being sheeted home to the employee, even if that employee has done something that most reasonable people think is absolutely stupid. I have experienced that situation. I was a farmer for 25 years before I came into this place. On two occasions employees did things that were absolutely crazy in terms of safety. In one case, an employee shot himself through the foot with a .22 calibre rifle. He had been given strict instructions about firearm safety on the property, not mixing alcohol and firearms and a range of other things that I will not go into. All those things were ignored. This person shot himself in the foot and tried to make a claim under workers compensation. The insurance company, to its credit, took the matter to court because it did not want the person to receive unreasonable benefits and set a precedent that would encourage other people to push claims that are clearly well outside the intent of the law and fallacious. Fortunately, the court saw reason and the case was effectively thrown out. It emphasises the fact that people will try to use the system to sheet home to somebody else the blame for things they themselves have done.

The second case did not involve a workers compensation claim, although it could easily have done so. An employee and I had been repairing a header. I told the employee to stand back as I was going to start the motor to see if the problem had been solved. I climbed into the cabin, and he leant against a drive belt on the side of the machine, which turned immediately the starter was turned. The tips of his fingers ran right through the drive belt under the sheave of the pulley. Luckily, he did not break any fingers, but he had to go to hospital, which was an hour away, and have the hand treated. Not only was he off work for several days, but also I lost a day's work. It could quite easily have meant a workers compensation claim of some sort. Yet, he leant against the machine after he was instructed to stand away from it. The cost of workers compensation has been pushed up because people do stupid things and then try to blame others. Again, it is a case of the attitude of "I have done something but it is somebody else's fault" permeating our society. I find it very sad.

Litigation generally has got out of hand. I greatly regret that we are following the American trend. We hear of cases in America where people sue anything or anybody. It is crazy, yet we are moving closer to that. On almost a daily basis, we see advertisements in the newspapers and on television from lawyers soliciting business from people who feel they have claims for injuries they believe they have suffered. The legal profession is effectively encouraging excessive and spurious claims. It is no wonder that costs in these matters are blowing out of proportion. The sad thing is that the genuine cases are often delayed because the courts are clogged. Employers are wary of putting on extra people because of the increasing costs. I spoke this morning to an employer in Esperance who was complaining about the cost of his workers compensation premiums. The premium does not take into account the break-up of the business. For the purpose of insurance premiums, people in office administration are lumped in with the workers in the more dangerous part of the business. The premium for the whole business is based on the rate applicable to the area of the business with the greatest risk. The employer said that his premium had shot up 85 to 90 per cent over the past two or three years. He has made one or two claims. One case involved half a day off work. The other case should have involved about three days off work, but the employee chose to be off work for three weeks, and was supported, unfortunately, by one of the local doctors. It was a very minor claim. The employee had suffered a cut on the little finger of his hand. It was not even his preferred hand with which to work. This employer has had virtually a 100 per cent increase in his premium because of two minor accidents. That is an across-the-board cost; the premium applies to not only the area of greatest risk but also those people who sit behind a desk. The most dangerous thing they could do would be to stab themselves with the end of a pen. The business of blaming and seeking recompense from somebody else is costing everybody, not only the employers. Employees are also losing because employers are putting them off or choosing not to take on fresh employees. That affects everybody.

One of the other areas in which society is, in my opinion, going a bit crazy is that of prohibitions on basic human responses to other people's distress, such as things that happen in the school ground. A seven or eight-year-old girl might trip over in the playground at her school. If the first teacher on the scene is a male teacher, he is no longer game to give that child comfort, other than verbally. He cannot even put his arm around the child or pat her on the head because, in our society, that is seen as somehow representing an act of a sexual nature. The teacher takes a risk when he carries out a common, reasonable and genuine human response. He cannot do it because someone might make a claim. Once a claim is made, it is very hard to disprove, and a person's reputation can be in tatters thereafter. The same thing applies with the female teachers. It is becoming more and more difficult to be human. Sure, there have been teachers of both gender in the school system who have abused their position of trust and privilege and the children in their care. That is despicable; however, it is a disgrace to counter that by making rules that disadvantage the students and the genuinely good teachers who are not the perpetrators of those sorts of things. It is a case of political correctness having gone totally overboard.

I speak about some of the needs of my electorate. My electorate received a number of significant benefits through the previous Government during the past four to eight years. Many great improvements have been made to the level of basic services, including the establishment of better water supplies and roads and improved schools. In a couple of cases, new schools have been built. Some innovative youth programs have been introduced into the area. All sorts of valuable things have happened in the past four years. However, in common with most regional areas of this State, there is still a heck of a lot more to be done. In matters such as communications - I acknowledge that is not only a state

responsibility - major gaps still exist in services that are regarded as necessary and average requirements of life, such as mobile phone services and Internet services with high data transfer speeds. Those services are beginning to be rectified, but there is still a way to go. It is vital that energy infrastructure, pricing and reliability is upgraded. It is tragic to hear of businesses wishing to set up in some towns but being turned away because Western Power either is unable to provide them with electricity at any price or, if it is prepared to do so, expects the new business to provide the infrastructure. In one case Western Power quoted \$2 million for a dedicated line of about 50 kilometres so that the capacity of a business in a small country town could be increased. Those are the sorts of things that are holding back our regional areas.

There have been major benefits in health in the past four years with a change in the system to encourage more doctors and nursing staff into the area. However, problems still exist with other allied services, such as dental and mental health services. I mention, for example, Esperance, which most people would say is a reasonably desirable country town in which to set up business. It has most of the benefits to be found in the city and other benefits, such as the wonderful environment and so on, that are not found in the city. Last year in Esperance there were six dentists; this year there are three. Even when there were six dentists, the then Minister for Health acceded to my request to have Esperance declared an area of unmet need for dental services because there was still then a shortfall. A constituent - a former member for Roe - contacted me through one of his family members. A filling had dropped out of one of his back teeth, which exposed the nerves, causing him severe pain. He rang a dentist to make an appointment and was told he would have a nine-month wait. The dentist could not see him, although it was, in a sense, an emergency. I rang the dentist concerned, not to complain, but to find out the background to the story, as there is usually more to a situation than is first presented. The dentist told me that if I made an appointment for a check up I would have a three to four-month wait to see a dental therapist and if the therapist determined that I would need the service of a dentist, the additional wait would be up to six months. I believe that the current ratio of dentists to population in Perth is one to 1 000 or one to 1 500; in Esperance it is one to 5 000 or one to 6 000. Therefore, even a town as attractive as Esperance is having trouble attracting and retaining qualified dental practitioners.

A similar problem occurs with mental health. Improvements have been made to the mental health system both in the provision of physical resources and to the people visiting the Esperance area. However, compared with mental health services in metropolitan Perth, not only my electorate but also the whole of country Western Australia is underserved. Because of the isolation of some individuals and businesses, mental health problems tend to take on a greater importance than they otherwise would in a city like Perth, where there are at least people around for back up and support with a range of readily available services throughout the metropolitan area. More work must be done in those areas.

Significant improvements have been made to roads in recent years. However, because of the size of the area I represent and some of the activities taking place there - the growth in heavy haulage traffic because of increased grain production from farms, the advent of new mining activities along the South Coast Highway near Ravensthorpe and the general increase in domestic traffic from tourists and the general population - the road system still needs much more money spent on it to bring it up to a standard that most people would regard as reasonable. I hope this Government does not cut back on the previous Government's projected road funding for the next few years programs because to do so would be detrimental not only to road safety but also to the whole State. These roads are not just a local asset; they are a state asset and have a great deal of value to not only the people who use them, but also every person in this State.

Esperance is very much in need of relationship counselling services, but we are struggling to get funding. A service exists four hours drive away in Kalgoorlie, but it is not satisfactory to expect couples with problems who need assistance to rely on an infrequent service or to expect them to get in a vehicle and travel for four hours. This is another area that is grossly underserved compared with some of the more densely populated areas of the State.

One of the myths perpetuated by the media and the general public over a period - and probably by some members in this place - is that country towns are in decline. As with any argument, members will find an example to prove their argument. However, the vast majority of country towns that I represent are either in a state of growth or are trying to grow. Much of the reason for their not growing as fast as they would like is that they are held back by a lack of services of some sort. This inability to grow quickly, or at all, is due to a lack of available land. That might sound strange, because as one drives through country towns and sees empty paddocks of adjoining farms or vacant blocks of land in a town, one cannot help wondering how there could be a land shortage in that country town. The answer is simple. The first reason is native title; secondly, some services are unavailable, even to a surveyed block of land. When the Water Corporation cannot guarantee to provide water to that land, the Department of Land Administration will not release that land for use. That is the case at Salmon Gums, which is a tragic example. It causes me a great deal of pain that a small town is denied the opportunity to set up a new business because of something as basic as a water supply. That is not a problem that can be dealt with immediately.

Another problem is the supply of energy to some of these places. Ravensthorpe is a classic case, as it is currently on the longest lead from the power source in the southern hemisphere. The power comes from Katanning, several hundred kilometres away, and by the time it gets to Ravensthorpe the quality and quantity of the power are below par. Apart from voltage fluctuations and outages, there is also no capacity for an increased load on that line. Some moves are afoot to rectify that and I know that the previous minister examined the possibility of extending the gas pipeline from

the west coast in that direction. Currently, a proposition is being considered by the independent power provider, who has been chosen by the current Government in a process set up by the previous Government, to provide power to Esperance. Burns and Roe Worley Pty Ltd, the successful bidder in that process, is considering the possibility of extending either an overhead line from Esperance or the gas pipeline from Kalgoorlie to Esperance and across to Ravensthorpe. As I mentioned earlier today, Ravensthorpe is facing a 100 per cent growth in its population because of the advent of the Ravensthorpe nickel operation, one of the two nickel mines proposed for the area. One mine is already operating, but another big one is the proposed Ravensthorpe Nickel Operations Pty Ltd project for which an estimated 1 100 to 1 200 people will come into the town. A substantial amount of energy will be required for that operation; therefore, the proponents of that project are currently in discussion with Burns and Roe Worley.

The power required for that operation should be able to be fed back into the Western Power grid. That would provide an improved service for the town of Ravensthorpe and for some of the customers on the line between Ravensthorpe and Katanning, in that a better and more reliable supply of power could be provided to them.

We need to look very closely at providing some incentives to increase growth in country towns. Apart from overcoming some of the other impediments that I have mentioned - planning delays is another example - we need to look closely at the current taxation zone system as it applies on a federal and state level. The current zoning system is a farce. It was put in place a long time ago and today bears no relationship to the facts of life in country areas. We must provide incentives to encourage people to relocate to these towns as either workers or business people. We must seriously consider providing to businesses that are prepared to establish in regional areas, relief from state taxation, perhaps in the form of a tax holiday or tax relief from some of the state charges they would otherwise be required to pay in starting up. We must make available land at the right price. It is not very realistic to value land in the country at a similar price to equivalent land in the Kwinana strip - as was the case with the Meenaar industrial estate. If we could encourage businesses to set up in country regions, we would go a long way to solving some of the other social and economic issues that are continually talked about in this place.

In the few minutes left to me, I will talk specifically about Esperance, which is my home town and which contains about 50 per cent of my voting population. Esperance currently is going through a very positive time, despite some of the vagaries of agriculture, of which everyone is aware, and the business pressures that are being experienced for a range of reasons. The place is still progressing at a rapid rate and some extremely positive things are happening in the region.

In no particular order I will mention a few: I refer first to agriculture. Apart from the traditional agriculture that we have seen in the area, we have seen the emergence of a very promising seed potato industry as well as a small but successful wine industry.

A lot of activity is occurring in the area of aquaculture: interest is being shown in establishing abalone farming operations, and a local group currently is working on the establishment of the Esperance marine institute. We are also very close to securing a \$2 million, three-year research project on the marine environment, to be carried out through a combination of the University of Western Australia and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. I am hopeful that we can also establish a marine reserve system in the Recherche Archipelago, because local management of that resource is vital.

We are at the feasibility stage for a discovery centre - an interpretive centre covering a region extending from around Ravensthorpe, on the edge of the Fitzgerald River National Park, to Norseman and the eastern extremity of the shire of Esperance near Israelite Bay. This is a fantastic project which I hope will get up and running as it has huge benefits from a tourist point of view as well as for local users.

The region supports a growing forestry industry. Discussions currently are occurring between the local industry and the independent power providers to establish a biomass plant to feed into the gas turbine system, so that biomass can be used for electricity generation.

The community college in Esperance, which was established with the help of the previous Government, is a wonderful combination of the Department of Education Services, Curtin University of Technology and the former TAFE college - Esperance amalgamated with Kalgoorlie College as an independent TAFE college and that then became part of Curtin University. All the tiers of education are combined in a collaborative basis in this community college and it has a lot of potential for future growth.

Major developments are occurring at the port, which, when completed, will make Esperance the only port south of Dampier or Port Hedland capable of fully loading a cape-size vessel. This is to cater for increasing iron ore exports from the port. The exports have been highly successful. Once the port development is completed and the increased production from the mine occurs, we anticipate that up to 8 million tonnes of iron ore will go through the town annually.

Tourism is also doing well. Despite our weather conditions, on which some people occasionally cast aspersions, our tourist season is now probably nine to 10 months of the year rather than four to six months. It is a huge growth industry with a lot of potential because of our natural resources as well as some of the man-made attractions that have been

established. These augur well for vastly increased tourism through the town and the spin-off economic benefit that it brings to the area.

On the issue of ports in general, I was privileged to attend the state ports conference at Woody Island in Esperance only a few days ago. It was impressive to me because I knew only about my own home port. However, when all of the port authorities from around the State, including little ports like Broome, reported on what they were doing, it was clear that each and every port was in expansion mode. Even Albany, which has had a downturn over the past 12 months because of the agricultural situation, is expanding. The ports have experienced increases in through-put and they are all spending big money on providing better infrastructure for the future. It gave me great encouragement to see that, without exception, every port in Western Australia is looking positively to the future. That says a lot for the record of the past eight years of government and I hope it continues - for the State's benefit, at least - during the next four years of the new Government.

**MRS EDWARDES** (Kingsley) [3.38 pm]: Having heard so many maiden speeches during this Address-in-Reply debate, I wish to reflect upon my maiden speech. I was elected in 1989 and I am currently the longest serving woman member of the Parliament. I do not know whether any former female members served longer than I have, to date.

Mr Barnett: Youthful yet experienced.

Mrs EDWARDES: I am still a young member of parliament.

In 1989 I was elected to represent the new seat of Kingsley, which was created after a redistribution. It was an absolute privilege to be elected and to represent all of those people. The suburbs in the electorate then were Greenwood, Kingsley, Warwick and Woodvale. There has since been a redistribution and some of Warwick was lost. However, as those members who have not yet experienced a redistribution will come to know, once a member has represented people, the member will always be regarded by those people as their member, irrespective of whether they are still in the same electorate.

As I went back over my maiden speech, I noted that the issues of the day were the need for youth facilities and child-care facilities. Preprimary school was a big educational issue and more schools were needed, as quite a few demountable classrooms were in use at the time. Transport was another big issue, particularly bus transport. The Government needed to ensure that the bus system met the needs of the community and did not just go north from Perth out to the suburbs and then back again. The bus system at the time basically ran from north to south and did not cater for the shopping centres, doctors facilities and the like; they needed to be accessed by a system running from east to west. Rail transport and the freeway also were two big issues of the day. Some of these issues have not changed; indeed, there will always be issues. The extension of the rail is still an issue in the northern suburbs and I will talk a little bit more about that and the Greenwood railway station shortly.

The City of Joondalup currently is landscaping some of the older parts of those suburbs with the aim of revitalising those areas. Although most people welcome the landscaping, some residents do not appreciate trees suddenly being placed in the middle of the street, even though it does give a lift to the suburb.

An issue critical to my electorate at the moment is school crossings. There was considerable concern last year about school crossing wardens being taken away from a number of schools. The original criteria were set by the previous Labor Government back in 1992 and were based on the number of children who used the crossing and the use of the road by traffic. It was basically a counting exercise, which is a reasonable starting point. However, if demographics and the use of the area are considered, and if consultation with schools and the local community and the like is carried out, it becomes evident that the basic mathematical exercise does not always meet the needs of the school community. After the election I wrote to the current Minister for Police and put the case for Hawker Park and Halidon Primary Schools. I pointed out that there was a weekly traffic flow of 3 000 vehicles along Hawker Avenue, most of which were going to the Warwick train station, and there was something like 6 000 motor vehicles travelling along Dorchester Avenue. The number of school children crossing that road may have been down - between 25 and 35 depending on the day of the week and the like - but at the end of the day it was an enormous risk to remove those school wardens when approximately 6 000 motor vehicles use the road and one child would have to negotiate it. I was pleased that the former Minister for Police started a review and that the review is being continued by the Labor Government. The Minister for Police has confirmed that Halidon and Hawker Park Primary Schools will retain their current A-level school crossing status until the completion of the review.

I raised a further point in my letter, which was not answered by the Minister for Police. I asked that before she makes any changes as a result of that review of school crossing wardens, that those changes go to the local community, the school, the principal and the parents and citizens association. This is critical if the Government is to get an understanding of the situation. Hawker Park Primary School is a critical case. A roundabout on Hawker Avenue has caused confusion, especially following the change of rules for roundabouts. Most people still do not understand those changed rules. If the drivers are confused, imagine how the school kids feel. These are primary school kids who are being asked to work out whether there is an indicator saying that the vehicle will go forward or will turn left or right. They get confused. Many motor vehicles go along Hawker Avenue because it is the only northern access to Warwick train station. It is critical that the traffic warden for that school stays in place. It is equally important to the Halidon

school community that its warden stays in place, given the level of traffic along Halidon Street. I am pleased that they will stay in place; however, I would like some confirmation from the Minister for Police that when the review is completed the local schools and the communities surrounding them will be consulted on any future changes.

I was pleased to read in a media release issued on 2 May by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure that the tenders for the Greenwood train station would be called towards the end of this year and that the service to Clarkson was scheduled to begin in September 2003. That means that everything is still on track. As it was anticipated that both would go together, if the service to Clarkson begins at that time the Greenwood train station will also be up and running. The timing of that was based upon the delivery of new railcars. It took me some time to work out why the Greenwood train station could not be in service without extra railcars. Again, it was a mathematical exercise, which I will not go into today. It needed to be explained to the community that it will be in place in 2003 and that tenders will be called this year. I am pleased to know that it is still on track.

Five hundred parking bays will be provided at the Greenwood train station. Parking at Warwick and Whitfords train stations is under pressure. An extra 100 parking bays will be available at Whitfords in the near future. Also an exercise of consultation occurred last year, in which the Government worked with Westrail, the Department of Transport, the City of Joondalup and local communities. The Government was able to work through all the difficulties about access onto the freeway and into the parking bays, whether to the kiss and ride section or to park the cars and use the trains. Other issues concerned commuters parking their cars at the front of residents' homes and taking shortcuts across the freeway at an inappropriate spot. As a result of that consultation, a roundabout is being built between Kingsley Drive and Whitfords Avenue, which will help with the traffic there, and a dual entry onto the freeway will be built. Details for those are being worked out at the moment. One hundred new bays will go in at Whitfords train station. Another roundabout will help ease traffic into Whitfords train station or to the freeway south. The City of Joondalup will make sure that commuters cannot park at the front of residents' homes, while the Department of Transport will erect a major fence of some length to discourage people from parking or crossing the freeway at an inappropriate spot. It was significant that those solutions came from working with the local community, the appropriate departments and the local council. I commend those people who spent many hours, even Saturday mornings, meeting residents to come to what is an excellent solution for those people.

The third area that still requires some work concerns local youth. When I was first elected to Parliament in 1989 issues raised at the time concerned the need for more child care, preschools and the like. Those kids have now grown up and are teenagers. Some of those teenagers are a little antisocial and are causing problems. In my local shopping centre, in which I have my office, about 70 to 80 youths almost terrorised the patrons the Christmas before last. When the shopping centre employed security guards to move them on, the youths would go into the street and knock down letterboxes and the like out of pure frustration from being moved from where they had congregated. A group from the community and shopping centre management got together with the respective departments. In an endeavour to employ someone to work with the youth in the shopping centre, the group intended to try to access funds from Safer WA. To its credit, the shopping centre management went one better; it said to forget about putting in a submission to Government and to do it as a group. The centre management has ended up paying for a barbecue on Friday nights for the kids in the area, to which the local police officer goes. If anyone from Family and Children's Services or another agency is needed, they also go.

As a consequence, the 70 to 80 kids who used to congregate there over a year ago have been reduced in numbers to about 20 to 25. The remaining kids and the security officers work quite closely together to ensure that no-one comes onto their turf and disrupts the good relationship that they have developed with the management of the shopping centre and the local police officers. It is an example of sitting down, working out what is the problem and deciding on a solution. What happened to the other kids that no longer congregate at the shopping centre? They have gone to other corners of the suburbs but it is not as big a problem as it might be in some areas. The numbers involved are small but we do not want it to grow into a larger problem. The northern suburbs need a police and citizens youth club. The district of Joondalup is the only police district that does not have a PCYC. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1996 indicated 90 000 youths were living in the northern suburbs. That is a huge number. I am not talking about only my electorate but about all the northern suburbs. I am talking about the electorates of Joondalup, Wanneroo, Hillarys and part of the electorates of Carine and Ballajura. A PCYC is needed in a location that provides easy access for those kids. The sorts of centres that exist today are not solely the style of PCYC that I remember operating from Scarborough. Modern centres involve other organisations and groups; they have games rooms, Internet cafes, computer laboratories, skate parks and climbing walls. They have all the mod cons that are needed to capture the imagination and attention of modern youth. They are not funded and operated solely by the police, but the police are needed to play a very strong role in running the centres.

During the election the Liberal Party made a commitment to establish a new centre and, in the next few years, to run a mobile facility. I would like to see the Government, with the help of the members for Wanneroo and Joondalup, work towards operating a mobile facility with the long-term goal of building a permanent centre a few years down the track. A mobile centre currently operates in Ipswich in Queensland and it is very successful. For many years I worked as a volunteer on the YMCA mobile facility which was just a bus that had bean bags and sporting equipment and which

dispensed hot dogs. It was something to which kids could come and feel safe and secure. We could always put them in touch with people if they had problems or issues they wanted to raise or we could offer to help them ourselves. It is essential that we give local youth much more help and additional services.

It is now winter. In some suburbs pot belly stoves are numerous and one can drive down the freeway and know from the haze when one is approaching the electorate of Kingsley. The winter haze is well known and has been documented by a select committee of this Parliament. The main causes are pot belly stoves, wood heaters and the like. Strong recommendations were made by the committee and the previous Government started to address them to try to improve the quality of Perth's air. A plan was released that will be extended over the next few years. The recommendations included looking for ways to encourage people to upgrade their wood heaters and exploring options to change to gas or electric heating. I regularly receive complaints about the smell and smoke created by wood heaters. The situation creates enormous difficulties for people with respiratory problems. If we can help remove the impact of wood heaters on people's lives it will make them much more comfortable. Wood heaters must now comply with Australian standards; people have to burn dry wood and not wet wood. I was delighted to see the Melville City Council team up with AlintaGas to look at ways of improving the situation. They have developed a special program that offers incentives to householders to replace their existing wood heaters with gas appliances. As an incentive, AlintaGas is offering local people discounts on gas heaters, free connection to the AlintaGas mains supply and special deals on heater and bayonet point installation. The program was supposed to have been launched in April. I wait with interest as to the outcome of the program. I will write to the City of Joondalup and ask whether it will enter into a similar pilot program next year. I will suggest some of the suburbs in my electorate as being suitable for a trial. I am aware that, with the air monitoring that has been put in place, Duncraig has become a key suburb for smoke haze.

Another promise made during the election, which was due to be in place by 1 March was paid parental leave to all government employees. A number of agencies currently have some form of paid parental leave and they include: Agriculture Western Australia, the Department of Land Administration, the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations, the Ministry of Fair Trading, the Education Department, the Ministry of Justice and the Tourism Commission. A number of other departments and agencies do not have paid parental leave. At the moment the entitlement for parental leave for state government employees is 52 weeks following the birth of a child. The difference would be that the first six weeks would be paid leave. An employee could have 12 months off with a combination of paid and unpaid leave. It would be a boon for government employees such as nurses, police officers and administrative staff who do not currently have access to that form of paid entitlement. It is an initiative that recognises the value of parenting and supports families. It is aimed at fathers and mothers; it has gender equality. It should be taken up by the current Government as a family-friendly policy even though it was originally a coalition Government suggestion. The initiative is behind time and should be implemented immediately.

During the past eight years I have been privileged to be a minister. On a daily basis I appreciated the value of public servants. They are a very professional group of people who are committed to their jobs. They are employed to do their jobs on behalf of the people of Western Australia, whom they serve. I have always found public servants to take that role very seriously. As a minister one needs to receive professional advice from people who are experienced and knowledgeable about the Public Sector Management Act and the Financial Administration and Audit Act and who know and understand Treasury guidelines and the practices and procedures that ensure that we have a public service of integrity. Such experienced people are needed to ensure that a minister, and by extension the Government, does not unintentionally breach standards and guidelines.

I had some wonderful experiences in working with my public servants and chief executive officers. At the risk of giving them the kiss of death, given the restructuring that is being undertaken, I will not name them. I do not think they would thank me for that. I would like to thank one in particular, Mr Bob Fisher. He was the former chief executive officer of Family and Children's Services. I had the privilege of being the responsible minister for 12 months. That experience was thoroughly enjoyable.

The people I worked with, both within the agency and in the non-government sector, were very passionate people, committed to those they cared for. They would also wish Bob Fisher the very best in his new position, representing Western Australia as Agent General.

That leads me to the Public Sector Review Taskforce. It is absolutely essential that the task force not be used to dilute the integrity of the fundamental principles, values and standards contained within the Public Sector Management Act 1994. I pulled out the "Report of the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and other Matters". It is a valuable document, and I would commend it to ministers, because it contains some critical things. At page 6-5 of part II of the report, it states -

There are substantial reasons for believing that the merit principle was put in jeopardy . . . Ministerial staff dealt with officials in matters relating to programme management in ways which affected the organisational integrity of departments. Some chief executive officers had their access to ministers they served seriously curtailed.

. . . it is impermissible for a government to encourage allegiance by making the Public Service partisan at points of strategic significance.

It is therefore absolutely critical that, throughout this restructuring process, the integrity of the public service, and the lessons of the past, are not lost. The roles and responsibilities of the public sector must be understood.

It was with some concern that I read an article in the *Sunday Times* of 11 March 2001, under the title "Burke aide gets job in new regime". The article reads -

One of Brian Burke's right-hand men during the tainted days of WA Inc has been made a senior officer in the new Labor Government.

Emiliano Barzotto is now chief of staff to Police Minister Michelle Roberts.

"I have no regrets about my time with Brian," he said this week.

"They were amazing years. They were exciting times."

Further on, the article states -

The commission reported: "Whatever may have been the instruction from the Premier, the manner in which it was carried out carries alarming implications for the integrity of public records."

It therefore is a matter of some concern to read -

Mr Barzotto told *The Sunday Times* he had done nothing while working for Mr Burke that he wouldn't do again.

Mr Quigley: No adverse findings or criticisms were made of Mr Barzotto by the royal commission.

Mrs EDWARDES: I encourage members of this House, particularly ministers, to go back and re-read the "Report of the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and other Matters". It contains some valuable pieces of advice and recommendations, and it is critical that we do not forget those lessons. My concern is that, through this restructuring, we will see the departure of long-serving public servants, particularly at the chief executive officer level. I have identified why the experience of those people is needed. I have had reported to me instances of interference by ministers and their staff in the appointment of people to public sector agencies. That is contrary to the Public Sector Management Act. People have been appointed to chair reviews, who have had long and close connection with those ministers or the Labor Party. A large number of contract staff in ministers' offices are political appointments. I give the commitment of the Opposition to the employees of the public sector, that we will watch very closely this restructuring, and make sure that the integrity of the public sector is maintained and the lessons of the past are not lost.

Another concern is that the public sector review may just be about reducing the size of government to meet extravagant election promises, and the result is low morale, confusion, low productivity, suspicion and a lack of confidence. Everybody is seeking advice about what they can do if they lose their position, and this is concentrating their minds, instead of the delivery of services. There is a sense of frustration and despair resulting from the restructuring process. It is critical to the Premier and his ministers that the public sector's confidence in the Government is retained. That confidence is being lost, and public sector employees feel betrayed because the Premier, while in opposition, promised that there would be no job losses in the public sector. Now, in his ministerial statement dealing with the interim report of the Public Sector Review Taskforce, he says there will be no forced redundancies, but that is not what the public servants took him to mean in the lead-up to the election. The Minister for Health has large numbers of contract staff in his department who have been there for many years, and they expected to be made permanent, through commitments given before the election, but in the past couple of months, long-term contract staff have been put off without any notification. I will be watching very closely the outcome of the Public Sector Review Taskforce.

**MR COWAN** (Merredin) [4.07 pm]: I congratulate all the new members of this Parliament on their election. I guarantee that, while they will find it intensely interesting at times, it will be equally boring at others. There will be a great deal of frustration for those new members, particularly those who have entered this Parliament to sit on the government benches. The opportunity for government members to speak in this place is far more limited than for those of us who have the misfortune to have lost government. Parliament is structured in such a way that democracy rules, and in a democracy, we have to suffer the tyranny of the majority. The majority will always get its way, but the Parliament is created for the minority to be heard. That is exactly what happens in this place, so those of us on this side of the House will have a much greater opportunity to express our views publicly, in the Parliament. Members opposite may be able to do that in a room upstairs or in committee rooms around this place, but it makes it a lot more difficult for them to articulate their views publicly. They will also face the prospect of having demands placed upon them from their constituents as to when they will deliver some of the things that the Government promised. However, I do hope that everyone who was elected finds this an interesting place.

I have always had the view that there are two key opportunities for speeches in this Parliament. The first is the Address-in-Reply debate, which is effectively about an outline of policy by a Government - what it hopes to implement - and the second is the budget debate, in which it can be established if the necessary funds have been appropriated to allow the Government's policies to be implemented. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr McRae), I am sure you would agree that, unless there is money, it is very rare that the action follows.

It is easy to enunciate policy and produce policy framework, either during an election or within the Governor's speech, but it is another story to find the funds to deliver the programs to the people of Western Australia. I shall respond to some of the initiatives that have been identified during the Address-in-Reply. As with all Governments, this Government can be commended for some programs. Most people would applaud the decisions made by the Government and referred to under the heading "Achievements So Far" in the Governor's speech. The reduction of the Totalisator Agency Board turnover tax from five per cent to 4.5 per cent is a good example and it will be welcomed by the racing industry. However, if the Government is to deliver some value to the racing industry it will need to examine the way in which the funds are distributed throughout the industry. At the moment, there is complete domination by bodies such as the Western Australian Turf Club and, although more money has been given to the racing industry, this Government has not followed through and dictated how that money will be distributed. As a consequence, the additional funds may not be well spent. However, I am sure that at some time in the future the Government will have the opportunity to complement that decision to reduce its revenue from the TAB turnover tax and apply itself to the distribution of that additional revenue.

The next issue relates to the payment of bills by government agencies within 30 days of receipt. I always resented the policy directive from Treasury that the period should be extended to 60 days, and I commend the Government for being prepared to reinstate the previous policy position.

Other matters listed under the heading "Achievements So Far" will rebound against the Government. The first item indicates that cabinet membership has been reduced from 17 to 14, and a ministerial code of conduct has been established. I will deal with the reduction in cabinet numbers and not the code of conduct because, no matter what is written about a code of conduct, the ministers themselves must ensure it is put into effect. The public will argue that the reduction in the number of cabinet members is laudable. Most people would argue that we are over-governed and it is a fantastic idea to reduce the number from 17 to 14. The Cabinet of 14 contains only three ministers who have previous cabinet experience - perhaps four if we include the member in another place who was a minister of the Crown for 10 or more days. It is placing an enormous burden on those ministers, with little experience, to assume the full responsibility for government. I have watched some of the ministers during the time they have been on the front bench, and I have already detected some of the signs which usually indicate people are learning how to operate without sleep. They are beginning to understand the rigorous pressure imposed upon them when they graduate from being a member of Parliament to being a minister of the Crown - it is a significant shift.

Mr Kucera: I am used to night shifts.

Mr COWAN: I will have a conversation with the minister one day in the future, and I am sure he will acknowledge that the job he is doing now is more onerous and requires more time than the job he had previously. I recognise the significance of the minister's previous occupation, which would have occupied a lot of time, but I bet that he is now spending more time at his desk doing his job than he ever did as an Assistant Commissioner of Police.

The public would approve of the reduction in the number of cabinet ministers as a valuable reform. I do not agree. It is placing a huge workload on ministers, to the extent that they will not be involved in the administration of their departments and they will be able to intervene only in matters of policy. People can argue about whether that is right or wrong, but we should not emulate the federal system under which ministers effectively deal only with policy decisions. Those ministers are so far removed from the wishes of the public that no-one should want to go down that path, but that is the system this Government has initiated.

I am most concerned about that decision combined with the decision to reduce the number of senior executives in the public service. I know the public supports that concept, because not many people understand the pressures or demands involved in the public sector. When the Government indicates to senior executives that their numbers will be reduced by 40 or so, they immediately either become insecure or develop a competitive streak in an attempt to become the chief executive officer of the newly restructured department. As a consequence, instead of giving fearless advice to an inexperienced minister, they will compete with other people in adjacent positions. Therefore, they will never take on ministers and provide the advice they should hear, as opposed to the advice they would like to hear. In other words, that old rule for senior public servants will go by the board every time. I will provide an example of that in a moment, because there is already proof that it has occurred.

The final matter listed as an achievement or reform was the offer of redundancies within the public sector. I assume that over a period the Government will go through all agencies and offer redundancies, but I understand that that the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet was first, the Department of Commerce and Trade was next and a few others will follow. As everybody knows, if the paddock gate falls down it is not the hack that disappears; it is always the good animals. In other words, the good people who should be retained will leave. The people who can find alternative employment, perhaps in the private sector, will take the redundancy offer, and this Government will be left with the hacks.

With the combination of those three issues, I have a great deal of concern about the direction in which the State is heading during this Government's formative months. Its ministers have a high workload and not a lot of experience - I am sure they will get over that very quickly - and senior executives cannot take on their ministers and give them fearless advice, because as a consequence they might lose their jobs or not be favoured in a contest for a particular job.

Finally, the Government will offer severance and redundancy packages and all of the good people will leave. That is a generalisation; some good people will stay. I know that I am right.

I will give an example that was dealt with earlier today by my colleague, the member for Stirling. He made the point that an application had been made to the federal Government for an extension of the boundaries under which exceptional circumstances funding - that is, relief from poor seasonal conditions - could be made available to additional numbers of farmers. That application failed because it did not meet the specifications of the National Rural Advisory Council. The NRAC operates on guidelines set by the ministerial council. The New South Wales Government invariably refuses to change the exceptional circumstances rules because it seems to be able to qualify under the current guidelines. The first successful Western Australian application was made last year by my colleague, the member for Stirling, when he was the Minister for Primary Industry.

The National Rural Advisory Council examined the draft application made by the previous Government and informed the Minister for Agriculture that it would fail because the percentage of people suffering was not high enough. To be eligible for exceptional circumstances, two out of three farms within the boundary of the declared area had to fail. The draft was amended, much to the chagrin of farmers who missed out on the relief, including those in my home town of Narembeen, and also Yilgarn and Kondinin. Seven shires or part thereof were granted eligibility and were able to apply.

I will not deal with the successful applicants within the area that was declared eligible for exceptional circumstances funding; however, I will deal with the second application. It was effectively a rewording of the draft that the previous Government had already been told would fail. The chief executive officer who helped draft the application should have told the minister that it would fail. However, he knew that he was competing with another CEO for the newly merged agriculture, fisheries and forestry portfolios. He reworded the application in a hurry because he did not want to argue with his minister, and it failed. That is what happens when doubt and uncertainty is created in the senior public service in response to offers of redundancy packages and people's workload is increased.

The outcome of the second exceptional circumstances application was a disgrace. The Minister for Agriculture thought it was all right to put a spin on this issue and to blame the federal Government. The minister knew that he would have to spend at least \$5 million of the State's money on an EC application should it be successful and that the federal Government would pay the rest. Knowing that that \$5 million would not be available, the minister did not care whether the application was successful because he knew that he could belt the federal Government. People are not fools; they will see through the shallowness of the minister. It is disappointing that the senior executives who were involved in the second application have not been able to give fearless advice to their minister because their positions are in jeopardy.

I am irritated that in the third application made by the Minister for Agriculture, federal funds that, with federal Government approval, were earmarked for other purposes in Western Australia were to be reallocated. The state minister did not want to spend new money out of the consolidated fund; so, in the third application, he applied to reallocate moneys that belonged to the Commonwealth. The farmers of this State will see through that device. The honeymoon for the Minister for Agriculture is well and truly over.

I will refer to other government achievements that sound very good but, on closer examination, are shown to be shallow and will cause disenchantment. Labor's policy to end logging in old-growth forests is an example of that. The majority of electors support an end to logging in old-growth forests. Labor cannot end all such logging and still retain all of the contracts for timber. If that were to happen, pressure would be applied to the remaining productive forests and the yield would not be sustainable. Popular decisions must be accompanied by some unpopular decisions. The Government has not yet had the guts to make them, but it will have to eventually. It would be appropriate for the Government to make an early start on that issue.

I will also address another matter of considerable importance; that is, the machinery of government process. I will give a friendly warning to the Government. When I first assumed ministerial responsibility, the second paper I received came from Treasury officials and informed me that the Government had to be more efficient and that the only way to do that was to examine closely the machinery of government. I had no problem with that, but I did have a problem with recommendations about the machinery of government process that would hand greater authority to Treasury.

I have had a very good relationship with the Under Treasurer. I regard him as probably one of the more competent Under Treasurers not only in this State, but also in Australia; he knows his stuff. However, I am disappointed when Treasury officials try to dictate the terms of the operations and the machinery of government in this State. I am sure that members of this Government will be given recommendations that comply with or are closely in accord with the recommendations made by Treasury officials. I am wary of giving Treasury greater authority over government trading enterprises. We will soon have a minister for government enterprises, and I bet that government bodies including Western Power and the Water Corporation, which have huge revenue raising capacities, will be subject to the whims of the Under Treasurer or Treasury officials. That will handicap this Government in the future.

Members on this side of the House used to get tired of my talking about issues associated with regional development. It is something about which I am passionate because one of the biggest issues in regional Western Australia is not the identification of the lack of infrastructure or reduction of services; it is what practical outcome we can deliver to address

those issues. We will never get a government agency to do that on its own. Its priorities will invariably reflect the number and location of its clients. If members want proof of that, they should look at the health budget. The five teaching hospitals consume 50 per cent of the health budget. Every other health service in every other part of the State is funded from the other 50 per cent; that is, all hospitals - including Joondalup Health Campus and Bunbury Regional Hospital - and the allied health services. The reason for that is that the power base is in the teaching hospitals, and they can claim they deliver and service the numbers. They do not; the small peripheral hospitals do that and they are equally as good. That issue must be addressed.

The issue for regional development is not simply the identification of the lack of service or the failure to deliver a product in the form of infrastructure; it is establishing a group of people who can implement some of the findings and argue the case for the reinstatement or delivery of infrastructure in a particular region. Regional development is about to be completely fragmented. Four ministers are now responsible for the nine regions. The Premier chairs a cabinet standing committee on regional policy. I will be asking how often it meets because I do not think it will meet very often. When fragmentation of the regional development portfolio takes place, an individual minister will not be in a position to argue for an increased budget to resource the regional development commissions to ensure that those matters that have been identified, whether they be infrastructure development or service delivery, are addressed. The path this Government appears to be travelling will provide no way in which to deliver outcomes. It has made many high-profile announcements; for example, the reduction in the number of ministers, the reduction in the number of people in the senior executive service and the offers of redundancy. It announced the decision to end old-growth logging, but it has made no accompanying announcement about strategies that will ensure the remaining productive native forest is not put under so much pressure that it falls over. A \$75 million fund for regional development has been announced. Is it old or new money? Where will it go? Who will argue the case for the expenditure of that \$75 million? I could go through the 2000-01 budget and find in excess of \$75 million that has already been allocated to regional Western Australia. Will we follow the Victorian example? Will the Government pool the money already contained in the forward budget projections and then say that it has a new \$75 million fund?

I repeat: the Government may fool some people, but it will not fool them all. Ultimately, it will be found out. I say the same thing to the new Minister for Science about the \$50 million science commitment. It is fantastic, but I have only to read the budget estimates for two government departments - Agriculture Western Australia and Fisheries WA - to find in excess of \$50 million already allocated for research. That money comes from compulsory levies on industry and is destined to be spent on research within those government agencies. Is this \$50 million old money? Will it be in addition to the money that is already set aside for research? If it is, then it has real value and meaning. The budget in August will show the \$50 million as a single line item. Agriculture Western Australia, Fisheries WA, the Department of Commerce and Trade through the centres of excellence and various telecommunications programs, and the Department of Resources Development all make a significant contribution to research and the application of science and technology. I strongly suspect that we will find in the budgets of those departments a corresponding reduction in the funds available for research. The Government should not think it will get away with that. I will ensure that does not.

The key issue is epitomised in the salinity debate. Under the new program, the Natural Heritage Trust will continue for another five years. Another program associated with land care is being offered \$500 million over seven years, which, for Western Australia on a per capita entitlement, is about \$158 million over the next seven years or approximately more than \$20 million a year. A lot of fuss is being made about the State Government contributing money to that. The State Government is complaining that the federal Government has asked for matching money. It has said it would give the Commonwealth an extra \$10 million. It would not be very difficult to do that; but I bet it does not.

**MR JOHNSON** (Hillarys) [4.37 pm]: I start my contribution to the Address-in-Reply with congratulations. I congratulate the Speaker of the House on his election. I have got to know the member over the past nine years; I have worked with him closely on different parliamentary committees. One of the members on the other side said he has a unique sense of humour. I can confirm that. He will carry out his duties with fairness, equity and the necessary diligence. I also congratulate the Premier and the Labor Party for a successful election. They ran a very good, strategic campaign. I take my hat off to them and say that it was an outstanding job, and one that was not expected by the general public of Western Australia. They ran the election in a tactical way, with the cooperation of the Greens (WA). I often saw members of the Labor Party and the Greens meeting in the Parliament House courtyard. It was a good, tactical move on the part of the Labor Party because it could win the election only through preferences, and they had to come from somewhere. They came from the Greens and those involved with the Greens. I also congratulate all the new members in this House. They obviously fought good campaigns. They will have an interesting four years. Some in safe Labor seats will be here for longer, but other members will be here for only four years. It will then be time to say, "You are the weakest link. Goodbye." They will be gone. However, I urge them to enjoy the four years during which they are here, as it is a rewarding job. This is my ninth year in this place. I know that every member of this House, as well as contributing in the House, will work as hard as he can for people in his electorate.

I also want to thank the many people who helped in my campaign. As always, they worked tirelessly. I mentioned them after the last two elections and they have asked me not to mention their names this time. It is getting boring for them and they are happy to be mentioned en bloc. Therefore, I say a big thank you to all of those who helped in my

campaign. For those members who do not know the electorate of Hillarys well, it is the pearl of the northern suburbs. It has a unique marina.

Mr Pandal: South Geraldton.

Mr JOHNSON: Some people say it is south Geraldton but it is not; it is the pearl of the northern suburbs. I shall say a few words about Hillarys Sorrento Quay marina. There was a great deal of opposition to the project when the previous Labor Government started it. When I first came to Western Australia in 1986, just before the America's Cup series, I remember only too clearly seeing big bulldozers and so on involved in reclaiming the ocean. It looked like a unique operation. I was unsure of what was going on at the time until it was explained to me. When I eventually immigrated to Western Australia in February 1988, Hillarys marina was up and running. In those days it was a bit of a ghost town because many shops were vacant. Some people would say it was five to 10 years ahead of its time. However, today it is a thriving and busy community facility, not only for the people who live in Hillarys but also for people from all over Western Australia and international visitors who frequently visit the marina. It is a wonderful place. We have what used to be called Underwater World and is now called AQWA - the Aquarium of Western Australia - which had some wonderful dolphins that tragically died through, I believe, some form of pollution.

During the election campaign the Premier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, went up there, as did the Minister for Health when he was a police officer. They held morning teas and various other functions and made all sorts of promises, encouraging people to vote Labor. The Premier made a promise to the people that once elected he would spend \$500 000 to upgrade the car park and provide more parking spaces for the people who use Hillarys marina. As I said, the previous Labor Government developed the marina; however, it did not have enough foresight to develop it properly. It was developed to cater for one million visitors a year and currently attracts three and a half million to four million visitors a year. The car parking facilities are, therefore, inadequate and there is a problem getting in and out of the marina on busy summer weekends. The then Leader of the Opposition said that he would spend \$500 000 on easing that situation to enable people to park easily when they visited Hillarys marina. I call on the Premier to come good on his promise. It will be interesting to see how long it will be before he fulfils that promise, because he said he would do it straight away. There is definitely a bottleneck when people try to park there.

The Labor Party candidate who stood against me - I have nothing against her, as I am sure she is a credible person - also claimed that if elected she would ensure that access roads and roundabouts would be put in place so that people could more quickly get in and out of the marina. She did not say that the project had already been commenced, and it is now almost finished. I have been working on improving access to the marina for many years. There are now two major roundabouts and some dual carriageways that people can use to get into the commercial side of the marina and to the wonderful restaurants. There is also separate access to Hillarys Yacht Club - a very successful yacht club to which people come from miles around to be members - and to groups such as TS Marmion, a naval cadet group that has been situated there for some years now. The member for Kingsley and I had a great deal to do with supporting them in getting those facilities in the Sorrento Quay area. They are a great young group of people who do a tremendous job, supported by their parents and by dedicated naval officers.

I ask the Premier to put his money where his mouth is. He promised the people of Hillarys \$500 000 to try to get his candidate elected. She did not quite make it, but that should not matter; the Premier should still come up with the money. I ask him to do that and thereby fulfil his promise.

Mrs Hodson-Thomas: It is an election promise.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, it is an election promise.

Mr Watson: She didn't get elected.

Mr JOHNSON: Exactly, and that is what I am worried about. If she had been elected, I am sure at some stage - probably just prior to the next election - the money would be spent. I can assure members that the electorate wants the money.

Mr Watson: They chose you and lost it.

Mr JOHNSON: It was not a conditional offer, at least not in writing. There may have been a condition in the small print that nobody else saw. It was certainly not a conditional offer.

I will return in a few minutes to the subject of the marina, as there are further problems there. I want to ensure that the Premier and the Minister for Water Resources fulfil a pledge made by the previous Government related to the Beenyup waste water treatment plant. The Water Corporation promised \$9 million for stages 1 and 2 and \$30 million for stages 3 and 4 to alleviate the enormous Craigie pong, as it became known. I am sure my colleagues the members for Kingsley and Wanneroo know that that pong has been a problem for many years. The smell emanates from the old days of the then Shire of Wanneroo, which allowed a residential development in an area that should not have been developed. It was too near to -

Ms Guise: That was not when the member for Hillarys was there, I hope.

Mr JOHNSON: No, it was long before that.

Mrs Edwardes: It was the member for Whitfords when she was the Minister for Planning.

Mr JOHNSON: I would not have allowed something like that to happen. There is an enormous problem there at particular times of the year and money must be spent on that treatment plant so that people can have the quality of life they deserve. I ask the Premier and the Treasurer - I am sure he will have a hand in this - not to grab any money from previous commitments made by the Liberal Government, which were genuine commitments made for good, solid reasons, not for political reasons. Every Western Australian deserves to have a good quality of life. I therefore ask the Government to come good and not to renege on the commitments made by the previous Government. Some stories have been circulating in Craigie that the Gallop Government will renege on that commitment and not spend money on that project. I hope that will not happen.

Mrs Edwardes: They will be marching in the street.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely.

Mr O'Gorman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: They may love us but they will not love the member for Joondalup!

Mr O'Gorman: They have never loved you in Craigie!

Mr JOHNSON: Of course they have. I accept that I did not do well in Craigie in the last election, but I lost it in the 1996 election by only 39 votes. I lost the election before that by about 600 votes when Pam Beggs was the member. I accept that this election indicated a big turnaround. I also accept that the member for Joondalup's friends may not love me in Craigie, but a few people voted for me, including a few people who voted for Labor in the past. However, even if we are unsuccessful, because of the work we do as members of Parliament and provided we work as hard as we can to help people, we are very often rewarded on the ballot paper.

Mr O'Gorman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: It is very difficult to hear an interjection from so far back in the gods. My hearing is not the best in the world, but the member for Joondalup will have to speak up a bit more if he wants to interject on me, because I cannot hear him otherwise.

Mr O'Gorman interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Of course there were some. However, I am in this place and I was 1 200 votes ahead of the Labor candidate. That speaks for itself.

I pledge to the people in the seat of Hillarys that I will continue to work as hard as I can and do everything in my power to assist them whenever they need help. They know my door is always open and my telephone is always answered. I have never refused to meet with any person who wanted to meet with me. I help many people over the phone, and many other people are happy to be helped by my electorate officer if it is a simple matter rather than take the time to make an appointment with me. However, they know that if they want to meet with me, I am always there for them.

My electorate has a few problems, and I know the member for Kingsley's electorate has similar problems. These problems have not just come to light, but they are getting worse; and now that members opposite are in government, they must make the hard decisions and try to do the things that must be done. My area must have a safe bus service.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I am happy for members opposite to also have a safe bus service in their electorate, but they should get up and ask for that themselves when the time comes. If they have already made their maiden speech -

Ms Radisich: First speech.

Mr JOHNSON: It is called a maiden speech - then they should take advantage of the next opportunity and ask for whatever they need in their electorate. However, this is my time, and I intend to take my time to speak on behalf of my electorate and the people who use the bus system in my electorate. Although the number of reported and unreported incidents of crime is relatively low, a large number of passengers are concerned about their personal safety when waiting for buses at bus stations and interchanges, or when travelling on buses, particularly at night. Many of the people who travel on buses have no alternative means of travel and must rely on the bus service to deliver them safely to their destination, whether that be their home or somewhere else. Other people use public transport to exercise their support for environmentally responsible travel options. We have heard a lot from the Greens (WA) and members of the Labor Party about how we should be more environmentally responsible, so I hope those members are listening. However, those people who choose to use public transport for that reason will be inclined to revert to car use if their safety is in doubt. They will not wait at bus stations or interchanges or go on buses if they risk being mugged or attacked. Most of the concerns of bus passengers relate to antisocial behaviour, in particular from groups of young people, who are often affected by drugs or alcohol. That can be very intimidating to other passengers.

A great deal of vandalism takes places on buses and trains. There is a now a new form of graffiti called scratchiti. I had not heard of it before, but I am told that is what it is called. It involves the etching and tagging of glass on bus and train windows, and on bus shelters. This type of graffiti costs the public a tremendous amount of money. Action must be

taken to deal with this problem, which concerns not only the Minister for Police, who has a responsibility to ensure the safety of people at bus stations and interchanges, but also the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It is a bit difficult to work out whether this matter comes under road safety or transport, and who is the responsible minister. I do not know, and perhaps the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will let us know. Perhaps the whole lot is the responsibility of the Minister for Police now that she has taken over a certain amount of work from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

A recent survey conducted by Donovan Research found that while most people feel safe on buses during the day, that is certainly not the case at night. The chief reason people gave for feeling unsafe on buses at night was the perceived threat of personal harm or violence. The survey found that there were significantly higher levels of "do not feel very safe" responses in the Morley region. In fact, 63 per cent of the respondents in that area said they did not feel safe when using buses at night. This was an increase on the survey results from the previous year. As a consequence of the antisocial behaviour on buses, patronage levels at night have declined, and those people who have no alternative to using buses at night are in constant fear of personal harm or threat. I ask the responsible minister to take note and do something. Some of the people who travel on buses live in my electorate, and others live in other electorates. However, I care for those people just as much as I care for the people in my electorate.

The Liberal Government recognised that public safety, antisocial behaviour and vandalism was also an issue in the rail system, and it increased train security by appointing additional security officers, special constables and customer service assistants. In effect, it formed a specialist railway security unit comprising approximately 168 personnel to provide both a customer service and a security-revenue protection role. This unit has enabled all trains to be manned for at least part of each journey and every train that departs after 7.00 pm to have two security personnel on board. In addition, major railway stations have static security between 2.30 pm and 3.00 am daily. All of those personnel are uniformed and provide a highly visible physical presence, thereby acting as a deterrent to possible troublemakers and minimising vandalism, and also providing a customer service. This coalition initiative has been extremely successful and has gone a long way towards restoring passenger and community confidence in the rail system.

The unit that was put in place by the coalition Government should also be put in place on the bus service. Transport currently provides static security at Wellington Street bus station, and at Mirrabooka and Morley bus stations in the northern corridor, during various hours of the day and night. That static bus security is required and, like the static rail security, is effective. It is obviously not possible for a security officer to travel on each bus in the northern suburbs and throughout the metropolitan area. What the people who travel on buses need is a mobile unit comprising security officers who can react quickly and can jump onto a bus when no-one expects it, because that will deter people from committing the vandalism and antisocial behaviour that we have experienced. As I said, I am not sure whether this matter comes under road safety or transport; therefore, I ask both ministers to take action to make bus travel safer not only in my area but in every area.

I now say a few words about the time I have spent not only as a member of this House but also as a minister in the Court Government. I believe that for eight years we had a Premier who worked for all Western Australians and made some tremendous achievements that future generations of Western Australians will enjoy. He will go down as one of this State's best Premiers for a very long time. I want that on the record. I spent just over a year as a minister, but I got a tremendous amount of satisfaction from the job, which was a hard one to do. I am sure that all the new ministers will find that after about a year they will think that it is quite a hard job, particularly those with the super ministries. From what I can gather, some of them are already having trouble. It is disgraceful that it can take two months for a minister to reply to a letter from a member of Parliament. I do not believe that any member of Parliament who ever wrote to me when I was a minister received a reply more than two weeks later, at the outside. The portfolios that I covered were works and services and citizenship and multicultural interests. Works and services was an interesting portfolio, which took in the Department of Contract and Management Services and the State Supply Commission. Both agencies were extremely well run by top chief executive officers and the dedicated staff did a tremendous job. The Department of Contract and Management Services has saved the taxpayers of Western Australia many millions of dollars through being innovative and taking on new technology.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued.]

Debate thus adjourned.

#### **TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2001**

*Returned*

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

*House adjourned at 5.02 pm*

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### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

#### STAMP DUTY, MOTOR VEHICLES

1. Mr BRADSHAW to the Treasurer:
- (1) Is Stamp Duty payable on extras when a motor vehicle is purchased?
- (2) If a motor vehicle is purchased as is and then the extra purchased at a later date or even a later time the same day, would Stamp Duty be payable for those extras?
- 67.
- (2) Stamp duty would generally not be applicable to the accessories supplied if they were fitted some time after the vehicle was licensed and were not a part of the original agreement to purchase the vehicle. However, if the Commissioner of State Revenue is of the view that the sale of the accessories was an integral part of the original agreement to sell the vehicle and was merely disguised as two separate contracts to reduce the stamp duty payable, then stamp duty would be applied.

#### LIQUOR STORES, SUNDAY TRADING

68. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:
- (1) Does the Government intend to change the licensing laws or regulations to allow licensed liquor stores to trade on Sundays?
- (2) Does the Government plan to restrict the number of licensed liquor stores any one company or person can own or operate?

Mr RIPPER replied:

- (1) The Government's election commitment to the liquor industry was that it opposes Sunday trading by liquor stores.
- (2) No.

#### POKER MACHINES, HOTELS AND LICENSED CLUBS

69. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister representing the Minister for Racing and Gaming:
- (1) Does the Government plan to review the legalisation of poker machines into hotels and licensed clubs?
- (2) If yes, when will the review panel be in place?

Mr RIPPER replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

#### FUEL PRICES, REDUCTION

70. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:
- When can Western Australian motorists expect to see the lowering of fuel costs as a result of the Minister's promised 50 per cent rule?

Mr KOBELKE replied:

The Government is implementing a range of measures to reduce the price of fuel. The legislation to amend the Petroleum Retailers Right and Liabilities Act 1982 to allow retailers of motor fuel to purchase up to 50 per cent of their fuel from a supplier(s) other than a primary supplier is one of these measures.

As retailers, including franchisees, will have a statutory right to source up to 50 per cent of their fuel from any supplier, this will provide the opportunity for increased price competition at the wholesale level and therefore lower prices for retailers which the Government expects will be passed on to consumers. The 50 per cent legislation is also expected to put increased pressure on franchisors to supply fuel to their franchisees at competitive market prices. However, the 50 per cent legislation will only override exclusive supply agreements binding retailers to a particular supplier entered into on or after 10 February 2001 being the date the Government was elected to office. Agreements or arrangements entered into before then will not be affected by the legislation.

Retailers will be able to exercise the right to purchase up to 50 per cent of their motor fuel from a source other than a primary supplier as agreements and arrangements entered into before 10 February 2001 progressively expire. This is but one part of the petrol pricing regime being put into place by the Government which should result in a more open, competitive and transparent market with lower prices for consumers. Therefore, the legislation is expected to exert gradual rather than immediate downward pressure on retail prices.

#### GNANGARA PARK, CONCEPT PLAN

71. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

When will the concept plan for Gnangara Park be finalised?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

The concept plan for Gnangara Park will be finalised by July 2001.

#### YELLAGONGA REGIONAL PARK, MANAGEMENT PLAN

72. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

- (1) Has the final management plan for Yellagonga Regional Park been approved by the Conservation Commission as was expected in the February/March meetings?
- (2) If not, what is the delay?
- (3) If so, when will it be released?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) CALM is awaiting comments from the City of Wanneroo prior to finalising the management plan.
- (3) Not applicable.

#### TAMALA PARK, LANDFILL CELL

73. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

- (1) Has the minister or the chief executive officer approved Mindarie Regional Council's application for a second landfill cell at Tamala Park?
- (2) If yes, or no, is this approval conditional upon the resolution of all member local government councils of the Mindarie Regional Council to proceed with the proposed waste recycling and processing plant, with a commitment to a tight time frame and to funding?
- (3) Have all member local government councils of the Mindarie Regional Council resolved to proceed with the proposed waste recycling and processing plant to replace the reliance on landfill?
- (4) If not, who is still to resolve?
- (5) What is the life span of the current landfill cell?
- (6) What is the expectant life span of the proposed second landfill cell?
- (7) If the new plant is to be operational by 2004, why is it necessary to have a second landfill cell?
- (8) What is the latest report on the environmental impact of the current landfill cell and in particular in respect to leaching?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

- (1)-(2) No.
- (3) No, however the Mindarie Regional Council, which has council representatives from all the member local government councils, has advised that on 15 February 2001 it resolved to adopt an implementation plan for the establishment of a secondary waste treatment plant in the Mindarie region. The implementation plan aims to commission a secondary waste treatment plant by 2004.
- (4) The MRC has advised that its member councils have not made individual resolutions.
- (5) Recent estimates provided by the MRC indicate that current (Stage 1) landfill will reach capacity by June 2003.
- (6) Recent estimates provided by the MRC of the expectant life span of the second landfill (Stage 2) vary from 2013 to 2037 depending on the technologies used to treat the waste and the quantity of waste diverted from landfill.
- (7) A second (Stage 2) landfill is required to accept waste -

- (i) while secondary waste treatment is being fully implemented by the MRC;
  - (ii) which is not amenable to secondary waste treatment or recycling;
  - (iii) in the event of treatment plant down time; and
  - (iv) that cannot be recycled after secondary waste treatment.
- (8) The latest report provided by the MRC in March 2001 on the environmental impact of the current cell relates to ground water monitoring conducted by the CSIRO from March 2000 to February 2001. The monitoring data indicates that nutrient leaching is the significant ground water impact at the premises and that the ground water to the west of the landfill at Marmion Avenue may now be being impacted by the leachate. Any approval for a landfill in Stage 2 of Tamala Park will therefore require that the landfill is fully lined with an appropriate leachate collection system.

#### WATER SUPPLIES, BINNINGUP, MYALUP AND PRESTON BEACH

74. Mr BRADSHAW to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is the minister aware that the residents of Binningup, Myalup and Preston Beach are dissatisfied with the water from the reticulated water scheme?
- (2) What is the analysis of the impurities of the water supplied by the Water Corporation to the residents of Binningup, Myalup and Preston Beach?
- (3) When can the residents of Binningup, Myalup and Preston Beach expect to receive a water that is of a satisfactory standard?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The water supplied to Binningup, Myalup and Preston Beach is safe to drink and complies with health guidelines. The water supplied to these towns is high in iron, manganese, salinity and hardness. The high salinity produces a taste problem and hardness contributes to scaling in hot water systems.
- (3) The Water Corporation has taken the following action to address water quality issues -

Myalup: The corporation has upgraded the water filter at this scheme to improve iron and manganese removal and provide consistency of water quality in the reticulation system. A calgon dosing plant to reduce the scaling effect on hot water systems is under consideration in consultation with the community.

Binningup: Calgon dosing is also planned for Binningup.

Preston Beach: A new borefield has recently been developed some 7km inland from existing bores. This source has lower salinity than the existing source. A calgon dosing plant is currently being installed to reduce the scaling effect on hot water systems.

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